



Media Contact:

Kim T. Wall, Community Relations

Georgia United Credit Union

770-476-6409 - kim.wall@georgiaunitedcu.org

UGA College of Family & Consumer Sciences Partners with IRS & Georgia United Credit Union to Provide Volunteer Income Tax Assistance for Athens-Clarke County Community



University of Georgia students and VITA volunteers for the 2014 tax season gather for a photo in front of Dawson Hall, following finals on May 2 (front left) with Georgia United CU volunteers Tom Cochran, Bill Bland, Paul Annis and College of Family & Consumer Sciences Associate Professor Dr. Lance Palmer.

ATHENS, GA (May 2, 2014) Fifty students from the University of Georgia's College of Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) and J.M. Tull School of Accounting in Terry School of Business partnered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and Georgia United Credit Union to provide free tax preparation services for 779 individuals this tax season. This is the 8th year of this partnership that gives "real life" work experience for UGA students who are majoring in Financial Planning (College of Family and Consumer Sciences) and Accounting (Terry College of Business). Students who enroll in this service-learning course and participate in the VITA program earn academic credit for their effort.

The IRS trains UGA students as tax preparers and Georgia United Credit Union provides the office space and funding – and local consumers benefit by having their taxes prepared and filed electronically at no charge!

Dr. Lance Palmer, Associate Professor in the College of Family and Consumer Sciences, helped develop this program for UGA as a service learning course with recently retired Department Head Dr. Anne Sweaney, after they were contacted by UGA retiree Tom Cochran who was affiliated with Georgia United Credit Union. From there, the VITA partnership was launched and has grown every year.

Georgia United Board Member and VITA Volunteer Tom Cochran of Watkinsville shared the following information, **“This year, we assisted 779 individuals and were able to successfully submit 724 returns electronically resulting in federal refunds totaling \$1,005,925 and state refunds totaling \$189,373.** Our total numbers were down this year due to closures related to the inclement weather experienced early in the filing season. We had to cancel five tax assistance sessions representing in excess of 100 appointments being unavailable to serve our clients.”

The VITA program extended free tax return assistance to individuals and families with low to moderate income (who do not have depreciable property, business losses or extensive stock or asset transactions.) This year’s VITA site was located at Georgia United Credit Union’s 190 Gaines School Road branch. Sessions were available on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings, beginning January 28 through April 10, and on Saturdays, February 1 through April 12. Appointments were booked online via the Georgia United website.

About Georgia United Credit Union

Georgia United Credit Union is ranked as one of the top credit unions in Georgia in both size and safety at \$990 million in assets, 128,000 members and 16 branches, including two in Athens. Georgia United seeks to make members’ lives easier by offering products, services and education to help members meet their needs and achieve their goals.

Georgia United serves the faculty, staff, students and alumni of the University of Georgia, residents of Athens-Clarke County, and employees and family members of over 500 select employee companies including all State of Georgia employees. Additional information may be found at www.georgiaunitedcu.org.

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