



Volunteer Tax Clinics Winnebago Indian Reservation

The Situation –

- Low income taxpayers are entitled to an earned income credit (a refundable, negative income tax) of up to \$5,666
- Paid tax return preparers have provided short term loans and prepaid debit cards using the refunds as collateral
- Some of these loans result in interest rates over 100%
- The Winnebago, NE community was especially vulnerable to these exorbitant loans

The Response –

- Creighton accounting and law students, and alumni from accounting and law, decided to sponsor a tax preparation clinic in Winnebago, NE
- The IRS has a program called VITA – Volunteer Income Tax Assistance – that coordinates free tax return preparation for low income taxpayers
- A partnership was created with the IRS, Ho-Chunk, Inc. (a for-profit corporation affiliated with the Winnebago Nation), and St. Augustine Indian Mission
- Creighton partners included the Department of Accounting, Beta Alpha Psi, and the Business Law Society
- Students in Accounting 343, Federal Income Tax, are required to participate in VITA as a course service learning component
- Volunteers need to pass several examinations and undergo training



Volunteers assisting clients with tax returns in Winnebago

Cultural Interaction and the Clinics –

- Clinics were held in 2010, 2011, and are scheduled for 2012
- Students interacted with members of the Winnebago Nation in cultural exchanges the night before the clinics, sharing a traditional meal, hearing stories about the Winnebago People, and dancing together with the Kateri Drum and Dancers group
- In 2010, 25 volunteers served over 40 clients by preparing returns with refunds exceeding \$150,000
- In 2011, over 75 clients were served by over 30 volunteers and refunds exceeding \$250,000 were generated

Ignatian Elements –

- Low income clients receive a valuable service at no cost
- Volunteers share their talents with low income people
- Students are required to prepare a reflection paper
- Participants learn more about another culture

The Spirit of Creighton –

- Collaboration across academic units and with community groups
- Reinforcing resilience in attitude in the low-income clients served
- Generous sharing of professional knowledge for the betterment of society
- Healing the wounds of economic challenges



Kateri Drummers and Dancers leading members of the Winnebago community and volunteers in traditional Winnebago dances.

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Sponsored by the Creighton University Jesuit Community, in association with the Degelman Center for Ignatian Spirituality.