Life. Captured daily.
The Sacramento Bee
sacbee.com

Sacramento agency offers taxpayer help in many languages

By Claudia Buck
Thursday, Feb. 18, 2010

Taxpayers who speak Ukranian, Russian or Cambodian can get help in their native language through new services offered by the Sacramento Mutual Housing Association.

The Ukranian-language tax help is believed to be the first in the region. It's part of Internal Revenue Service and state Franchise Tax Board efforts to offer free tax help to moderate-income taxpayers – those earning up to $49,000 a year – at dozens of local Volunteer Income Tax Assistance centers.

Iryna Kline, a housing association community organizer, said the agency's surveys showed that many Ukranian and Russian-speaking taxpayers were spending $40 to $60 for simple tax returns when they qualified for free tax help.

"A lot of people don't understand how the tax forms and tax credits work, so I can explain it in their language," she said.

Altogether, a dozen or so foreign languages are offered at VITA locations in the Sacramento area, including Armenian, Cantonese, Farsi, Hindi, Hmong, Laotian, Mien, Spanish, Russian, Tagalog, Vietnamese and Ukranian. Dozens of VITA sites are scattered throughout the region, including at libraries, senior centers, and state and local agencies.

Hours and schedules vary by location through April 15. For instance, the housing association's new Ukranian services are scheduled at its Foothill Plaza complex, 5324 Hemlock St., as follows:

Mondays, 1:30 to 4 p.m. (Russian, Ukranian and English); Wednesdays, 1:30 to 4 p.m. (Russian, Ukranian and English); Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. (Cambodian, Russian, Ukranian and English). An appointment is required by calling (916) 541-3665.

To locate a free tax help center by city or ZIP code, go to: www.ftb.ca.gov (Search under "VITA"), or call the tax board's help line at (800) 852-5711.

SACRAMENTO SMHA MUTUAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION
Transforming Lives...Building Community

Sacramento Mutual Housing Association develops housing that is affordable to a diversity of households. Our housing builds strong and stable communities through resident participation and leadership development.

For more information, call (916) 453-8400 or visit our website at mutualhousing.com.