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VITA PROGRAM BANKS MILLIONS FOR AREA TAXPAYERS

United Way of Central Alabama and the Birmingham Regional Chamber of Commerce today announced the results of an initiative that's captured millions of dollars for low income and working individuals and families.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program (VITA) is coordinated by United Way of Central Alabama, the lead agency of the Alabama Asset Building Coalition, in partnership with the Internal Revenue Service and numerous community agencies and over 100 volunteers.

In 2008, the VITA Program results were:

- \$2.8 million in tax refunds to working individuals and families
- 3,418 tax returns prepared at no cost, saving individual and families an estimated \$683,600 in tax preparation fees
- \$1,071,431 in Earned Income Tax Credits, which often go unclaimed
- 18 VITA sites offered free tax preparation services with more than 100 volunteers

“Our VITA initiative is just one component of United Way’s Financial Stability Partnership. It was created to strengthen communities by identifying and tackling the underlying causes of the financial hardships facing individuals and families, said Drew Langloh, President & CEO, United Way of Central Alabama. “We are bringing together cross-sector partners to help lower-income individuals and families achieve financial independence by empowering them with the tools and skills necessary to maximize their income, build savings and gain assets,” he added.

“The VITA program benefits the community multiple ways,” said Russell Cunningham, CEO and president of the Birmingham Regional Chamber of Commerce. “More than 3,400 families that have taken advantage of the program have benefited because of the amount of the tax refund. The regional economy benefits because those dollars are spent here in our communities. Finally, United Way benefits because it is a good program and it enables the practitioners involved in the initiative to enjoy making a contribution to the community using their best talents. The Chamber applauds United Way for coordinating this initiative.”

Also speaking at today’s news conference was Elaine Beck, Alabama and Mississippi territory manager for the Internal Revenue Service and Katrina Brown who not only had her taxes prepared through the VITA program, but went on to enroll in other United Way Financial Stability programs. She has enrolled in United Ways Individual Development Account program and is saving money for law school. Brown is earning \$2 for every dollar she saves up to \$2,000 for a potential of \$6,000 toward her school expenses.

For more information on United Way’s Financial Stability Partnership programs contact Ms. Judy Allen at (205) 458-2088 or jallen@uwca.org. United Way of Central Alabama serves Jefferson, Shelby, Walker, Blount and St. Clair Counties by providing solutions for the most important needs in the community. Our business is to improve lives and community conditions by building and mobilizing resources.

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