

# REAL ECONOMIC IMPACT (REI) TOUR GRANT FINAL REPORT

The following is a final report regarding the City of San Antonio's accomplishments and successes with respect to REI grant funding:

## I. REI Tour Special Events and Activities

**January 18, 2007** - City-wide press conference - VITA kick-off – announced opening of the Coalition's 26 VITA sites located throughout the City. The VITA site located at the San Antonio Independent Living Services (SAILS) office was highlighted as site specifically staffed and equipped to help the disabled community. SAILS is a non-profit, federally designated center for Independent Living aimed at those who reside in the Greater San Antonio Area. Since 1981, SAILS has worked to make San Antonio and the surrounding counties a better place to live, work, and engage in recreational events for people with disabilities. SAILS helps individuals with any disability: mental, physical, cognitive, or sensory by teaching independent living skills, providing up-to-date information and referrals, and training individuals on how to advocate.

**February 1, 2007** - Mayor's Proclamation EITC day in conjunction with IRS – news conference announcing EITC day was also used as an opportunity to inform the public about the SAILS VITA site and VITA Super Saturday community fair with emphasis on services for people with disabilities. Super Saturday was scheduled for February 10, 2007.

**February 10, 2007** – City of San Antonio SAILS, and the Antioch Community Transformation Network (ACTN) hosted a community fair at the Claude Black Community Center. Services for the disabled were emphasized with 30 organizations present, including Deaf Interpreter Services, Deaf Link, and SAILS. The fair also served to better inform the public of available services for the disabled through a news conference attended by San Antonio City Councilman Richard Perez, Mr. Ron Smith, Internal Revenue Service, Mr. Billy D. Hubbard, IRS, Austin SPEC office, Mr. Dennis J. Campa, Director, Department of Community Initiatives, City of San Antonio. More than 400 people attended the fair, with 60 individuals receiving free tax preparation services, of which 10 were disabled persons.

**February 12 and 13, 2007** - The City of San Antonio's VITA mobile team spent two days at the San Antonio Lighthouse, preparing tax returns for the Lighthouse's visually impaired workforce on site. Twenty-four individual returns were prepared during this event - these taxpayers were able to take advantage of this free, convenient service on their work breaks and lunch periods without losing any paid work hours.

## II. Marketing and Media Outreach

**January 2007** – Our Community/Nuestra Comunidad public television EITC/VITA outreach via 30 minute airings – 7 spots/week in English and Spanish

**January 8, 2007** – Distribution of 150,000 VITA brochures/fliers reflecting site locations and hours, including SAILS location, and hours. For added convenience, disabled taxpayers were able to schedule appointments.

**January 11/25, 2007** – Distribution of payroll stuffers by all partners

**January 18, 2007** – City-wide press conference – Focus on VITA & disability services

**February 1, 2007** – Mayor’s press announcement – National EITC day including special emphasis on services for the disabled

**March 14, 2007** – City-wide press announcement – VITA awareness and sites again emphasizing SAILS location and free tax services for the disabled

### **III. Disability workgroup partners and roles.**

In November 2001, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) partnered with the City of San Antonio’s Department of Community Initiatives (DCI), the United Way, Our Lady of the Lake University’s Center for Women, and Catholic Charities to establish the San Antonio Coalition for Family Economic Progress. The Coalition now includes local colleges, businesses, and banking institutions. The focal point for this effort is the Coalition’s Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program which provides free income tax assistance to taxpayers.

The City’s Department of Community Initiatives (DCI) provides a majority of all human services for the City and is responsible for managing twenty VITA sites and coordinating all media events and marketing efforts for the Coalition. San Antonio Independent Living Services (SAILS) joined the coalition as an operating VITA site three years ago. SAILS operates an independent living center primarily staffed and governed by disabled people. SAILS also provides various services to disabled people in the community and operates a VITA tax preparation site on-location. SAILS also conducts various mailings and outreach activities for its disabled customers.

Goodwill Industries of San Antonio has been a coalition partner for three years. Goodwill’s workforce services help people with disabilities and other barriers to employment prepare for, find and retain meaningful employment. They are the largest employer of people with disabilities in the community. Goodwill is host to three VITA sites co-located with Job Help Centers located within Goodwill stores. Not only do they serve the disabled community with workforce services, disabled individuals also shop at the various retail outlets, all of which are ADA compliant. This year, three Goodwill retail locations provided free tax services, producing a combined total of 2,694 tax returns and returning \$4.4 million in refunds, including an estimated \$2.1 in EITC.

The San Antonio Lighthouse provides rehabilitation services and employment opportunities for persons with visual disabilities. For the first time during the 2007 tax filing season, the San Antonio Lighthouse, while not a coalition partner, did host the City’s VITA mobile team providing free tax services to the Lighthouse workforce on site. Services are also provided to the general disability population. The results of this year’s first endeavor have ensured this effort will continue in future years.

### **IV. Additional Data**

During the 2007 federal tax filing season, the SACFEP completed 34,483 tax returns, with refunds totaling in excess of \$53 million, including almost \$24 million in Earned Income Tax Credits. Of these, the SAILS VITA site prepared 167 tax returns for persons with disabilities resulting in more than \$250,000 in refunds for these individuals, including \$110,000 in Earned Income Tax Credits. Further, the 24 returns prepared by the City’s mobile team visiting the San Antonio Lighthouse returned more than \$36,000 to these taxpayers.