

## Elder High will again host free tax prep site

By Kurt Backscheider

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People who work but don't earn a lot of money may be eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit, as well as some free help preparing their 2009 tax return.

For the fourth straight year, Elder High School's Tech-reach program is teaming up with several community organizations to help people get back every tax dime they deserve.

"We don't want people to pay to get their tax returns," said Sister Nancy Kinross, director of the Tech-reach program and member of the

collaborative organizing the free west-side tax preparation site at Elder.

"We have good people who are giving up their Saturdays to do this and taking all the time needed to learn the tax laws. It's a community initiative, that's the wonderful thing about this."

She said dozens of volunteers, many of whom are from the west side, have undergone six hours of training and passed a test to become certified by the Internal Revenue Service and prepare tax returns for those of low to moderate income.

The volunteers at the sessions help people with

the basic tax preparation. Returns are filed electronically via the Internet, and folks typically get their money back within seven to 10 days, she said.

Kinross said volunteers prepared taxes free of charge for 325 people last year, putting more than \$490,000 back into the pockets of those who used the service.

"This year our goal is to do the tax preparations for 400 taxpayers in the area," she said.

"We are opening two computer labs this year because we anticipate serving 400 people."

In addition to helping

people prepare their taxes, trained volunteers will also be available to offer financial planning advice to help people manage money and make wise financial decisions throughout the year.

"It's really a community of people who want to give back," Kinross said.

"Each volunteer is expected to give 12 hours of their time or more.

"We're proud to be a part of this," she said.

The free sessions take place in Elder's Schaeper Center, 4005 Glenway Ave., and the first day of preparations runs from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 30.

Sessions run most Satur-



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A local taxpayer has his taxes prepared by a trained volunteer using the Internal Revenue Service's TaxWise software in Elder High School's computer lab during one of the free tax preparation sessions Elder hosted last year.

days in February and March, and there is one session in April.

Those who want to learn if they qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit or want to make an appointment can call the International Welcome Center at 363-4693.