

Website articles

Thanks to a generous grant of \$10,000 from United Way of the Columbia-Willamette, Bienestar is offering for the first time free income tax preparation for residents and members of the community. As part of an EITC (Earned Income Tax Credit) Campaign, it is the goal of Bienestar and its partners United Way, CASH Oregon, and TaxAide to help more latino families access tax credit refunds available through the Earned Income, Child Care and other tax credits. These credits often go unused by people who don't know about them or who don't know how to file for them.

Bienestar staff members Gracie Garcia and Maria Moreno, along with Maria's husband Ezequiel Hidalgo, and Promotores Luisa Manriquez and Javier Urenda braved snow and ice during Saturdays in December and January to take 40 hours of training. After passing an exam (with flying colors!), all were certified by the IRS as volunteer income tax preparers.

Following extensive preparation and outreach, two sites have been serving Bienestar residents and members of the community with free tax preparation on Thursday evenings from 5 to 9 and Saturdays from 9 to 2 since the beginning of February. Board member Janice Morgan is also certified, and volunteers on Thursday evenings.

The Bienestar sites rotate – so one week they are at Sunset Gardens in Hillsboro, and the next week they are at Jose Arciga in Forest Grove. For a complete schedule or to make an appointment, call Gracie Garcia at 503.693.2937,x101. The sites work by appointment only.

In just a few weeks, the Bienestar team has already helped 59 people with their tax returns and ITIN numbers. A final outcome report will be available after April 15th. We are learning that many of the people who come to us have been victims of tax preparation predators in the past and have gotten bad advice and paid high fees. We are very grateful to United Way for making this program possible, and for helping us to help people access their tax refunds at a time when they are very badly needed.