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For Immediate Release

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Event to celebrate free tax prep site for low-income families

Sacramento Mutual Housing Association (SMHA) is doing its part to help distribute the estimated \$20-25 million that goes unclaimed locally through the federal Earned Income Tax Credit program each year.

On Thursday, January 20, SMHA and the IRS are teaming up to celebrate the opening of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program site at Victory Townhomes in north Sacramento.

The site is a recent addition to the mix of programs offered through SMHA's collaborative economic development effort, the Valley Initiative for Developing Assets (VIDA).

"For over five years VIDA has been helping low-resource families in Sacramento develop assets through education and savings programs," VIDA Coordinator Amy Goldwitz said. "The addition of VITA to our menu gives potential savers a great new way to get started on the path to creating long-term financial security for themselves and their families."

Bob Meyer of the IRS said that eligible Sacramentans (those earning at or below approximately \$36,000, depending on family size) claimed approximately \$135 million through the EITC last tax season. Several million of this total was distributed through VITA sites, mainly through the Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance. Still, as noted above, a lot of money remains on the table each year.

Despite the success of VITA sites, many eligible families do not know about the free preparation program, where IRS-certified volunteers can e-file returns for quick receipt. In recent years the IRS has been reaching out to nonprofit organizations such as SMHA, which have strong relationships with large groups of eligible tax filers, in an effort to increase the reach of VITA.

WHEN: Thursday, January 20, 6-8 p.m.

WHERE: Victory Townhomes Community Center, 1075 Dixieanne Ave., Sacramento

VIDA is a collaboration of SMHA, Mercy Housing California and the Sacramento Valley Organizing Community. VIDA has graduated over 300 families from its financial education programs. Nearly 100 of these families have used their own savings plus

program match dollars (up to 3:1 for savings of up to \$1,000) to purchase and/or renovate homes, create or develop small businesses, or cover the costs of post-secondary education, and many more are currently saving toward the same goals.

Event speakers will discuss program benefits, and refreshments will be served thanks to the generous sponsorship of River City Bank. Members of the media are encouraged to contact us about coverage.

Key VIDA sponsor/partners include California Bank & Trust, Union Bank of California, Wells Fargo Bank and Home Mortgage Foundation, River City Bank, US Bank, SAFE Credit Union, Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco, Opening Doors, Inc., U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, Allstate Foundation, American Express Foundation, the Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance, the Great Valley Center and the Foundation for Financial Literacy.

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