

Tax aide volunteers trained and ready to file for you

BY LOIS BELL

SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER

SHERIDAN — As if filing your annual tax refund isn't a chore in itself, there are still the requirements about filing around the Affordable Care Act that can make filing more arduous.

Volunteer Bonnie Zowada shares the value of the program's service especially for those reporting participation in the Affordable Care Act. The Act has five forms to select from to file depending on one's situation.

"The Affordable Care Act is very confusing especially if you were covered only part of the year. It would be very confusing for John Q. Public," Zowada said. "It's new and hard."

One example of where someone had medical coverage under the ACA for part of the year could be if they qualified and switched to Medicare at age 65.

Where can you go for assistance with your filing?

The AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program is again partnering with the Senior Center to provide free tax filing assistance for local residents. The AARP Foundation has been offering free tax filing assistance nationally since 1968. Volunteer training is required every year to stay current with tax law.

"It's become more difficult to file than in the past," said Janet Dill, the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide area program coordinator.

"We have some wonderful people volunteering this year: a nice mix of experienced and new volunteers," Dill said.



Bonnie Zowada, left, reviews the schedule for tax filing appointments with hostess Jeannie Eman. Both ladies are volunteering with the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program that offers free tax filing assistance to the community.

COURTESY PHOTO | LOIS BELL

"I like helping people and feeling like I'm using my brain," Dill said. "And I love the Senior Center."

New to the team this year, Zowada brings a Bachelor of Science in accounting from the University of Wyoming and 10 years working in a CPA firm. She gives a thumb up to the training the volunteers receive.

"I think it's very good," said Zowada. "My co-workers are good in supporting me. They are very thorough. Everything is reviewed. We met as a group several times to go over the certifications."

A new twist to the annual tax refund filing process is that the Internal Revenue Service is encouraging everyone to file even if they don't qualify to do so and haven't had to do so for years. Why? Once you have filed under your social security number, you have protected yourself from someone else filing for a fraudulent refund under your identity.

Simple filings take about 15 minutes but some appointments may take longer. Individuals need to

bring last year's return, all pertinent paperwork for income, their social security card, and picture identification.

"If you didn't qualify to file last year or in past years, you can still file without last year's return," Dill said.

Returns are electronically filed through the AARP Foundation volunteers through an encrypted system.

The AARP program can process income tax returns except for rental property with depreciation or expenses attached. They also do not process farms or ranch filings or businesses with inventory. To make an appointment, call the Sheridan Senior Center at 672-2240. Appointments are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays through April 14.

The IRS has extended the federal tax deadline to Monday, April 18, to accommodate the Washington, D.C., Emancipation Day holiday on April 15 where government services will be closed.

What do people think of this free tax filing service? "People are very appreciative," said Dill.

Volunteers were required to be trained and certified before they can hang their shingle as an AARP Foundation tax aide volunteer. Each tax aide volunteer attended the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance training at Sheridan College.

"In addition to that," Dill said, "the Affordable Care Act required additional training."

Volunteers utilize IRS and AARP workbooks to bolster classroom teaching. As a coordinator, Dill began additional training last fall in Casper along with co-coordinator, Dave McClintock. Sheridan-based McClintock also serves as the state coordinator for the program.

Then, there's certification for all volunteer tax preparers. Volunteers take certification testing in its entirety online, submit it, and get immediate feedback if they passed. If they don't pass, they can't assist through the AARP program.

This is Dill's 10th year with the AARP Foundation Tax Aide program. Why does she volunteer?

Need help?

Want to file your own tax return and can't get to town? If you are computer savvy, you can go to www.irs.gov for the forms you need.

If you prefer hard copies of the tax return forms, there are copies of the 1040 forms

and guide books at the Sheridan Post Office, 101 E. Loucks St. Check with your local post office if they have tax forms. If forms at your local post office are not available, the Fulmer Library has hard copies of the 1040 forms at no charge. If you want an IRS reference booklet, the library can print instruc-

tions off the IRS website for you at 10 cents per page. Ask for these at the information desk.

