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The Forgotten Stimulus: United Way invests \$50,000 to increase awareness and expand access to the Earned Income Tax Credit

Changes to eligibility may mean more money for working families this year

As part of a larger strategy to help families hit hard by the recession move from crisis to financial stability, **United Way of the Greater Seacoast** (UWGS) announced today that \$50,000 is this being invested in the CASH coalition again. They are also working to raise public awareness about changes to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which could result in more money for working families this tax season. Created in 1975, EITC is a federal income tax credit for low to moderate-income individuals and families. United Way is encouraging individuals who have not previously been eligible for EITC but may have experienced a job loss or a change in salary this year, to look into their eligibility.

Thanks to the Economic Stimulus Package the EITC income threshold has been increased for 2009 and 2010 so more families will qualify for this credit." Said, Bill Piombino who chairs the UWGS investment committee.

Families who earned less than \$48,279 in 2009 may be eligible to receive more than \$5,000 of their earnings back through EITC. This is up from last year's salary cap of \$41,646. Changes brought about by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act have also broadened eligibility and increased the credit amount for families living with three children. Through its \$50,000 investment, United Way is funding outreach efforts and free tax filing sites throughout the Seacoast region.

The Earned Income Tax Credit has lifted more people above the poverty line than any other federal program and yet an estimated \$5.2 million in tax credits went unclaimed in the Seacoast region last year. The tax credit when returned to hard-working families through EITC is money that can be used to pay bills, climb out of debt, or save for the future. It is also money that greatly contributes to the local economy.

Last year, United Way invested \$50,000 in the CASH (Creating Assets Savings and Hope) coalition. CASH is a local coalition that set up Volunteer Income Tax Preparation sites on the Seacoast. Their site Coordinators also work to connect individuals and families with direct service providers who can help them create strategies to overcome poverty. On the Seacoast, those volunteers prepared over 350 tax returns totaling more than \$340,000 in refunds.

United Way of the Greater Seacoast is actively working to bridge the gap between crisis and stability by helping families transition from emergency basic needs to permanent housing, education and asset building opportunities. This year UWGS invested \$50,000 to establish a regional partnership whose sole task is to develop an actionable strategic plan to end homelessness on the Seacoast. And to help prevent homelessness another \$50,000 is being made available through a partnership with Rockingham Community Action to provide assistance to individuals and families in need of short-term assistance.

To learn about free tax filing services and other financial credits available, residents can visit www.uwgs.org for eligibility information and a list of tax preparation sites.

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United Way of the Greater Seacoast (UWGS) is a locally governed nonprofit organization working to advance the common good by focusing on the building blocks for a good life – education, income and health. UWGS develops, supports and works in groundbreaking partnerships in the Greater Seacoast



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