

## **More than Books**

### **Free help with tax preparation – not just for seniors!**

Have we got a deal for you! The Freeport Library and the Senior Resource Center are getting together to offer free basic tax assistance to all low to moderate income taxpayers in the area. That means anyone, not just seniors, whose income is less than \$57,000.

Thanks to the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, trained volunteers will be on hand, at the library, every Monday, 4 to 8 p.m., now through March 27, in the library's new, private second-floor Learning Lab, to guide people every step of the way in filling out either or both federal and state tax returns on line.

This is self-service in that you fill in your own information, but you have an IRS trained guide to get you through the filing process, step by step. Here's what you need to bring:

- W2s, 1099s and/or other income forms, such as bank interest
- Real Estate tax bill, if applicable
- Childcare provider name, address, and tax ID, if applicable
- Bank routing and account number (i.e., a blank check for direct deposit or payment)

Since you'll be filing electronically, you also need to have an email address for receiving information on your return. Not to worry if you don't have email yet! The trainer or a library staff member can help you set one up.

It doesn't say so, but, if I were you, I'd also bring along last year's tax return. Couldn't hurt.

This is not a drop-in service, however. You need an appointment for scheduling purposes. Call the library at 815-233-3000 and ask for the second floor information desk, or just say you're calling for the free tax assistance program.

Here's a brag for the Senior Resource Center. The Center has been offering free tax assistance for seniors for more than 25 years. The library is proud and lucky to be their new partner for this new service. It's free, it's fast, it's safe, and it's confidential. Filing is done electronically at the library, and refunds are then direct-deposited into your bank account in about seven to 14 days.

For additional information, call the library (815-233-3000) and ask to speak with Adult Services Supervisor Extraordinaire Pat Vorwald.

### **Food for Fines Drive Exceeds Expectations**

In several recent "More than Books" columns, I asked library users – and abusers –to "Have a Heart" during February's month-long Food for Fines Drive. For every can of food or non-

perishable food item brought in during the month of February, the library promised to “forgive” up to \$1 in fines.

In 2006, 220 pounds of food was collected for distribution between the Salvation Army and Freeport Area Church Cooperative (FACC). In 2007, Salvation Army volunteers collected and weighted a record 1,075 pounds of donated food. The 2008 total was 996 pounds, and in 2009 we were back over the 1,000 pound mark with 1,005 pounds. For a librarian, I’m a really lousy record keeper, so darned if I can recover what we did last year.

Enough with the history: this year’s drive brought in an incredible 1,652 pounds of food for the needy.

How do I know this? My friend Nickee Bender at the Salvation Army began humoring me in 2006 by weighing the food so I can keep a record of how we’ve doing with the drive. I appreciate the drivers' extra trouble, because that means they have to first weigh an empty truck and then weigh it again after picking up the barrels of donated food.

The drive is always promoted through bookmarks distributed by library’s Circulation Department staff, on the radio, in the newspaper, and at City Council meetings. Additionally, individual staff members remind groups and organizations of the opportunity to do a good deed, independent of whether a library fine is at issue. We always tell people they don’t have to have a fine to bring in food! To all this year’s donors, warmest thanks from the library, FACC, and the Salvation Army for the generous response.