

# VISTA

## TAX RELIEF WHEN NEEDED IT MOST

*Defiance College VISTA program works to serve  
Defiance community and beyond*

*by Nick Weber '10, McMaster School  
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### **HISTORY & BACKGROUND**

Since 2009, the Defiance College VISTA office has worked closely with community partners to address the issue of high unemployment and underemployment in the Defiance area. In moving towards this goal the VISTA office has collaborated with the Northwest Ohio Community Action Commission (NOCAC), a non-profit public agency that serves to alleviate poverty and empower low-income families in communities throughout Northwest Ohio. Together, DC and NOCAC have worked to help those suffering from financial insecurity using the Ohio Benefit Bank program.

The Ohio Benefit Bank itself is a nonprofit organization that provides various supports to low income families throughout Ohio. One of these services is a program that prepares tax returns for families or individuals making under \$60,000 a year, absolutely free. By preparing a client's federal, state and school district taxes at no cost, we help them to keep more of their refunds. On average the OBB saves families



*Nick Weber assists an area couple with their tax return.*

between \$150-\$400 per appointment, helping them to avoid using their refund to pay for costly tax preparation services and allowing them to keep more money in their pockets during the times they need it most.

or reach out to new clients. Making matters worse, several other organizations that once offered free tax preparation assistance to the community were no longer able to provide those services.

In just three years the joint efforts of DC and NOCAC had not only filled this gap in services to the Defiance community, it had emerged as the leading provider of free tax preparation services in Defiance county. By 2012 the program expanded its reach even further, setting up free tax clinics in neighboring Paulding, Van Wert, Henry and William counties.

This incredible and rapid growth is due to the resource sharing between the college and NOCAC. Both organizations contributed their own unique talents and skills that

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### **BUILDING A STRONG PROGRAM**

In 2009 there was only a very slight OBB presence in the Defiance area, limited mostly to small scale OBB sites consisting of churches or concerned citizen groups that served a limited number of clients and in most cases did not have the capacity to expand their services

ultimately resulted in the success of the program. NOCAC utilized its connections throughout the community to advertise these services, create host sites for services and provide a hotline for community members to call to schedule appointments. The college provided facilities to host several tax clinics which were operated by student volunteers.

### COMMUNITY IMPACT

In 2008 Defiance College started a pilot program for the OBB that served 23 clients. By the end of the 2012 tax season, it had served 923 families and facilitated the return of more than \$1,000,000 to the Defiance community in the form of refunds, savings on preparation fees and helping clients apply for various tax credits and refunds they did not know they were eligible for. Of the clients served, 421 lived below the Federal Poverty guidelines. It is important to note that the vast majority of the clients served indicated that they would not have been able to file their taxes that year if our service had not been available, due to either not knowing how to file their own returns, or because they could not afford the filing fees of a paid preparer service.

### MOVING FORWARD

Through this collaboration, these two organizations were able to serve their community together in ways that neither could have done alone. The fact that not a single one of the program's 380 appointment slots in the Defiance County area alone went unused throughout the entirety of the 2012 tax season speaks to just how much the community needs this service. In the time DC and NOCAC have worked together they have trained more than 100 OBB volunteers, many of which continue their service with the program to this day.

*(As of October 2012, Nicholas Weber serves as the new Program Coordinator for the Northwest Ohio Community Action's OBB services where he now manages program activities in Defiance, Williams, Henry, Paulding and Van Wert counties. NOCAC and Defiance College already have plans to continue providing free tax preparation services throughout northwest Ohio in 2013.)* ◆

## E. KEITH HUBBARD: 1932-2012

Defiance College alumnus, trustee, and Pilgrim Medal recipient E. Keith Hubbard passed away earlier this year at the CHP Defiance Area In-Patient Hospice Center. He was 79.

Hubbard was a trusted advisor to the College and led a number of fund-raising efforts. While assisting with the annual fund and numerous capital campaigns over the years, he championed an effort to provide guidance to the students from the graduating class of 2003 to reconstruct a fountain that had been on campus when Hubbard was a child. In addition to his generous support of the College, he helped students achieve their professional goals by sponsoring two endowed scholarships and offering internships to Defiance College students through The Hubbard Company.



Hubbard, a native of Defiance and graduate of Defiance College, founded The Hubbard Company in 1951 as an engraving company. He served as its chairman and CEO until his death. The Hubbard Company expanded services by acquiring two other Defiance, Ohio-based printing companies and later, an office supply firm.

Over the years, Hubbard demonstrated a dedication to private higher education both through his service to his alma mater and his service to the Ohio Foundation of Independent Colleges. He served on the College's Board of Trustees since 1981. He also served for eight years as the president and director of the College's Alumni Association. In addition, he was an OFIC trustee for many years.

In 1991, the Defiance Area Chamber of Commerce awarded Hubbard its most prestigious award for service leadership, the Leadership Award. Hubbard received this award for his service to the Defiance College Board of Trustees, the Defiance Hospital and other area health organizations, national and local business organizations and the Shawnee Council of the Boy Scouts. In 1998, Hubbard was awarded the Pilgrim Medal by Defiance College, the College's highest award.

He received the Ohio Foundation of Independent Colleges Volunteer Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005 and was to be awarded the national North Star Award from the Boy Scouts of America for his distinguished service to youth earlier this year.

He served in the U.S. Army during the Korean Conflict and continued to serve in the Army Reserves until 1964.

He is survived by his wife, Janis; sons, Tom and Steve, both of Defiance; daughters, Cindy Hall, Jacksonville, Fla., and Deb Mosier, Defiance; brother-in-law, Paul Shannon; and 11 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Services were held at St. Paul's United Methodist Church with burial in Riverside Cemetery.