



Tuesday, February 3, 2004

OU students assist low-income families with taxes

Students from Oakland University's Beta Alpha Psi chapter, a fraternity for business financial information professionals, will assist low-income Michigan residents with their taxes with the Volunteer Accounting Service Team of Michigan (VAST) at Lighthouse Emergency Services by preparing local, state and federal income taxes and tax credits for people with low-incomes.

Tax services are available on Saturdays through April 10, from 10 a.m.- 2 p.m., at the Lighthouse Emergency Services located at 46156 Woodward in Pontiac.

"By volunteering our services, our members not only gain professional knowledge but also give back to the community," said Sarah Phillips, senior accounting major and Beta Alpha Psi president. "It's truly a real world experience. We see a lot of elderly and underprivileged people, and it feels great to give back by helping them."

VAST offers its services at no charge on a walk-in basis at more than 25 metro Detroit sites. About 6,000 households are assisted each year. In 2003, volunteers helped process \$6.4 million in tax refunds. Those eligible for the service include individuals with an annual income of \$20,000 or less and families with an annual income of \$35,000 or less. Volunteers are offered tax preparation training prior to meeting with clients.

"We couldn't run the site without the OU students," said Pete Keating, tax supervisor at the Lighthouse site. "We have about 40 to 50 people who walk in each day, and the students have been able to handle the high volume. The students provide an essential service. They help people who otherwise wouldn't file their taxes or they'd pay a tax preparer - and these are people without much money to spend. Plus, they also get certain tax credits they normally wouldn't be aware of, like the earned income credit or child tax credit."

For more information on the program or to learn how to volunteer your services, visit the [Volunteer Accounting Service Team of Michigan](#) Web site or contact them at (313) 647-9620.

Oakland University is a comprehensive state-supported institution located in Oakland County, Michigan. The university has 114 bachelor's degree programs and 82 graduate degree and certificate programs. Dedicated to delivering a distinctive undergraduate experience that is complemented by the strength of its graduate offerings and research accomplishments, Oakland University is organized into the College of Arts and Sciences and the Schools of Business Administration, Education and Human Services, Engineering and Computer Science, Health Sciences, Nursing, and The Honors College.

SUMMARY

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