

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF SECOND HARVEST FOODBANKS

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ELIGIBLE OHIOANS CAN FILE TAXES FREE THROUGH THE OHIO BENEFIT BANK

Free tax assistance available for most households earning less than \$60,000 annually

COLUMBUS – Tax season is quickly approaching, and thousands of Ohioans will soon begin the filing process to ensure that they receive their refunds. To save taxpayers a little extra money this year, when individuals and families can use a few extra dollars in their pocket, the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks (OASHF) is set to help low and moderate income Ohioans obtain free Federal and State income tax return assistance and to identify if they are eligible for other work support benefits.

Free tax assistance is one of many services provided through The Ohio Benefit Bank (OBB), a Internet-based program that connects low and moderate income Ohioans to potential work supports, such as health care coverage, home energy assistance, child care subsidies and food assistance. This year, most Ohioans with an annual household income of less than \$60,000 can file their Federal and State taxes for free using The OBB.

Eligible individuals can obtain free tax assistance by visiting The OBB website at www.ohiobenefits.org. The website is designed, not only to help individuals and families prepare and electronically file their taxes, but also to enable Ohioans to claim all credits for which they are eligible at no cost, as well as review potential eligibility for other community supports. If clients choose to use direct deposit, they can receive their refunds in as few as seven to 10 days.

Trained counselors at Ohio Benefit Bank sites and clinics throughout the state are also available to help Ohioans prepare and file their tax returns at no cost if they meet the income eligibility requirement of less than \$60,000 per year in household income. If eligible, clients can also claim the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a special tax refund program for working families and individuals. To file their taxes or to locate an organization that can help them file their taxes, Ohioans can visit www.ohiobenefits.org or call the toll-free number: 1-800-648-1176.

“Too many Ohio taxpayers miss out on receiving free tax assistance each year just because either they don’t know it’s available or they don’t know where to get this valuable service,” said Jason Elchert, Deputy Director at the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks. “In addition, at least one in every four taxpayers eligible for the EITC fails to claim the credit, which is why we are urging residents to utilize The OBB to be informed and ensure they don’t miss out on potential benefits and tax savings this year.”

Each year, more than \$1.7 billion dollars in tax credits and other supports go unclaimed by eligible Ohioans. More than 95 percent of these unclaimed funds are federal dollars. Claiming these dollars will bring more federal money to Ohio, therefore helping to boost the state’s economy.

For more information about the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks call 614-221-4336 or visit www.oashf.org.

For more information or to locate an Ohio Benefit Bank site nearest you, call 1-800-648-1176 or visit www.ohiobenefits.org.

About the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks

OASHF is Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger, representing Ohio's 12 Feeding America foodbanks and 3,000 member charities including food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. In SFY 2010, OASHF and its member foodbanks were able to acquire and distribute over 135 million pounds of food and grocery items.

About The Ohio Benefit Bank

The Ohio Benefit Bank is an Internet-based program that connects low and moderate income Ohioans to potential work supports, such as health care coverage, home energy assistance, child care subsidies and food assistance. Since inception in 2006, The Ohio Benefit Bank has assisted over 177,000 Ohioans in receiving work supports and tax credits with the potential value of over \$393 million.

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