Clearmont, Story and Tongue River libraries do not have hard copies but they can print forms and booklets for 10 cents per page.

SENIOR CENTER HAPPENINGS

• **'Conversations in History' with Helen Laumann.** March 9, 10 a.m., Sheridan Senior Center, 211 Smith St. March conversation: "The History of Clearmont and the Clear Creek Valley." No need to sign up in advance. Just

come in, grab a beverage in the dining room and join the conversation! Ask for the room at the front desk.

• **Introduction to One Stroke Painting and Mosaic Class** with instructors Gail Savoy and Tena Twite, Wed., March 9, 1-3 p.m. and March 16 - April 13, Sheridan Senior Center Art Studio. The intro class

is \$5 per person on March 9. Pay the instructor. Fees apply to the course beginning March 16. Call the Senior Center at 672-2240 for details.

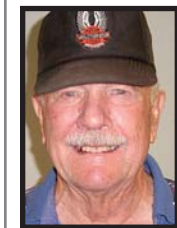
• **Photo Journey with Darren Rogers,** Mountain Climber, March 10, 12:45 p.m. Raised in Wyoming, Rogers has climbed mountains in Wyoming,

Colorado, Bolivia, Ecuador, Tibet and most recently was on Mount Everest at Camp 1 when a 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit. See the pictures and hear the story of adventure prior, during and after the earthquake that killed 21 people in Base camp and over 9,000 in the country of Nepal.

CENTER STAGE

WWII and the troop trains

During World War II a common practice was to move large numbers of men by rail. The steam engines that pulled the troop trains took on coal and water in my hometown. For some unknown reason, the whole town knew when a troop train would be arriving.



BOB HUFF

The high school band would be there playing modern and patriotic music. We grade-schoolers were organized to sing songs for the troops. The arrival of the troop train was a good excuse to celebrate.

The town women baked cookies and cinnamon rolls for the soldiers on the train. We all assembled close to the railroad

tracks to welcome the troops.

One of the local bars was only a half of a block away from the railroad tracks. The owner did a land office business when a troop train arrived. It seemed that the soldiers had a powerful thirst for what the saloon had to offer. The soldiers had money and they spent it.

My friends and me always liked to see when a troop train would come to town. The Army guys were generally generous with their money. They generally shared their money with me and my friends without doing anything for the money. Another plus when a troop train was in town, school was dismissed.

Several high school girls became pen pals with the GIs that were riding the troop trains. In one case a soldier in the Army

married a local girl. They eventually made their home where she lived after he was discharged from the Army.

When I joined the Navy in 1951 railroad transportation still exceeded air transportation. We left Sheridan, Wyoming, by rail and travelled all the way to Helena, Montana; Salt Lake City, Utah; Las Vegas, Nevada; and finally San Diego, California. When we left Sheridan, the Navy mothers gave us a package of goodies. Many other recruits travelled to San Diego by rail too.

More than 200 of us wound up in Los Angeles heading for the U.S. Navy and San Diego. It was the height of the Korean War and there were a lot of enlistees. The ladies treated us recruits to coffee and doughnuts while in Los Angeles.

Most of the seats on the train between Los Angeles and San Diego were occupied by soon to be U.S. sailors. You might say we were on a troop train made up of U.S. Navy recruits. The Korean War lasted two more years.

After arriving in San Diego on the troop train, the fun and games ended. We were organized into 80-man companies and taught the Navy way of doing things. Prior to joining the Navy, I always thought that there was a right way and a wrong way of doing things. I soon learned there was a third way of doing things, the Navy way. You needed to learn the Navy way or you would not enjoy your four-year enlistment.

BOB HUFF grew up in Upton, Wyoming. He is a driver for the mini-bus managed by the Senior Center. Center Stage is written by friends of the Senior Center for the Sheridan Community. It is a collection of insights and stories related to living well at every age.



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Fri - Fish Florentine		Beef Noodle Soup
Sat - Pork Chop Supreme		
*Home Delivered Meals		
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