



United Way Suncoast

**UNITED WAY SUNCOAST WORKS WITH UPIC TO CREATE VIRTUAL VERSION OF
FREE TAX RETURN SERVICES FOR COMMUNITY IN NEED**

Contact David Burley, CTO, Upic Solutions david.burley@upicsolutions.org Angie Gudino
angie.gudino@upicsolutions.org

May 21, 2020—United Way Suncoast and Upic Solutions, technology provider for United Ways, enable continuation of free tax return services through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, by creating a virtual version that protects clients during the pandemic.

United Way Suncoast supports and operates the VITA program for the Tampa Bay area. VITA is a national program helping to ensure billions of dollars in tax returns are returned to individuals in communities across the United States. For 50 years, people with disabilities, lower income or limited English speaking ability have relied on VITA to assist them, with filing their tax returns and ultimately receive tax refunds, through an in-person service.

“With the current pandemic and social distancing, all of our VITA sites in the Tampa Bay area had to close. We needed an immediate solution to serve the community, in a safe and secure environment that protected clients’ personal information,” explained Dallas Smith, VP of Informational Technology, United Way Suncoast.

“We turned to the team at Upic Solutions to help ensure we could continue serving clients during this critical time. They quickly created a virtual solution that enabled clients to be served from their homes,” noted Smith.

“Security was critical when developing a virtual VITA program given the need to account for taxpayer privacy and confidentiality. Hundreds of clients in the Tampa area were in mid-process with tax returns and thousands were in queue. The new technology solution was developed, reviewed and approved by the IRS to meet their strict security standards. The virtual program is available nationwide to United Ways and VITA programs,” explained Angie Gudino, Upic Director.

Client’s tax filings are flowing again, in support of family financial stability in the Tampa Bay area and beyond. Most VITA clients have smartphones and can now download an app and communicate through phone call or video conference securely – alleviating the need to meet in-person.

“People rely us to get back on their feet and the virtual VITA program enables us to serve them,” noted Margarita Perez, Senior Manager Financial Stability, United Way Suncoast, who runs the VITA program.

About United Way Suncoast:

United Way Suncoast is a non-profit that aims to break the cycle of generational poverty throughout the Suncoast region through the help of volunteers, donors, partner agencies, and the communities we serve. Visit <https://unitedwaysuncoast.org/>

About Upic Solutions:

Upic Solutions helps to optimize United Way operations by increasing donor engagement and community impact as a shared service provider. Upic is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Visit <https://upicsolutions.org/>

About VITA:

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance grant program is an Internal Revenue Service initiative designed to support free tax preparation service for the underserved through various partner organizations. Visit <https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/1543>.