

PRESS RELEASE

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Ganesha High Students Provide Free Tax Preparation Help to PUSD Community

POMONA, Calif. – Tax season is here and for those who need assistance completing their returns, Ganesha High School business and accounting students are here to help.

A group of 12 students are offering free tax preparation services to the Pomona community now through April 11. They held their first session on Feb. 7, and are gearing up to hold the next one on **Saturday, Feb. 21.**

This is the third year the students – who are IRS-certified volunteers, have been officially trained and tested in current tax law and can provide assistance with a variety of IRS forms and schedules – are offering the services.

“This is an incredible opportunity for our students to gain real life, hands-on experience as accountants, learning what it takes to accurately file their clients’ returns and helping Pomona Unified’s working families in the process,” Pomona Unified School District Board President Andrew Wong said.

The student volunteers were brought together by Ganesha High accounting instructor Jacqueline Jones, who has guided her students through a rigorous qualification process that includes 20 hours of training. As part of the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, students must also pass two IRS certification exams.

“Our students have shown an amazing aptitude to comprehend complicated IRS tax code,” said Jones, who acts as on-site coordinator overseeing and approving all of the students’ work. “They receive valuable work experience, as well as college credits, and the community also benefits through this free service. It’s a win-win for everyone.”

Senior Bianca Celis volunteered to be a tax preparer due to her enthusiasm for numbers and math.

“I’ve always loved numbers and I would love to be an accountant and help my family,” said Celis, who will graduate in June and plans to attend Mt. San Antonio College this fall. “My dad wants to start his own business someday, and I’m definitely interested in being the bookkeeper.”

In Ganesha's year-long accounting program, students learn how to record journal entries, write checks and prepare bank reconciliations, prepare payroll, post to the general ledger and prepare financial statements.

A number of Jones' students will head off to college upon graduation to pursue accounting and other business-related fields. Among them are Denisse Prado and Eduardo Castro, who will both study accounting at Cal Poly Pomona. Jayaira Perez will study business administration at Harvey Mudd College and Sofia Garcia will study architecture and engineering at Penn State.

"Thanks to the unwavering commitment of our teachers, our students are gaining the knowledge, experience and expertise to excel in their chosen academic paths while still in high school," said Pomona Unified Superintendent Richard Martinez. "We are proud that they are learning the skills to help our community, and I want to thank them for their efforts."

Sessions will take place from 8 a.m. to noon in Room 12 of Ganesha High School, 1151 Fairplex Drive, Pomona, and be held on the following days:

- Feb. 21 and 28
- March 7, 14 and 21
- April 11

Appointments are not required. Those who wish to drop off their returns and pick them up later may do so.

Filers must bring W-2 forms, a copy of a 2013 tax return, social security card, proof of identification, information for other income and proof of foreign status if applying for ITIN. Additional items may be required. Some returns may be referred to a professional tax preparer.

For more information or to obtain a full list of required paperwork, contact Jones at (909) 397-4400, ext. 30012.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

GANESHATAX1: Ganesha High School business and accounting students file tax returns for community members during a tax preparation session on Feb. 7, 2015.

GANESHATAX2: Ganesha High School business and accounting students are certified IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) volunteers. Pictured holding their certifications are (top row, from left) Mike Loreto, Jonathan Tostado, Denisse Prado, Jayaira Perez and Jessy Baltazar, (bottom row, from left) Eduardo Castro, Elizabeth Flores, Nicole Centeno and Sofia Garcia.

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