In a Tizzy Over Taxes

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by Ashley Goforth

For the Food Bank, February means tax assistance is in high gear and heading full speed into the April 15 tax deadline. At the start of the month, the Community Kitchen & Food Pantry of West Harlem hosted a press conference to kick of the tax season and to remind New York City residents that many of them may be eligible for free tax-return preparation and electronic filing at 14 sites citywide operated by the Food Bank's Tax Assistance Program and online through the IRS and New York State Free File Alliance programs. On hand to discuss the merits of the program was Congressman Charles Rangel; IRS Commissioner Douglas Schulman; NYC Department of Consumer Affairs Commissioner Jonathan Mintz; and Human Resources Administration Commissioner Robert Doar; Ed Black, President and CEO of the Computer & Communications Industry Association (CCIA); and Brad Smith, President and CEO of Intuit Inc.

Congressman Charles Rangel shows his support for strong student leadership as he chats with students trained as tax preparers from Frederick Douglass Academy and Rice High School.

Then, on February 18, the Food Bank, Capital One Bank and the Brooklyn Community Foundation joined forces to bring attention to the program at the Fulton Street Capital One, where our program provides tax assistance for the northern Brooklyn community. Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz joined Fran Freedman, LMSW, Deputy Commissioner, External Affairs NYC Department of Consumer Affairs; our Vice President of Agency Resources & Benefit Access Carlos Rodriguez and Capital One's Brooklyn Market President B.J. Duffy to extol the benefits of free tax assistance.

Our free tax services can constitute a significant step from food poverty toward self-sufficiency.

The Food Bank's Tax Assistance Program provides low-income New Yorkers with free tax preparation services as well as information on how to access the various credits they are entitled to – including the Earne Earned Income Tax Credit, a key piece of the public safety net for the working poor. One of the largest programs of its type in the country, the Food Bank's Tax Assistance Program has completed up to 50,000 tax returns for low- to moderate-income New Yorkers annually — helping to provide as much as $100

Food Bank Board Chair Rev. Henry Belin hosted our special

million in tax refunds.

If you think you may be eligible for EITC, use Intuit's free EITC calculator today. For a listing of the Food Bank's Tax Assistance Program sites, click here.

Henry Belin hosted our special guest speakers at the kickoff event and emphasized the importance of community support for the program.