

Prosperity Campaign of Hillsborough County Proud to Partner with CSD Students to Provide Interpretive Services at McDonald Training Center

The Prosperity Campaign of Hillsborough County, whose mission is to connect low and moderate income households in the county with resources- including free tax preparation and access to multiple tax benefits, as well as financial education and tools- that will help them achieve and maintain financial stability- is excited to announce the launch of a new pilot project this tax season, of which USF's Communications Sciences and Disorders department will be a vital part.

We have established a mobile free tax site at McDonald Training Center specifically to provide tax preparation and e-filing to the staff and consumers who utilize the center's services. Our goal was to reach a previously under-served audience- disabled adults- by bringing free tax help to them and ensuring their equal access to important tax benefits like the Earned Income Tax Credit. McDonald Training Center's mission- "To empower people with disabilities to lead the lives they choose"- is a perfect compliment to our mission of helping individuals take control of their financial lives and live as independently as possible. After some initial discussion last fall, we decided to move full steam ahead with this project.

At that time, the staff at the Center mentioned that they had a number of consumers who were deaf or hard-of-hearing, and we knew we would need to find someone who could provide interpretive services to enable us to serve these individuals. After some phone calls, we got connected to Instructor Andrea Smith, an instructor in the Communication Sciences and Disorders Department at USF's College of Behavioral and Community Sciences, who agreed to donate her and her students' time to meet the need. We are tremendously excited about this partnership that will hopefully benefit everyone involved- from the taxpayers who will be able to receive help in a familiar location with someone who speaks their language to the students who will gain invaluable experience by applying what they've been learning to a real-world scenario.

We will be preparing returns at McDonald through early March and will have the opportunity to assist about 10 deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. We greatly look forward to working with Mrs. Smith and the Communication Sciences and Disorders department to accomplish the successful filing of these returns and the return of valuable dollars to the taxpayers who can benefit from them.

The Prosperity Campaign represents a coalition of public, private and nonprofit organizations and is currently coordinated through United Way of Tampa Bay.