

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE



## Grand Challenges

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- Health
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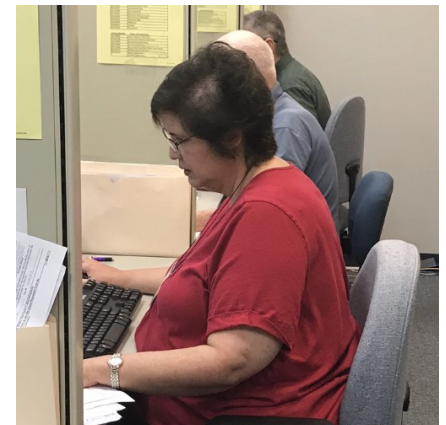
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## Grand Challenge: Community Vitality

### Title: IRS Trained Volunteers Provide Free Tax Assistance

**Why is this issue important?** Filing a tax return can require a level of financial literacy and knowledge of tax law that many do not possess. It can also be quite expensive. The IRS estimates the value of having a tax return prepared at \$225, but the cost goes up with the number of forms completed on the return. It is not uncommon for tax preparation to cost \$500–\$700 for returns claiming the child tax credit, earned income credit or education credits. The cost can be barrier to taxpayers. However, if they don't file, they may miss out on tax credits and deductions they may be entitled to.



**How did Extension address this issue?** Susan Fangman, Family & Consumer Sciences Agent, gives leadership to the Asset Building Coalition in Shawnee County. This group represents both Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and AARP tax volunteers, as well as educational, government and social service agencies. Together this group provides the space, materials and manpower to provide free tax assistance in Shawnee County. Target audiences include low to moderate income individuals and families, the disabled, Spanish-speaking taxpayers, and senior citizens.

**What was the impact?** During the 2019 filing season (2018 tax year) volunteers at 11 public sites in Shawnee County filed 6,156 federal returns, with a similar number of state returns. Free tax assistance saved Shawnee County taxpayers approximately \$1,385,000 in tax preparation fees (as estimated by IRS calculations). It also helped taxpayers receive close to \$6,355,000 in federal refunds and place on record almost \$1 million in tax liabilities. The average adjusted gross income (AGI) of those served at Shawnee County sites was \$27,338.