

# LIVE UNITED



## United Way of Snohomish County Tax Time Innovations

2011 WABC Conference  
June 21, 2011

# United Way of Snohomish County & Free Tax Preparation?



1. Provide a **free** basic service to the community
2. **Leverage** millions of dollars in federal resources through the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
3. Promote **economic self sufficiency**

# Free Tax Prep/EITC Outcomes

1. Low income families have more money to spend on basic needs like food and shelter
2. Participants decrease reliance on high cost fringe financial services like check cashing and refund anticipation loan (RAL) loans
3. Increased use of supplemental services such as Medicaid, food stamps, WIC, etc
4. Participants increase savings

# 2011 Campaign Structure

- 5 sites (rural and urban areas)
  - School-located
- Recruited 130 volunteers
  - Asset Building Services incorporated

# Asset Building Services Incorporated



Dedicated Asset Specialist available to all tax customers

- Menu of offerings
- Additional services available –
  - Job postings via WorkSource and capacity to search listings
  - Safelink – wireless cell service for low-income
  - Washington Prescription Drug Program

# Asset Building Marketing and Outreach

1. Savings strategy included in initial tax prep brochures – emphasized planning ahead
2. Promoted savings bonds through PSAs in English and Spanish
3. Volunteer Savings buttons
4. Asset Specialists included as part of Intake
5. Volunteers promoted bond post refund determined
6. Customer drawings during Snohomish Saves Week

# Summary of Campaign Results



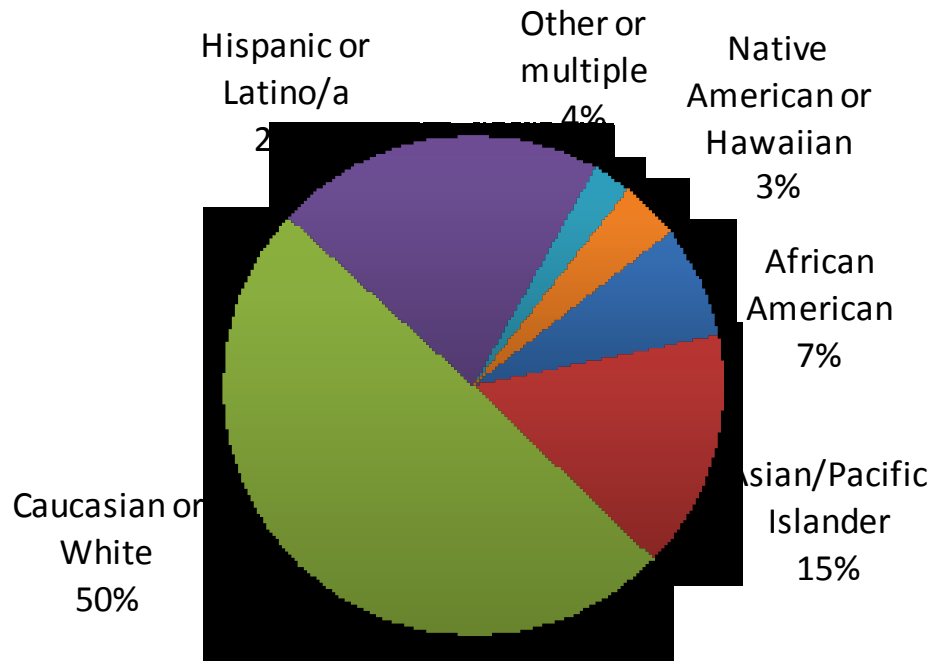
	2011 (5 sites)	2010 (4 sites)	% increase 2011 vs. 2010
<b>Number of customers</b>	2,281	1,657	38%
<b>Refund \$</b>	\$3,847,792	\$2,905,868	32%
<b>EITC \$</b>	\$1,149,030	\$907,868	27%
<b>Average Income</b>	\$25,328	\$23,657	7%

