



Wal-Mart Foundation to sponsor free tax prep effort

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By Nicole Maestri

NEW YORK, Feb 10 (Reuters) - Wal-Mart Stores Inc's (WMT.N: [Quote](#), [Profile](#), [Research](#), [Stock Buzz](#)) foundation is teaming up with nonprofit organizations United Way and One Economy Corp to offer free U.S. tax preparation and filing services for individuals earning less than \$56,000 per year.

The foundation, which is supporting the effort with a \$3.6 million grant, said five mobile tax center vans would visit various Wal-Mart parking lots for two to three weeks between Feb. 10 and April 11.

The vans will be equipped with One Economy's online tax filing technology and Internal Revenue Service-certified tax professionals. Individuals earning less than \$56,000 per year will be able to visit the vans to file their taxes free of charge, ahead of the IRS deadline on April 15.

Wal-Mart spokeswoman Deisha Galberth could not confirm the number of stores that the tour will visit, but she said the company expects 225,000 tax returns to be completed.

The partnership is meant to help raise awareness of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit for low-to moderate-income individuals and families.

Last year, Wal-Mart's sales got a boost after roughly \$100 billion in tax rebate cash landed in the hands of U.S. consumers between late April and mid-July. To help attract shoppers to spend those extra dollars in its store, it offered to cash the rebate checks for free.

"This tax season, more Americans may be eligible for tax refunds due to the state of the economy and declining job market," Wal-Mart Foundation President Margaret McKenna said in a statement. "That's why we're stepping up our efforts and bringing free tax filing access directly to the communities we serve."

McKenna said the program should put "millions" in EITC refunds back in the pockets of eligible taxpayers. (Reporting by Nicole Maestri; Editing by Lisa Von Ahn)

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