

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Contact: Michelle Tarnelli  
315.733.4691 x225  
michelle.tarnelli@unitedwaygu.org

## **UNITED WAY AND RCIL INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP BRINGS OVER \$2.6 MILLION IN EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT TO MOHAWK VALLEY**

***Over 27% Increase from 2008 Drives Dollars Back to our Community***

**Utica, NY (May 11, 2009)** — The Resource Center for Independent Living's (RCIL) Mohawk Valley Asset-Building Coalition, in partnership with United Way of the Valley & Greater Utica Area, has brought over \$2.6 million into the Mohawk Valley community through Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) refunds and waived preparation fees.

"This is an outstanding accomplishment for RCIL's Mohawk Valley Asset-Building Coalition program and this entire community," says Phil Hayne, Executive Director of United Way. "We believe that it is important to focus on strategies to help families become more financially stable, build assets and strengthen their families and this EITC program has many benefits to everyone in the Mohawk Valley."

Research shows that each year, at least \$7 million go unclaimed in EITC dollars in our area. According to the Mohawk Valley Asset-Building Coalition records, the EITC program brought \$2,662,009 of this into both Oneida & Herkimer Counties - \$2,391,981 returned via tax refunds and \$270,028 saved in tax preparation fees.

"Many families in the Mohawk Valley are faced with daily financial struggles, especially in the state of today's economy," says Danell Libby, Project Coordinator of the EITC program. "These hard-working families are often one paycheck away from a financial crisis, with little savings or few financial assets. This program continues to build awareness of EITC, public benefits, financial literacy services and asset development opportunities."

Over 100 extremely dedicated volunteers committed over 2,000 hours to support the EITC program in the 2008-2009 tax season. Individuals with household income less than \$42,000 per year are eligible to receive the EITC program services and this year, the Mohawk Valley Asset-Building Coalition served over 1,444 individuals and families.

"The EITC program is just one element of the Mohawk Valley Asset-Building Coalition and we were fortunate enough to be able to extend our efforts in Herkimer County this year," says Hayne. "The Coalition is able to help these individuals with their annual taxes but are working even harder to educate these individuals from needing some of their services in the first place."

- more -

EITC program participants are also invited to join a variety of financial literacy classes, hosted in various locations throughout Oneida County by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County. Class topics include, but are not limited to, banking basics, credit and credit reports, creating spending plans, credit card basics, scams and identity theft. If your group or organization would like to schedule a class, please contact Mary Beth McEwen at 315.736.3394 x106.

In 2008, the EITC program brought \$1,987,801 into the Mohawk Valley - \$1,747,923 returned via tax refunds and \$239,878 saved in tax preparation fees.

The Mohawk Valley Asset-Building Coalition is developed in partnership with the Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL), Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County, the Internal Revenue Services and with financial support from the United Way of the Valley & Greater Utica Area.

The Coalition Members include Bonnie S. Collins Accounting Services; Catholic Charities; Cornell Cooperative Extension; First Source Federal Credit Union; Food Bank of Central New York; GPO Federal Credit Union; Hamilton College; Human Technologies Corporation; Internal Revenue Service; Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency; Mohawk Valley Community College; Mohawk Valley Latino Association; Mohawk Valley Perinatal Network; Primerica; SUNYIT; Utica Safe Schools; Workforce Development Institute; and Working Solutions.

Both certified and non-certified volunteers are welcome to participate. For volunteer opportunities or further information, contact Danell Libby at 315.797.4642 x1888 or [dlibby@rcil.com](mailto:dlibby@rcil.com).

#### **About the Mohawk Valley Asset-Building Coalition**

The Mohawk Valley Asset-Building Coalition's mission is to increase awareness and utilization of the EITC; to increase the availability and accessibility of free tax preparation assistance and e-filing opportunities through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites; and to link EITC participants to information, education and services to improve financial literacy and management skills designed to build long-term financial security.

#### **About the Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL)**

RCIL is a community-based nonprofit agency offering a wide range of independent living and advocacy services for and – more importantly – with people with disabilities. The underlying assumption is that there should be “no limits” placed in people, regardless of disability. For more information, visit [www.rcil.com](http://www.rcil.com) or call 315.797.4642.

#### **About United Way**

United Way of the Valley & the Greater Utica Area is a local, independent non-profit organization funding area programs and services that address the most crucial local community issues. United Way's strength is its ability to improve lives by mobilizing its partners to create positive, sustained change in community conditions and to focus on results. For more information, visit [www.unitedwaygu.org](http://www.unitedwaygu.org) or call 315.733.4691.