

News Release

Lifeline for the Empowerment and Development of Consumers, Inc.

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**Free Tax Preparation Help Available at Lifeline, Inc.
February 10, 2010**

PAINESVILLE, Ohio—You don't have to spend money to get your own money back. Free tax preparation help is available to low-income families and individuals in Lake County. Lifeline, Inc. wants to help families and individuals meet their filing obligations, find credits they may not know about and protect them from unnecessary costs.

"Many people struggle with preparing taxes," said Carrie Dotson, Executive Director. "Low-income people really cannot afford expensive advice to get the refund they should. We want everyone to know there is an alternative."

In particular, Dotson believes Lifeline, Inc. can help many families and individuals who may not realize they qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The EITC is a federal income tax credit for low to moderate income working families and individuals. Congress originally approved it in 1975.

Eligibility factors include how much you earned in 2009 and how many children you have. For tax years 2009 and 2010, the program was expanded as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The average credit is more than \$2,000 but the maximum credit for 2009 and 2010 is \$5,657.

"A lot of families are at a different place financially than they were a year ago," Dotson said. "If they earned less in 2009 than they did in 2008, they might qualify for the credit but not be thinking about it."

Even single adults and couples without children can qualify for the credit, although families with children receive larger credits.

Earned Income and adjusted gross income (AGI) must each be less than:

- \$43,279 (\$48,279 married filing jointly) with three or more qualifying children
- \$40,295 (\$45,295 married filing jointly) with two qualifying children
- \$35,463 (\$40,463 married filing jointly) with one qualifying child
- \$13,440 (\$18,440 married filing jointly) with no qualifying children

Tax Year 2009 maximum credit:

- \$5,657 with three or more qualifying children
- \$5,028 with two qualifying children
- \$3,043 with one qualifying child
- \$457 with no qualifying children

“Millions of EITC dollars go unclaimed every year,” Dotson said. “We don’t want that to happen in our community. The low-income people of Lake County can count on Lifeline, Inc. for free tax help.”

Lifeline, Inc. uses volunteers trained and certified by the IRS through its Volunteer Income Tax Assistant (VITA) program. VITA volunteers provide free income tax assistance to low-income, elderly, disabled people and those with limited English.

“These volunteers do our community a tremendous service,” said Michelle Mezaris, Consumer Education Coordinator at Lifeline, Inc. “They provide a priceless resource for the people of Lake County.”

Free tax preparation is available to residents who meet Lifeline, Inc.’s federal income guidelines. Clinics are available on a variety of dates and times and include both appointments and walk-in times. All clinics are held at Lifeline, Inc.’s Painesville office at 54 S. State St., Suite 309. Appointments can be scheduled by calling (440) 354-2148.

For more information, please contact Michelle Mezaris, Consumer Education Coordinator at Lifeline, Inc., or Stephanie Beres, VITA Site Coordinator at Lifeline, Inc., at 440-354-2148. For more information on Lifeline, Inc., visit us online at www.lclifeline.org.

Lifeline for the Empowerment and Development of Consumers was founded in 1973 with the mission of helping Lake County residents by providing them assistance and life skills programming that is designed to increase self-sufficiency. In 1980 Lifeline became a participating agency of the United Way of Lake County, UWLC, and in 1987 was designated a community action agency by the Ohio Department of Development, ODOD.

Today Lifeline continues with the same mission of helping Lake County's low-income residents break the cycle of poverty and make the transition from agency-dependency to self-sufficiency. Lifeline's current programming includes services in the health, housing, energy and consumer education areas. Our motto is 'first to help, then to teach.' Lifeline is currently funded by the UWLC and by grants through the ODOD, the Lake County Board of Commissioners, the Western Reserve Junior Service League, the CVS Foundation, the Bikers Aiding Local Diabetics and through private donors.