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**WPWDB Kicks Off Free Tax Prep Assistance Program for Working Families and Individuals  
Making Less than \$54,884 a Year**  
*Program runs from February 1 through April 15*

**(WESTCHESTER) February 21, 2019**— On Friday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, The Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board (WPWDB) kicked off the “Volunteer Income Tax Assistance” (VITA) Program at the Career Center located at 130 Mount Vernon Avenue, Mount Vernon, NY.

Several volunteer tax preparers were already hard at work helping the first participants including Antonio Stamos who has volunteered for the past several years, Larry Cowen, Wanda Amparo, and Tamicka Hall. “I really enjoy helping people and this program provides a great way to assist individuals and families,” stated Stamos.

“I’ve been coming to get my taxes prepared for 5 years,” stated Clarice McConnell of Mount Vernon. “I’m really grateful for this type of program.”

OJ Yizar welcomed those in attendance and introduced WPWDB Director Thom Kleiner who thanked Donovan Beckford, *Executive Director, WestCOP*, for spearheading the effort while Director of WPWDB several years prior. Both Ken Jenkins, *Westchester County Deputy County Executive* and Kevin McGuire, *Commissioner, Westchester County Department of Social Services* reiterated Westchester County’s commitment to the free program and thanked all the partners and volunteers for their time and support in making the program so successful.

OJ Yizar concluded the program by highlighting all the collaborating partners who work diligently to coordinate the day-to-day appointments and operations—United Way 2-1-1, Volunteer NY, WestCOP, AARP, the IRS, Westchester County Government, Westchester Community College, Westchester Education Opportunity Center, Mercy College Westchester and Bronx Campus, Interfaith Council Association, and the Westchester-Putnam Career Center Network.

The program is designed to provide eligible Westchester County residents with free tax prep assistance to maximize their returns and help those who are eligible take advantage of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) implemented to help low income taxpayers making less than \$54,884 a year. VITA relies on dedicated volunteers to act as greeters, assist with translation and call-center operations. Tax preparation is done by IRS-certified volunteers.

**The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)** is a federal tax credit available to working families and individuals with modest incomes. Many eligible Westchester residents are not aware of the credit and therefore do not claim it. Maximum

credits depend on income, marital status and number of dependents. It is estimated that about 80% of refunds are spent locally, which generates local sales, wages and jobs, ultimately boosting the local economy.

Call 211 or 1-800-899-1479 to make an appointment, or visit one of seven locations listed at [www.westchesterputnamonestop.com](http://www.westchesterputnamonestop.com) including White Plains, Dobbs Ferry, Mount Vernon, Valhalla, Yonkers, Bronx and Ossining.

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The VITA/EITC Tax Prep Program, which runs from Feb. 1 to April 15, 2019, kicked off at the Mount Vernon Career Center on Feb. 1, 2019. Present at the launch of the event were: **James Bernardo**, *President, Candela Systems*; **Ken Jenkins**, *Westchester County Deputy County Executive*; **OJ Yizar**, *Westchester Career Center Manager*; **Katrina Alexander**, *Director of Temporary Assistance, Yonkers*; **Larry Cowen**, *Volunteer Tax Preparer*; **Donnovan Beckford**, *Executive Director, WestCOP*; **Kevin McGuire**, *Commissioner, Westchester County Department of Social Services*; **Victor Avendano**, *VITA Program Director*; **Tamicka Hall**, *Volunteer Tax Preparer*; **Rudy Aikens**, *VITA Site Coordinator*; **Thom Kleiner**, *Executive Director, Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board*; and **Antonio Stamos**, *Volunteer Tax Preparer*.



**From left to right:** Customer Clarice McConnell; Volunteer Tax Preparers Wanda Amparo and Larry Cowen.