

Making Tax Time Easy: Beacon Community Services Volunteers

Comedian Dave Barry once called tax season “the time to gather up those receipts, sharpen up that pencil, and stab yourself in the aorta” Fortunately, a local group of caring volunteers can take away income tax pain and anxiety – for free. Beacon Community Services’ Community Volunteer Income Tax program offers free tax preparation and filing for those with low income (individuals earning no more than \$30,000/year, less than \$40,000 for couples).

Files must not involve investments or self-employment income, but the confidential service is open to clients of any age or background.

“Some who come in are very anxious. Maybe they’re nine or 10 years behind on

their taxes. And the volunteers just take it away and get everything settled down,” says Deb Greenaway, Beacon Community Services’ Volunteer Services Coordinator.

All 15 Beacon tax volunteers are trained by Revenue Canada. Many have also opted for additional training to assist those who may have specialized tax needs. Some have professional backgrounds in accounting or bookkeeping, and all are keen to help people. One volunteer spends hours dealing with others’ taxes because

“We can often identify credits and rebates that are available only to tax filers, so filing might actually mean more money in your pocket.”

it “brings the satisfaction of being the connection between a need and a solution.”

Another considers it “A privilege. “It’s particularly rewarding to help those who qualify by ensuring they receive the disability tax credit to lower their taxable

income,” he adds, after 15+ years volunteering with Beacon’s program.

“It’s important to file even if you’ve earned nothing during the year,” counsels another. “We can often identify credits and rebates that are available only to tax filers: so filing might actually mean more

money in your pocket.”

The program served 860 people last year, each with a unique story. One yearly client, who was first referred by the Lions Food Bank, calls the program a godsend. “When I received some pension from the U.K., Beacon volunteers took the time to explain the impact it would have on benefits I was receiving at the time,” explains the senior. “And now I know that when I fill out my paperwork with the volunteer, I never have to worry. When I’m anxious, they’re always able to explain things in a way that I can understand. They’re very caring and professional.”

They’re usually also quick. Clients meet with the volunteer (typically for 10 or 15 minutes), leave their information, and get a call within seven days to say their return has been e-filed.

... No hair pulling or aorta stabbing required!

From March to April, Beacon’s Volunteer Income Tax program is “drop-in” at SHOAL Centre: Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. The rest of the year, service is Wednesday afternoons, by appointment.

Visit www.beaconcs.ca for more information. ✨



Celebrating a Special Event in 2017? Now is the Time to Stock Your Cellar!

INVEST IN YOUR WINE-DRINKING FUTURE.

DON'T FORGET YOUR:

- R easonably P riced
- R ed or W hite
- S ipping
- P leasure

Easy Process | Affordable | Barrel Aged On Site

PENINSULA WINERY EST. 1988
BREW

2031 Malaview Avenue West, Sidney 250.655.7121

www.peninsulaubrewwinery.com