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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

United Way of North Central Florida offers free tax services this tax season

GAINESVILLE, FL (Jan. 22, 2019) — United Way of North Central Florida (UWNCFL) will begin offering free tax services through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program beginning January 28.

The VITA program helps prepare tax returns for low- to moderate-income individuals, those with disabilities and those with limited English in our six-county service area of Alachua, Bradford, Dixie, Gilchrist, Levy and Union counties. The program has been with UWNCFL for 10 years and was a part of the East Gainesville Development nine years prior to that. Program volunteers secure refunds and credits these taxpayers are eligible for, such as Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit.

During the 2018 tax season, the VITA program filed more than 2,100 free tax returns and refunded almost \$2 million back to the community. It saved taxpayers almost \$600,000 in tax preparation fees.

VITA has successfully leveraged many community resources to provide tax-preparation services, including partnering with University of Florida's Levin College of Law, Santa Fe College, Buchholz High School's Academy of Finance and Alachua County Library District. As a part of their course curriculum, Buchholz High School's Academy of Finance trains and certifies its students to become tax preparers. These students have completed the same training as the other VITA volunteers.

"We're ecstatic to be working with these amazing partners for another tax season," said Mona Gil de Gibaja, MSW, Ph.D., UWNCFL President and CEO. "We hope that with their help, we can have another successful year of helping our community members put dollars back in their pockets."

This year, we have 11 sites in Alachua County at Alachua Branch Library, Library Partnership, Buchholz High School, Cone Park Library, Reichert House, South West Advocacy Group (SWAG), Santa Fe College Main College, Santa Fe Blount Center, Micanopy Branch Library, United Way of North Central Florida and University of Florida's Levin College of Law. There are three sites in the rural communities. Two in Levy County at Tri-County Community Resource Center and Suncoast Credit Union, and one in Union County at Union County Public Library.

Taxpayers can make appointments through United Way's free and confidential 2-1-1 helpline by dialing 2-1-1 or (352) 332-4636, or through our brand-new self registration page at unitedwayncfl.org/vita. If an individual prefers to file their taxes at home for free, they can visit myfreetaxes.com.

For more information on United Way's VITA program, please contact Marilyn Taylor at mtaylor@unitedwayncfl.org.

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United Way of North Central Florida has been a staple in the community since 1957. We serve a six-county area that includes Alachua, Bradford, Dixie, Gilchrist, Levy and Union counties. Since our inception, we have raised nearly \$100 million for the region. Our mission is to positively impact the education, health and financial stability of the people living in our region. Since 2011, we have consistently received four out of four stars from Charity Navigator for accountability and transparency. We have also been awarded a gold rating for GuideStar.

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