

Free tax prep available to those in need

Orange County United Way has helped save 1,100 low-income families more than \$747,000.

By **ERIKA CHAVEZ**
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With three weeks left before the April 15 tax deadline, Orange County United Way has helped 1,137 families – and counting – claim \$747,806 in the Earned Income Tax Credit.

The nonprofit has partnered with other local agencies to provide free tax preparation services to families earning under \$42,000 a year. At least 10 free tax preparation sites will continue throughout Orange County until the tax filing deadline.

The EITC is designed to help low-income families and individuals save more of their wages. Those without children who earn less than \$12,880 annually and working families with annual incomes up to \$41,646 are eligible for the credit, but according to the Internal Revenue Service in 2005 as many as 25 percent of OC

taxpayers eligible for the EITC did not claim the credit, totaling about \$65 million.

Those who claim it can get up to \$4,824 back, said Maria Chavez Wilcox, president and CEO of the Irvine-based Orange County United Way. That money can be used to pay off debt, build assets or save for a child's education, she said.

"These are difficult financial times for many families and being able to connect families to resources and services to help ease the strain will strengthen our communities and provide hope for a brighter tomorrow," Chavez Wilcox said.

Orange County United Way partnered with the Legal Aid Society of Orange County, the IRS, and local financial institutions and nonprofits to make the free tax preparation services available. Free tax preparation clinics remain in Anaheim, Irvine, La Habra, Westminster and Orange.

Tax preparation clinics

Families earning under \$42,000 per year are eligible and could qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Today, April 2, April 9

La Habra FRC
301 W. Las Lomas Drive
La Habra 90631
714-447-3460

March 30, April 6, April 13

Lakeview Senior Center
20 Lake Road
Irvine 92604
English: 888-434-8248
Spanish: 866-921-3890

March 28, April 11

Abrazar Inc.
7101 Wyoming St.
Westminster 92683
714-893-3581

For additional dates and sites in Orange, Santa Ana, Westminster, Irvine and Anaheim, visit unitedwayoc.org.