



Mobile tax center aids Selmians

By Barrett Welch | Selma Times-Journal

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With time dwindling as the tax-filing deadline — April 15 — approaches, MyFreeTaxes.com set up shop at Wallace Community College's Hank Sanders Technology Center to provide tax preparation assistance.

The tax assistance is the result of a partnership between the United Way, Wal-Mart and the One Economy Corporation. The goal is to promote free income tax assistance for taxpayers who may be eligible for the earned income tax credit and other programs they may not know about.

The mobile tax center is also working with the IRS-sponsored Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program to provide certified, trained volunteers on-site to prepare returns for individuals who make \$42,000 or less.

“We work with [organizations within] the local communities because they have a trusting relationship with the community,” said Julie Garcia, national director of the IRS Stakeholder Partnerships, Education and Communication program. “It’s a great program because the IRS wants to make sure we, through our partners, talk about . . . all those things that taxpayers are entitled to but sometimes don’t take advantage of.”

Garcia said close to 600 SPEC employees worked with 12,000 free tax preparation sites and 78,000 certified volunteers to process 3.5 million returns last year.

However, the help may have reached Selma too late. Tuesday’s session ran from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and received an endorsement from Congressman Artur Davis in a Tuesday morning radio broadcast remained at Wallace, but only two people came in between 10 a.m. and noon,

“It’s late in the season,” said DeForrest Brown, assistant vice-president of the Financial Stability Partnership and Planning and Community Initiatives for the United Way of Central Alabama. “We probably need to start getting the word out earlier in the tax season, getting the word out about this opportunity for individuals to prepare their taxes online.”

IRS associate Harold Pickens said the mobile tax center might return to Selma on Monday, two days before the tax deadline.

Kathy Marsh spent an hour with Hilliard Worthington, a mobile tax center volunteer. Marsh arrived hoping to learn how to prepare her own taxes, but Worthington took care of the paperwork for her.

“I thought I was going to learn how to do my taxes myself,” said Marsh. “This gentleman here just took me in and he’s doing it for me.”

Marsh handled her own taxes in the past. As tax laws and forms became more complicated and her workload increased, she put them in the hands of an accountant.

Now she is retired and looking to save money.

“I figured if I can save that accountant’s fee and do them myself, then that’s what I want to do from now on out,” said Marsh. “If they’re here next year, I will definitely be back here. I think it’s a great thing for the city of Selma.”