

# IRS News Release

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## **IRS Receives Connect America Partner of the Year Award**

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WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service today was recognized for its community-based partnerships that link low-income taxpayers with organizations that prepare tax returns for free, ensure they properly receive tax credits and assist them with ways to build a financial savings.

The IRS' Stakeholder Partnership, Education and Communications organization received the Connect America Partner of the Year Award. The honor is presented each year at the National Conference on Community Volunteering and National Service. The IRS is the first federal agency to receive the award.

"I'm pleased that the IRS has been recognized with this prestigious award. It's an honor for us to receive the same recognition as past winners such as the Salvation Army, the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation and Mothers Against Drunk Drivers," said IRS Commissioner Mark W. Everson.

Since its creation in 2000, IRS' SPEC operation has worked to develop a community-based partnership model that links Earned Income Tax Credit, outreach and free tax preparation with asset-building strategies for low-income families. IRS' SPEC outreach programs are geared toward low-income, elderly, disabled and limited English proficient individuals and families. SPEC develops free tax preparation services for these groups under the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs. VITA and TCE operate 14,000 tax preparation sites nationwide.

"The work of SPEC has been particularly helpful in growing our volunteer organizations. In the past five years, we have doubled the number of volunteer-prepared tax returns to more than 2 million. That's good service for taxpayers and good for the American public. We are committed to doing more," Everson said.

This year, SPEC worked with 290 local coalitions that helped the IRS inform working families of the Earned Income Tax Credit. In addition to helping low-income families receive tax credits, these local partners also work to help the families by providing information and access to asset building opportunities.

Connect America is an initiative of the Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network. It is a network of diverse organizations working together to leverage volunteering and other resources to positively impact communities. There are 150 Connect America National Partners, representing 221,000 local members in 7,700 communities nationwide.