# Asset Building

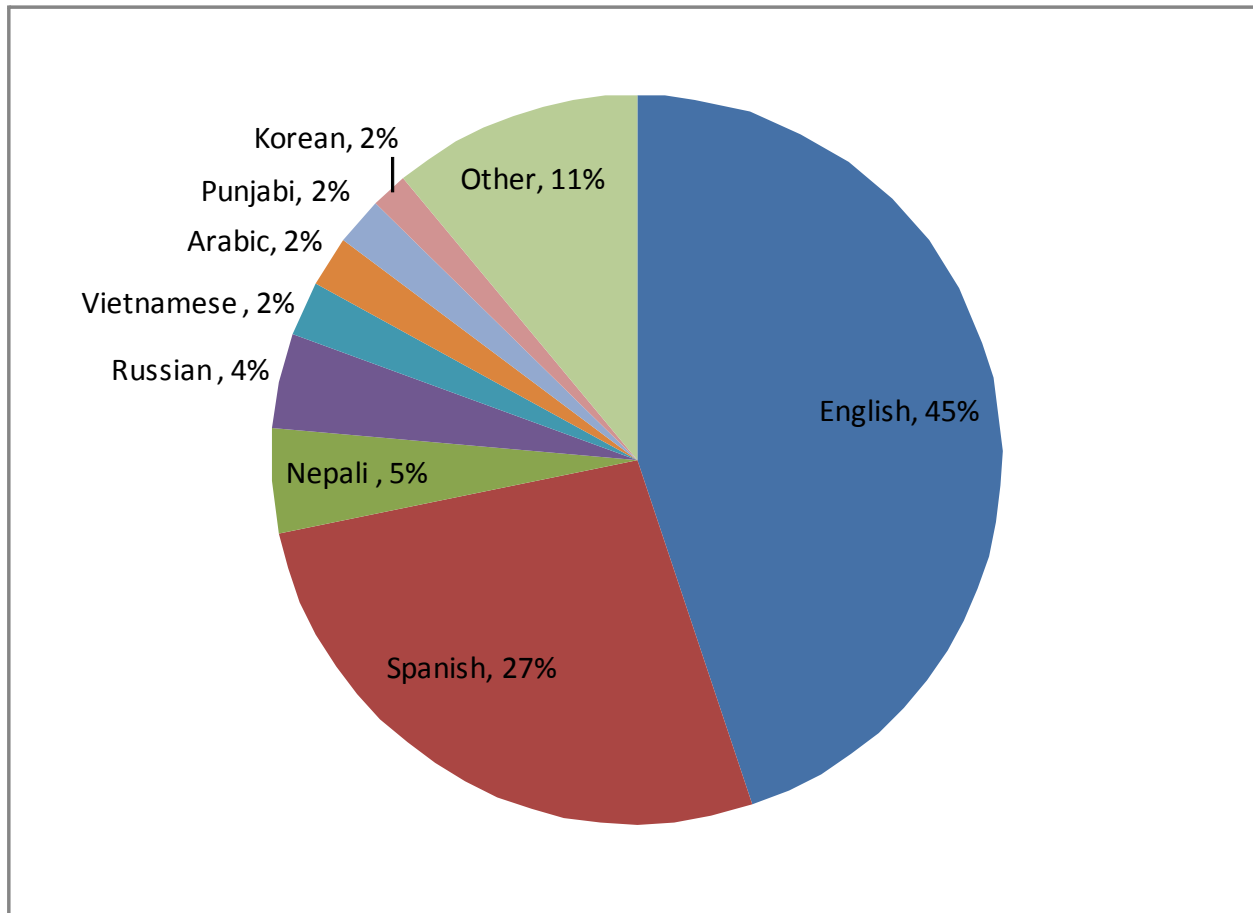
- Combined effort of the volunteers, Site Managers, and Asset Specialists resulted in **\$35,800 worth of bond purchases!**
- 133 households or 6% of our customers split their refund and invested in a US Savings Bond!
- The Asset Specialist team assisted 1157 customers including providing specific financial information to 296 individuals, pulling 54 credit reports and assisting 82 customers with completing benefit applications.
- Our Self-Prep Tax Project provided 69 individuals the opportunity to self-file their tax return.

