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**ESR spotlights the Earned Income Tax Credit for Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Residents****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

WINSTON-SALEM - The City of Winston-Salem is joining others across the nation in proclaiming January 29, 2021, EITC Awareness Day. EITC Awareness Day is a nationwide effort to bring awareness to one of the most important tax credits available to working families and individuals – the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), the Child Tax Credit (CTC), and more.

With strong bipartisan support since its inception in the mid-70s, it has grown to become one of the largest anti-poverty tools in the U.S. Unfortunately, nearly one in five people eligible for the EITC do not claim it. We are joining with our community partners to make sure that people know how vital the EITC can be to their family.

Forsyth Free Tax, a program of Experiment in Self-Reliance (ESR), provides free tax preparation for those who meet the income guidelines. For residents making less than \$57,000, free tax help and return preparation is available through volunteer sites. IRS-certified volunteers ask the needed questions to find out if you qualify for the EITC and other refundable credits.

ESR's Forsyth Free Tax program has provided free services for more than two decades, bringing in millions of dollars in EITC, CTC, and tax refunds into the community each year.

Delores McCullough, Forsyth Free Tax Program Manager, has seen how the EITC has positively affected families in the community. "The EITC supports a high proportion of families who have historically earned lower wages and experienced poverty levels at a high rate," says McCullough.

John, an adult student, was grateful to be able to receive the EITC. "It made a big difference for me," says John. "I was able to put some funds away and pay towards school. It helped relieve the financial burden I experience trying to pay my bills while also having to focus on school."

One of the ways ESR seeks to raise awareness about the EITC and other asset-building programs is through its membership of the Asset Building Coalition of Forsyth County. Since its inception in 2014, the ABC has helped make the EITC more accessible to the community.

Vivian Pérez Chandler, Executive Director of the Asset Building Coalition of Forsyth County, had this to say: “ESR has been a catalyst in empowering our community residents into becoming more self-sufficient and using skills learned to become independent once again. We are happy to collaborate with ESR on their EITC event as we all work together to reduce poverty and create a community that is asset wealthy.”

For members of our community, the EITC serves as a key contributor to their financial security. Our residents, as individuals, can see returns as high as \$6,660, depending on the number of children in their family and their income level.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) announced that the nation's tax season will start on Friday, Feb. 12, 2021, when the tax agency will begin accepting and processing 2020 tax year returns.

The Feb. 12 start date for individual tax return filers allows the IRS time to do additional programming and testing of IRS systems following the Dec. 27 tax law changes that provided a second round of Economic Impact Payments and other benefits.

Forsyth Free Tax also prepares and e-files (file electronically) your return at no cost to you. Forsyth Free Tax offers free tax preparation for people who qualify at the following tax sites:

The Robert Strickland Center at Forsyth Technical Community College (FTCC)

- Visit [www.forsythtech.edu](http://www.forsythtech.edu) for more information
- Call 336-734-7656 after February 12\* to make an appointment
- Appointment times are Monday and Wednesday, 10 am – 3 pm, and Tuesday & beginning February 15\* Thursday, 1 pm – 7 pm
- The Robert Strickland Center is located at 2100 Silas Creek Parkway, Winston-Salem, NC 27103

ESR

- Visit [www.eisr.org](http://www.eisr.org) for more information
- Call 336-722-9400 ext. 172 after February 12\* to make an appointment
- Beginning February 17\* appointment times are Monday – Thursday, 9 am – 3 pm
- ESR is located at 3480 Dominion Street, Winston-Salem, NC 27105

Appointments are required for drop-offs. Virtual options may be available. ESR and the Robert Strickland Center at FTCC are the only Forsyth Free Tax sites that will be open this season.

For information on what to bring, visit [www.eisr.org](http://www.eisr.org) or call 336-722-9400 ext. 172.

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#### **ABOUT ESR**

ESR is a non-profit Community Action Agency. Its mission is to empower social and economic self-reliance for the working low-income and homeless. Programs serve the working low to moderate income population in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County, helping people locate safe and affordable housing, increase their education, attend financial education classes, have their taxes prepared at no cost and more.