

Lewiston-Auburn CA\$H Coalition Touts Nearly \$30 Million in Claimed Refunds for Area Residents Since 2004

[Photo: Lorna Healey (on left) receiving a volunteer appreciation certificate from outgoing Site Coordinator KC Geiger. Co-Chair Chris Adler looks on.]



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LEWISTON: The Lewiston-Auburn CA\$H Coalition celebrated its 13th tax season on April 13, 2016, touting nearly \$30 million in refunds claimed for LA area residents since 2004. This tax season alone, its IRS-certified volunteer tax preparers facilitated \$3,508,000 in Federal and State refund

claims. Once again, LA CA\$H is the lead coalition of ten throughout the State of Maine, providing free tax preparation and asset-building opportunities to low-to-moderate income individuals/families. Taxes were prepared during the season at the Lewiston Memorial Armory and Auburn City Hall.

The 2016 tax season resulted in LA CA\$H & AARP-Tax Aide volunteers serving **2,661** individuals. A total of **\$2,740,000** was claimed in Federal refunds and **\$768,000** in State refunds. Of the Federal returns,

\$864,000 claimed was for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a Federal credit for low-to-moderate income workers. The EITC is known as the nation's largest anti-poverty initiative. In addition, LA CASH, with Asset Coordinator Jill Lorom at the helm, provided asset-building information during the season to interested individuals on various financial topics, to include a focus this tax season on savings. The pulling and reviewing of individual credit reports was also a service provided. Opportunity Guides assisting individuals were: Lorom, Jennifer Allen, Jan Byron, Linda DeSantis, John Chabot, and Lyse Henshaw.

During the evening, Lewiston's Community Relations Coordinator/Coalition Co-Chair Dottie Perham-Whittier presented a Powerpoint presentation that gave an overview of the Coalition's outreach and successes during the 2016 tax season, to include highlights from February's Super REFUND Saturday that featured a financial literacy resource "fair" and where attendees could focus on a "savings goal." Perham-Whittier also praised the positive relationship between CASH volunteer tax preparers and AARP volunteer tax preparers who worked collaboratively during the tax season

Site Coordinator KC Geiger & Head Start Training Coordinator/Coalition Co-Chair Chris Adler presented appreciation certificates to tax preparers, greeters, schedulers, and quality review volunteers: Louise Gervais, Bob Cavanagh, Roland Danico, Linda Cronkite, Joe Defilipp, Diane Kirouac, Sylvia Schrock, Celia Treworgy, Paul Blanchard, Judy Gervais, Lou MacDonald, William Randall, Teresa Austin, Nancy Bisson, Lisa Bolen, Ronald Bunker, Richard Duplisea, Peter Field, Melody Fish, Yolande Gay, Sue Goddard, Lorna Healey, Doug Kinchen, Gerry Langelier, Monica Lee, Paul Maheux, Greg Nadeau, Jan Provencher, Norm Provencher, Mady Roy, Jan Sullivan, Ginny Theriault, Antoine Tolton, Sue Tymoczko, and Bob Wailus. In addition, volunteer Doug Kinchen presented plaques of appreciation to Geiger and quality reviewers William Randall, Lou MacDonald, and Judy Gervais. Also on the agenda were commendation letters from US Senator Angus King, US Congressman Bruce Poliquin, and IRS Spec Consultant Tess Armstrong.

The evening closed with a tribute to Site Coordinator KC Geiger who has served in that role since the 2005 tax season. He is retiring as Site Coordinator, and speakers noted that he is leaving *"tough shoes to*

fill.” Those lauding Geiger’s long-time service were Perham-Whittier, Co-chair Chris Adler, Yvette Bouttenot from the City of Auburn, Lewiston’s Deputy City Administrator Phil Nadeau, and Lewiston Mayor Robert E. Macdonald who presented Geiger with a proclamation praising his integrity, professionalism, and sacrificial giving of time over the last 12 years. Geiger will volunteer on Tuesdays next tax season but wants to ultimately devote more time to other interests, traveling, and family.

For 2016, the CA\$H Coalition was funded by a statewide VITA grant, the JT Gorman Foundation, and Key Bank. Partners/promoters for 2016 were: the City of Lewiston; City of Auburn, Internal Revenue Service; United Way of Androscoggin County; Androscoggin Head Start & Child Care; New Ventures; Goodwill, Key Bank; Coastal Enterprises, Inc.; Lewiston Adult Education; Lewiston Housing Authority; Auburn Housing Authority; AARP Tax Aide Program; Community Concepts; Volunteers of America; HUD; and retired seniors.

The LA CA\$H Coalition was established in 2003 at the urging of then Council President Renee Bernier who, along with Councilor Lillian O’Brien and Councilor Ronald Jean, attended a Boston forum highlighting the importance of claiming all tax credits for which individuals are eligible for, to include the Earned Income Tax Credit.

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