



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**February 3, 2018**

**Contact:**

Kate Hermann Stone

[kherrmannstone@goladderup.org](mailto:kherrmannstone@goladderup.org)

cell: (773) 606-6326

**Ladder Up Launches Tax-A-Thon During Busiest Month of Tax Season**

*Ladder Up begins its Tax-A-Thon campaign at a day-long event at Olive-Harvey College*

Chicago - Each year, Ladder Up's IRS-certified volunteers help thousands of taxpayers secure critical tax credits and refunds by helping Chicagoans with low incomes prepare their tax return.

February is the busiest month of Ladder Up's tax season. On Saturday, February 3, Ladder Up will host a day-long tax session to kick off its second annual Tax-A-Thon, a campaign to encourage more volunteers to invest their time when it can have the most significant impact. February is historically the busiest month for tax preparation, because clients have all the documentation they need and want to get their refunds as quickly as possible. Clients that Ladder Up is unable to serve often turn to paid preparers to complete their return; spending hundreds of dollars on services that we can provide free of charge.

"Making sure that every volunteer slot is filled helps us avoid turning clients away," said Anna Phelan, Ladder Up's Volunteer Program Manager. "Volunteering is a great way to sharpen your professional skills and give back to the community."

In addition to providing free tax preparation to individuals with incomes less than \$30,000 and couples or families with incomes under \$55,000, the event will include prizes, refreshments, a kids' activity table, and more! Clients can find more information about eligibility and what to bring at [www.goladderup.org](http://www.goladderup.org). Clients will also have the opportunity to connect with Ladder Up's Save Up program to discuss asset building resources, the local IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service, and representatives from John Marshall Law School's Fair Housing Clinic.

The event will be held at Olive-Harvey College, 10001 S. Woodlawn from 9:00 am to 3:00pm. All client services are first-come, first-served.

Families who are unable to attend the Tax-A-Thon kickoff event can have their tax return prepared free of charge at one of Ladder Up's 16 tax sites, located in Chicago, and five surrounding suburbs through the filing deadline of Tuesday, April 17, 2018. Site hours and locations are available at <https://www.goladderup.org/locations>.

Throughout the tax season Ladder Up aims to increase the number of families receiving free tax help, as well as raise awareness of critical tax credits, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which can

total more than \$6,200 per return. Unfortunately, one out of five people who qualify for the EITC does not claim it and in Illinois, 55 percent of taxpayers who do claim the EITC file their taxes through a paid preparer, which can cost more than \$150 per return.

“Our goal is to ensure that clients get to keep as much of their own money as possible by helping them secure all of the credits and refunds that they are due, so they can pay their bills and save for the future,” said Jennifer Lambert, Ladder Up’s Tax Assistance Program Manager. “Some paid preparers may offer cash advances for a fee, but nobody can speed up your refund, so we want eligible taxpayers to know that they can save on fees and get the same great service by coming to our sites.”

Last year, with the support of its volunteers and partners, Ladder Up prepared 11,020 tax returns during the tax season, securing more than \$17.3 million in refunds for clients.

###

Ladder Up provides hardworking people with the financial resources and opportunities they need to move up the economic ladder.

Ladder Up provides free financial programs to help clients secure the tax refunds they deserve, gain the knowledge to navigate today’s complex financial systems, and obtain financial aid to make college dreams a reality.