

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Critical Issues

K-State Extension develops and delivers practical, research-based solutions to challenges faced by all Kansans, which includes the critical issues of:

- Global Food Systems
- Water
- Health
- Community Vitality &
- Developing Tomorrow's Leaders

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Critical Issue: Community Vitality

Title: Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) helps community members save money

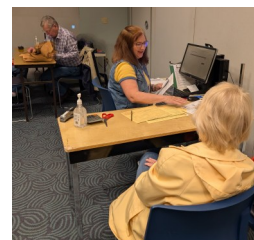
Why is this issue important?

Many consumers lack knowledge of financial concepts and skills they need to make decisions regarding their economic well-being. Lacking familiarity with how to manage limited resources, coping, communication, financial management, and decision making skills can leave persons with insufficient resources to cover basic needs.

Understandably, many of us feel apprehensive when trying to interpret the complex nature of taxes. With tax codes and rules changes, sometimes yearly, many do not take action to get their taxes filed annually. We estimated a low, average cost of \$250 for a simple return to be prepared by a company or financial accountant.

How did Extension address this issue?

Coordinated by Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent, Atalie Tompkins, the VITA program is at no cost to tax payers to have their taxes prepared and filed. The need for VITA sites is growing in Shawnee County as the population ages. The goal of Shawnee County Extension's VITA program is to provide free tax preparation and filing to those who's yearly adjusted gross income is below \$64,000 (per IRS) and who are at least 65+ years of age. Other ages and close income levels are welcome to discuss if their return qualifies.



What was the impact?

K-State Extension Shawnee County hosted 4 VITA tax sites for tax year 2024, which served 2,195 customers. This was about 75 more customers than TY2023. Sites operated from February 3, 2025 to April 15, 2025. Additionally,

- ◆ We saved our customers well over half a million dollars in tax return preparation fees!
- ◆ Total returns resulted in nearly 68% of customers receiving refunds. In total, refunds for federal returns were \$2.3 million and state refunds were at \$688,000, totaling \$2,978,100 in funds back to taxpayers from K-State Extension, Shawnee County VITA sites! In turn, federal and state tax refunds stabilize the county tax base and stimulate local economies.
- ◆ The Kansas Homestead refund provided tax relief to homeowners who were 65+ and met income qualifications. This TY2024 tax break generated over \$3 million in refunds at our sites.
- ◆ Reduced demand for public assistance by helping taxpayers access money they are legally entitled to through tax refunds.
- ◆ VITA volunteers provided education to the tax payer by explaining how they can benefit with certain tax deductions and how money management may affect future tax filings.
- ◆ Over 81% had an adjusted gross income (AGI) of less than \$64,000. The average AGI was \$41,027.

SITE	RETURNS	% BELOW \$64,000	% 65 or OLDER
SITES COMBINED	2,195	81%	60%
TOPEKA LIBRARY	832	80%	62%
LUNDGREN	712	83%	68%
NORTH TOPEKA	543	82%	47%
ROSSVILLE LIBRARY	108	77%	53%