

## ABDC Offering Free Tax Prep for All

Thursday, 13 March 2014

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

Even though the income tax deadline is over a month from now, it's never too early to get started on your return. But for those flummoxed by forms, riled by arithmetic or possessed by procrastination, an Anchorage non-profit is here in Kodiak the rest of this week to help.

All this is put together by a non-profit corporation, the Alaska Business Development Center. They've been in business since 1978. And their primary function is providing business consulting and tax assistance services for businesses in rural Alaska.

That's Tom Howell, who is coordinating the visit to Kodiak Island for two volunteer tax-preparers with him.

This is a VIDA program sponsored by the Internal Revenue Service. We have an agreement with some colleges in the Lower 48: University of Alaska, Montana State University, University of Montana and Ithaca College in Upstate New York.

The three were in Old Harbor on Sunday and Monday, and worked in Akhiok on Tuesday.

Golly I think we did 45 returns. And we probably produced more than \$50,000 in refunds and probably saved the local people \$10- or \$12,000 in fees.

Howell and the tax volunteers are at the Kodiak Senior Center Wednesday, and will be at the Kodiak Baptist Mission through Saturday. As described by Howell, the process is pretty quick.

Typically when people come in to have their taxes done I'll go over and make sure they have all their forms and necessary documents and do a preliminary interviews to make sure we've got all the income covered. And we prepare it in such a way that it can be electronically filed, so they can get their tax return and if they're eligible expedited. Or if they people prefer we can print it out and people can file it themselves.

And the best part is that everyone is welcome and the service is absolutely free.

Generally, it's targeted to rural folks, particularly to accommodate the Natives that are stuck in rural Alaska and don't have that kind of service. But it's open to anybody who'd like to have that. We're available to do taxes for anybody. Absolutely free. We're just here to provide services. We do get grants from the federal government and a lot of the Native corporations, as well as some local churches. So they provide the funding for this, and the students are just volunteering their time.

Howell can be reached at 907-891-5473, or look him and his team up at the Baptist Mission through Saturday. He said the whole process generally takes less than a half-hour.