# 2010 Customer Demographics

Customer Race/Ethnicity (% of known) n=1,437

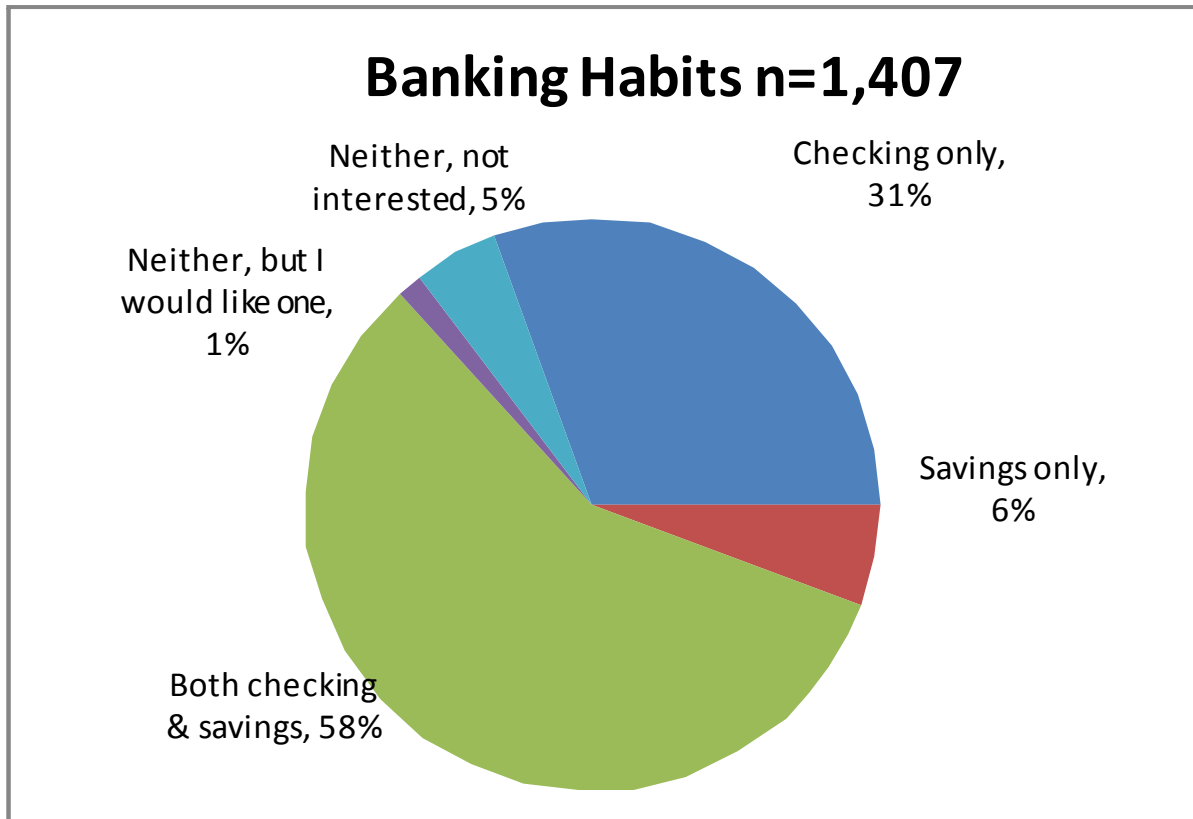


# 2010 Language Spoken at Home (n=612)



40 languages in all represented

# 2010 Bank Accounts: do you have a checking or savings account?



# Lessons Learned

1. Include asset building in training for tax site volunteers
2. Plant the ideas of saving early and often
3. Secure dedicated Asset Specialist who support the products and are personally familiar with them
4. Ask, ask and ask again
5. Collect stories
6. Evaluate and measure results to ensure the right product mixture

# Juan's Story



Tax volunteers helped Juan claim the Earned Income Tax Credit. Last year, \$2,000 went into savings.

“When I was young, no one taught me to save,” adds Juan. “I was raised dirt poor. Now, I’m blessed.”

Since then, however, Juan has lost his job. In a slowly recovering economy, jobs are still scarce. Juan is glad he saved when he could.

“For my family, that will put food on the table and a roof over their heads,” advises Juan. “No matter if you earn only a little bit—save.”

# Questions or Comments?