

MANY HAPPY RETURNS!

Base tax center provides free processing, electronic filing

By Staff Sgt. Michael Duhe
437 AW Public Affairs

Tax time is no reason to worry for Charleston AFB. The base tax center is providing free processing and electronic filing for federal tax returns. It is also processing (but not filing) most state tax returns as well.

The tax center, located in Bldg. 245, is staffed by Volunteer Income Tax Advisors (all active duty) and one civilian. Acting as NCOIC of the tax center is Master Sgt. John Heckman, a member of the 315th Airlift Wing legal office.

"So far, we've had almost 850 customers," he said. "We're cranking out about 50-60 returns a day. We've processed and filed about 850 federal returns and processed almost 700 state returns."

Those eligible for the service are active duty members, Reservists, civil service employees, retirees and employees of civilian contractors on base, such as Boeing.

Heckman said some of their customers are surprised to find the ser-



Staff Sgt. Michael Duhe

Staff Sgt. Randy Darnell (right), a Volunteer Income Tax Advisor, assists Scott and Terri Olson with a tax return.

vices are provided at no charge to them. Similar "rapid refund" off-base processing fees would cost anywhere from \$80-\$100. Heckman estimates the total savings for customers so far is around \$68,000.

"People seem very pleased with the service, which is very quick," Heckman said. "If you come in on a Monday and we e-file your return and everything goes through okay, you'll get a direct deposit no more than two

weeks out."

The wait at the center is not very long, Heckman said.

Many customers have called with questions on claims and deductions, such as home remodeling, home businesses, Roth IRA conversions and capital gains on stocks. Heckman said this is one service you won't find at off-base paid preparers.

"We don't just process your return and hustle you out of here," he said.

"We provide you with information to help you understand your taxes. After the forms are finished and printed up, the VITAs go through the returns with you and educate so that you won't be intimidated by your taxes. Here, we try to take our time and show you where everything goes and where the numbers are coming from. I think that's one thing we have over the outside."

One customer who was grateful for the tax service was Airman 1st Class Jessica Ackerman, who said she usually prepares her taxes with her husband. "My husband wasn't here to help me with the taxes at the time, so the tax center was a big help."

Approximately 40 VITA representatives have volunteered to staff the office while it is open. They each attended a one-week training session in January. Each will staff the office for two one-week periods, Heckman said.

To set up an appointment to have your taxes prepared, call 963-1040.

"It's free - it's a benefit for you," Heckman said.

Change of command set for March 20

A 437th Airlift Wing change of command ceremony will be March 20 at 10 a.m. in the C-17 nosedock (Bldg. 519). Maj. Gen. John Hopper will preside over the ceremony, during which Brig. Gen. (select) Verne M. Findley II will assume command from Brig. Gen. Robert D. Bishop, Jr.

Parking near the hangar will be limited. Base shuttle bus service will be provided for your convenience as indicated below. All members of the base are encouraged to come out and witness the time-honored tradition of the military change of command.

Transportation will be provided for all on base who wish to attend the change of command. Three buses will be running subsequently. Below is the list of scheduled stops and pick-up times:

STOP	BLDG#	Time	LOCATION
1	250	0850/0855/0900	Dining Facility, 315 AW, & SFS
2	201	0855/0900/0905	Comm Sq., Wing HQ, & Education Office
3	364	0900/0905/0910	Clinic, Gym, & TMO
4	343	0905/0910/0915	Billeting Area (across street from office)
5	611	0910/0915/0920	Main Base Supply (customer service) & CE
6	700	0915/0920/0925	Nancy Hanger & 637 AGS
7	575	0920/0925/0930	EMS & CRS
8	503	0925/0930/0935	MPF & Family Support
9	72	0930/0935/0940	14AS, 15AS, 16AS, Base Ops, & Parts Store
10	168	0935/0940/0945	APS Passenger Terminal, FTD & Fire Dept
11	178	0940/0945/0950	APS Freight & Chemical Warfare Training

New sick call begins Monday

In an effort to decrease the waiting time for patients, the 437th Flight Medicine Clinic will improve the system of walk-in sick call by making it an appointment-based sick call instead.

Beginning Monday, active duty members who wish to be seen for minor medical problems in morning sick call can call the Flight Medicine Clinic (963-6923) during the prior day or between 6-7 a.m. that day to make an appointment. In the rare occasion that all sick call appointments are booked, the staff will work with any remaining patients to ensure that they receive the next best available appointment time.

Afternoon sick call will work the same way, but with fewer appointments available. Active duty members can call anytime prior to 1-1:30 p.m. to schedule appointments for afternoon sick call. On the first Wednesday of each month, beginning April 5, there will be no afternoon sick call because of medical readiness training.

Flying personnel who need to get off DNIF can walk in during any of the sick call hours without an appointment. One flight surgeon will be devoted to getting them in and out of the clinic with minimal wait.

For more information, call 963-6505.

Travel card deadline extended; AF continues toward mandatory use

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Service members and DoD civilians now have until May 1 before use of the government travel credit card is mandatory, DoD officials said today.

DoD is one of a number of agencies given two extra months to implement the program, said Nelson Toye, DoD's deputy chief financial officer.

William J. Lynn, undersecretary of defense (comptroller), signed the memorandum announcing the extension March 1.

"Within DoD the primary reason for the delay is that we were so late receiving the guidance," Toye said. "Our components came back to us and asked for an extension. When we applied to the General Services Administration they were willing to grant us the extension."

Toye said that GSA officials made it clear there "would be no more extensions."

Toye's guidance in the meantime to DoD finance officials is to implement the travel card program to the maximum extent possible.

He said the extension does not mean Congress is rethinking the policy.

It has just taken longer than expected for government agencies to work out the details.

DoD issued new policies in mid-February to implement travel card requirements in an amendment to the Federal Travel Regulation published by the GSA in the Jan. 19 Federal Register.

The amendment implements requirements in the Travel and Transportation Reform Act of 1998. (AFPS)

Although the General Services Administration has granted the Defense Department a 60-day extension on mandatory use of the government Visa travel card, the Air Force is continuing efforts to implement the new policy.

The Travel and Transportation Reform Act mandates using the government travel card for all authorized expenses while on official government travel.

Air Force officials are encouraging travel card holders to use their cards now. (AFPN)