



Northwest Iowa  
Community College

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Northwest Iowa Community College students file a Record 185 Tax Returns for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program**

For the 7<sup>th</sup> year in a row Northwest Iowa Community College's Accounting program students and the Administrative Secretarial program students worked with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site. The students worked together to provide free income tax filing assistance for basic tax returns for people with low and limited income, individuals with disabilities, non-English speaking, and elderly taxpayers. Low and limited income is defined by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as \$49,000 per household. This year this collaborative effort has set yet another record—NCC's VITA Site filed a total of 185 returns.

The Administrative Secretarial program students checked the voice mail system for telephone messages on a daily basis and then followed up with the caller(s) to schedule the individual tax appointments. Personalized confirmation letters were also prepared and sent. This was to make sure the Accounting students had clear appointments in order to make sure everyone was kept busy and no one was double booked. The Accounting programs students met with the clients, prepared/processed the actual income tax return forms for the clients, and electronically filed their federal and state income taxes.

The Administrative Secretarial students commented, "The VITA site project has been a rewarding opportunity not only to obtain insight into what is expected in our future work responsibilities, but also to experience the satisfaction of helping others. The challenging and fast-paced atmosphere of the project has helped us to learn what will be required of us as administrative professionals."

Jessica Aguirre, Accounting program student, stated, "Working at the VITA site gives you the actual experience and the hands-on knowledge so you know what an accountant does. It prepares you for your job after you graduate."

Janice Sage, Paullina, said "I came in today to get help with my taxes. I think this is a great service to the community that NCC students are providing. They are able to learn and help people who can't afford to get it done any other way. I really appreciate it."

Sue Behrens, NCC Accounting Instructor, stated, "It is a great service and learning project for our students. Not only are they gaining valuable work experience we are also providing a great service to the community."

Added excitement this year was the visit of Mari Culver, Iowa's First Lady, on February 18. She held a public meeting and visited with about 40 people including Northwest Iowa Community College Accounting and Administrative Secretarial program students.

Culver stated, “VITA is a wonderful program. In these difficult economic times Iowans really need their tax refunds. Hopefully, with programs like VITA it will encourage more people to file their returns and put more money back into the pockets of Iowans. The fact that there are sixteen students working for the VITA program is phenomenal! It’s a very large number of people volunteering for a VITA site. It’s one of the largest numbers of volunteers I have seen in any city in Iowa, including the largest cities in the state. I have visited VITA sites from across the state and you can see the gratitude of the citizens of Iowa for this service!”

Culver continued, “College students can get so busy with their lives it’s great to see them get involved in their community.”

Boone commented, “We commend the students for their hard work. Needless to say, we are so proud of the outstanding teamwork that was demonstrated throughout these past three months. As IRS volunteers, each one of these students has contributed to making this a significant community service project, which ultimately benefits the citizens of Northwest Iowa. In addition, this team was honored to have been recognized by Iowa’s First Lady, Mari Culver, in February of this year.”

Front Row (Left to Right): Becky Dykstra and Rebecca Vande Kamp

Middle Row (Left to Right): Gerri Foreman, Janet Pickell, Jessica Aguirre, Katelyn Westra, Dana De Jong, and Stephanie Peterson

Back Row (Left to Right): Amanda Verdoorn, Kelly Cabanas, Michael Rohwer, Jamie Bohnenkamp, Katie Hofmeyer, Alisa Carlson, James Richters, and Laura Weatherford