

# Free tax service benefits more than seniors

By Michaela Kennedy

Tax season is here, and with it comes free help for anyone who needs some hand-holding in preparing tax forms. The AARP Tax-Aide service for low- to moderate-income earners starts Feb. 11 at the library. The free program runs on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., until Monday, April 14.

"We start out concentrating on the seniors, but we don't turn away anyone," says Cliff Largess, volunteer district coordinator for the service. "Everyone helping in the program is a volunteer," Largess emphasizes.

In addition to the district coordinator who recruits and trains the tax counselors; technology, communications and local coordinators

make up the team that makes the tax service a success. Technology specialists implement automated systems for tax service and provide electronic filing. The communications coordinator helps recruit volunteers and publicizes the event. Local coordinators assist Largess in recruiting as well as training.

Largess, the original founder of the service on the island, notes that 50 sites are available in Rhode Island, with 100 volunteers statewide. "We're celebrating 45 years of the tax service this year, and 26 years of the service offered in Jamestown," he notes.

Largess remembers the senior center as the center of service activities for a few years, but prefers the central location of the library, where the help is now offered.

"Everyone was cold at the senior center. It was uncomfortable for those who volunteered and for those who came for help. The library is a much better location for everyone," he adds.

Largess was in the Navy when he, his wife and children moved into the big, white house on Shore-by Hill. When his tour at the War College ended, he was transferred to Washington, D.C. and his family stayed on the island for the next two years. Largess, however, faced another transfer to Rochester before finally retiring, so they moved together and rented the house in Jamestown.

Largess and his wife declared rental income when they filed their taxes, but the Internal Revenue Service challenged the claim. Largess

found himself in court over the matter. Through his own research he was able to win his defense, and learned a lot about taxes in the process. "I spent so much time poring through tax information that I thought I had something to offer the service when I saw the ad for volunteers," he recalls.

The tax service is sponsored by the IRS. "They ran into trouble some years back because the AARP is not allowed to receive money from the IRS," Largess said, referring to lobbying laws. The AARP then set up a foundation to receive the financial support.

Largess has been working with the IRS through the AARP Foundation ever since. "You can volunteer for anything, but this is the most rewarding thing you could

do," he comments. "We don't accept a dime for our work." Largess has admitted to accepting hugs and kisses from grateful clients of the program, nevertheless. His best reward is knowing that the service has helped people get returns they didn't know they could get, and without high fees from professional tax preparers.

For more information about the service, Largess invites people to stop by the Jamestown library while volunteers are there on Mondays and Wednesdays. He encourages those who come to bring along all tax documents, and a copy of last year's filed forms, if possible.

To learn more about the tax service and other volunteer programs offered for seniors, visit online at [www.aarp.org/volunteers](http://www.aarp.org/volunteers).

## Zoning

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and encouraged the board to approve the application. Munger said the building enhanced the downtown business district.

Nonetheless, Teitz argued for the Andres for nearly two hours, alleging that Hammet Court, the adjoining property leasing the three needed spaces to Windridge, did not have the spaces to lease. Even though Hammet Court has 48 parking spots and only requires 27 for themselves, Teitz alleged that most of the parking spots were illegal because they did not meet zoning standards.

Teitz also attempted to block approval by saying that the park-

ing spots were inconvenient and that visitors and customers to Jack's Electric would park in the street and cause congestion in the neighborhood.

Donald Packer, the South Kingstown attorney representing Windridge properties, accused Teitz of throwing "red herrings" out to distract the board from dealing with the real issue. At one point, Teitz showed a photograph of a truck turning into the Jack's Electric parking lot with a wheel slightly off the pavement. Teitz said that it clearly demonstrated that the design of the facility was inadequate to properly handle the traffic that would frequent the business.

Board member Richard Allphin asked, "What does the design of the driveway have to do

with the leasing of three shared parking places?" The question drew laughter from the board as well as the audience.

After all arguments were heard, board member Richard Boren made a motion to approve, citing 23 points of support. Vice Chairman Don Wineberg seconded the motion. After lengthy discussion amongst the board members with occasional suggestions and comments from Town Solicitor Wyatt Brochu, the panel voted unanimously for approval.

Now, the house that Jack Built can finally be occupied.

Windridge Properties owner and Jack's Electric President, Jack Brittain stood beside his wife, Mary, and daughter, Julie Swistak, and listened intently as the motion was read and ul-

timately approved. During the emotional moment immediately following the decision, Brittain

could only say, "The fat lady finally sang."

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