



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Eligible Long Islanders to Receive Free Tax Filing Assistance Through Bethpage's
9th Annual Volunteer Income Assistance (VITA) Program –
the Largest VITA Program on Long Island**

Taxpayers to also Receive Important Details on How to Claim \$7K Earned Income Tax Credit

Bethpage, NY – January 27, 2012 – For the ninth year, Bethpage Federal Credit Union, Long Island's largest community financial institution, will help low- to moderate-income households on Long Island prepare their tax returns for free, by offering the government's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program at 12 of its branch locations.

Beginning February 1, 2012 through April 11, 2012, 150 IRS certified volunteers, including bilingual tax assistants, will be available to meet with eligible taxpayers with 2011 incomes of \$49,000 and below. One need not be a Bethpage member to qualify. VITA services will be available on Wednesday evenings and Saturday afternoons in Bethpage's Freeport, Hempstead, Massapequa, Elmont, Westbury, Roosevelt, Bay Shore, Farmingdale, Central Islip, Patchogue, West Babylon and Riverhead branches. For specific times and branch addresses, go to www.lovebethpage.com or call #1-800-628-7070.

Bethpage has also partnered with the Health and Welfare Council of Long Island to help educate eligible taxpayers about the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which each year goes unclaimed for thousands, and could bring an additional \$7,476 into the hands of deserving Long Island families. VITA volunteers will work with taxpayers to ensure that eligible families know how to claim their Earned Income Tax Credit. Currently, according to the IRS, 20% of Long Islanders are eligible to receive the EITC because of unemployment and declining wages.

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Notes Bethpage Senior Vice President of Corporate Strategy Linda Armyrn, "Both VITA and EITC are vital government programs that can help working-class families here on Long Island receive deserving refunds and credits, and ultimately provide a financial boost to the Long Island economy. Bethpage has increased its participating VITA branches to 12 this year and has doubled its number of tax assistors in recent years to 150."

"One of government's most effective anti-poverty programs, the Earned Income Tax Credit is only effective when workers are made aware of their eligibility," said Gwen O'Shea, President and CEO, Health and Welfare Council of Long Island. "That is why we are thankful to local partners like Bethpage for being such a vital partner in the VITA program, which last year, successfully brought over \$400,000 in EITC refunds to Long Islanders."

Bethpage coordinates the largest VITA program on Long Island and last year, was honored by the IRS' Commissioner of Wages and Investments, Rick Byrd, with the "Dedication, Commitment & Service to American Taxpayers" award. In 2011, Bethpage completed 1,295 VITA tax returns, and IRS total refunds of nearly \$1.8 million (up from 1100 returns in 2010).

Under the guidelines of the VITA program, Bethpage coordinates the services of its volunteers, who are trained by the Internet Revenue Service (IRS), to electronically prepare all specific forms including, among others, 1040EZ, 1040A, and 1040. Bethpage is also an e-file site where taxpayers can file their income tax returns electronically. E-filers will receive refunds twice as quickly as those using paper returns in as little as 10 business days when they choose Direct Deposit. Taxpayers who do not have a direct deposit account and wish to receive payment in this format can open a Bethpage account when filing their tax returns.

Enacted by Congress in 1975, the EITC is a Federal income tax credit for workers who don't earn a high income and meet certain eligibility requirements. Taxpayers who qualify and claim the credit could pay less Federal tax, pay no tax or possibly get a tax refund. It is estimated that up to 20 percent of Long Island families are eligible to receive refunds thanks to EITC. Long Island's Earned Income Tax Credit Coalition, which was developed by the Health & Welfare Council of Long Island, was initiated to create awareness for VITA and EITC.

Qualifying taxpayers planning to take advantage of Bethpage's VITA program need to bring the following materials with them for review: 2011 tax package of wage and earnings statements (Form W-2), all interest and dividend statements (Form 1099-INT), all other income and expense information, a copy of last year's Federal and State returns if available, bank routing and account numbers for Direct Deposit, total paid for day care and provider's tax ID, social security cards for you, your spouse and dependents and as well as photo identification. To file taxes electronically on a married filing joint tax return, both spouses must be present. For more information on VITA and paperwork needed, please visit Bethpage's "Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program" page located under the Heart of Bethpage section at www.lovebethpage.com or call 1-800-628-7070.

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Bethpage will also make mobile VITA assistance available to the employees of its Long Island partner organizations including Clearvision, Local 1102, ACLD, Luitpold Pharmaceuticals, Via Tech, The Nanz Co., Huntington Hospital and Newsday.

Bethpage Federal Credit Union is a not-for-profit financial cooperative, existing solely to serve its members and has experienced rapid growth in recent years to become a strong alternative to banks. Bethpage was approved for the largest federal community charter in the U.S. in 2003 and now is Long Island's largest credit union and leading community financial institution with over 196,000 members, 26 branches and 60 shared service center locations throughout Nassau and Suffolk Counties. As a financial cooperative, Bethpage offers better rates, lower fees and a full menu of personal and commercial financial services.

Bethpage maintains branch locations in Bay Shore, Bay Shore King Kullen, Bethpage, Central Islip, Commack King Kullen, Elmont, Farmingdale, Freeport, Glen Cove, Hempstead, Huntington, Levittown King Kullen, Lynbrook, Massapequa, Melville, Mineola, North Babylon, Patchogue, Port Jefferson, Riverhead, Seaford, Smithtown, Roosevelt, West Babylon and Westbury with over 350 surcharge-free ATMs in King Kullen, 7-Eleven, Walgreens and Costco locations throughout Long Island. For more information, call 1-800-628-7070 or visit www.lovebethpage.com.

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