



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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\$20 MILLION UNCLAIMED BY WORKING FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS ***San Diego County Intensifies Campaign on Earned Income Tax Credit;*** ***Countywide Initiative Lifting Families Out of Poverty***

Concerned that not enough working families and individuals were taking advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), the San Diego County Board of Supervisors launched an EITC awareness campaign in 2003.

The goal of the pilot program was to encourage more low-income people to claim the federal tax credit. Five years later, the initiative is now a countywide campaign that is having tremendous success.

"It's great to see so many hard working San Diegans get back the money they deserve," said Supervisor Greg Cox, Vice Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, as he kicked off the countywide campaign to help residents claim millions of dollars available through the Earned Income Tax Credit.

He was joined by working families who have benefited from the EITC and representatives from community service agencies, including René Santiago, Deputy Director for the Health and Human Services Agency- Central and South Region, Shaina Gross from United Way of San Diego County, Ron Wicks from the Internal Revenue Service, and Vicky Rodríguez, from the San Ysidro MAAC Project.

"This effort reduces poverty and puts money back in the hands of hard working families and individuals," added Cox, who along with Supervisor Pam Slater-Price has supported the initiative since it's inception in 2003.

Established in 1975, the EITC is the federal government's largest cash assistance program designed to lift low-income families and individuals out of poverty by helping them keep more of their hard-earned wages.

However, approximately \$20-\$25 million of EITC dollars are left unclaimed yearly in San Diego County alone. The figure jumps to more than \$1 billion statewide.

During the 2003 tax season, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors launched a pilot program that provided free tax preparation assistance to low-income workers. That year, volunteers at



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five sites filed 832 federal returns, generating more than \$600,000 in EITC refunds. The EITC initiative proved successful and was expanded countywide.

In 2006, free tax services were offered at 58 sites, more than 12,000 returns were filed, and nearly \$5 million EITC dollars were claimed by San Diego County working families and individuals. Since the program began, more than \$10 million EITC dollars have been returned to the regional economy.

During the 2007 tax season, more than 70,000 bilingual postcards and 750 English and Spanish posters were distributed countywide. Furthermore, hundreds of volunteers are offering tax preparation assistance at nearly 100 sites throughout the County.

“We are doing everything possible to help people claim their money,” said Santiago, who spearheads a countywide coalition of agencies and volunteers providing the tax assistance. “They worked hard for it. They earned it.”

Individuals and families who worked in 2006 and earned less than \$12,000 and \$39,000 respectively could qualify for the EITC that could be as high as \$4,500. However, they have to file a tax return.

For more information about the EITC Campaign or to set up an appointment to file a tax return, call:

Central or East Region:	(619) 283-3624
North Central Region:	(858) 974-3603
North Coastal Region:	(760) 757-0118 ext. 305
North Inland Region:	(760) 489-6380
South Region:	(619) 420-3620 or (619) 472-2900
Internal Revenue Service:	(800) 829-1040
2-1-1 San Diego:	2-1-1

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