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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fair Offers Hope for Economic Survival

OLYMPIA – Where in downtown Olympia can you get a haircut, lunch, and help with your taxes all for free? The answer is this Saturday at the Economic Survival Fair in Olympia. For the second year in a row, the Volunteer Center of Lewis, Mason and Thurston Counties has brought volunteers and local agencies together to host a community event geared toward helping residents navigate through difficult financial waters.

“We hope that the information we’re offering will help people to not only hang on during tough times but really provide them with the skills they need to improve and sustain their economic and physical well-being,” said Volunteer Center Executive Director Sara Ballard.

The Economic Survival Fair offers everything from free legal advice to onsite child care from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, January 30th at The Olympia Center on 222 Columbia St. NW in Olympia. Attendees are also invited to stay for the free community meal at the end of the fair.

New this year is the free tax preparation service offered through VITA sites (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance), where trained tax volunteers help low income residents and seniors file their 2009 tax returns. One benefit the VITA sites offer is a chance to see if tax payers meet the requirements for the government’s Earned Income Tax Credit, the largest federally funded anti-poverty program specifically designed to help lift working members of the community out of poverty.

“Many people don’t realize that they qualify for the savings that the federal government offers them through the EITC. They’re missing out on money that can help pay their bills and put food on the table because they don’t know they have access to it,” said the Volunteer Center’s VITA Program Manager, Blake Marzloff.

Other representatives from over 30 community organizations will be on hand to talk about the services they provide including the following:

- Katie Hart, Nutritionist, will conduct classes and cooking demonstrations on cooking healthy meals on a budget.
- Amanda Murdock from the Utilities and Trades Commission will conduct seminars on saving money on your utility bills.
- Ahniwa Ferrari from Washington State Library will discuss how to save money by going to the library.

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- Abby Kelso from TESC will talk about paying for college.
- Shelly Willis from Family Education and Support Services will be discussing parenting.

The Economic Survival Fair is lead by the Volunteer Center and co-hosted by United Community AIDS Network, Crisis Clinic of Thurston and Mason Counties, United Way of Thurston County, Family Education and Support Services, Family Support Center, Thurston County CASA, and Center for Community Based Learning and Action at the Evergreen State College.

Key Bank, OBEE Credit Union, Olympia Federal Savings, Rotary Club of South Puget Sound, ROXY 94.5 FM, MIXX 96.FM, and KGY 96.9 FM sponsored this year's fair. For more information about the fair call 360-741-2622 or visit the Volunteer Center's web site at www.volunteer.ws.

The mission of the Volunteer Center of Lewis, Mason and Thurston Counties is to support volunteer efforts to address community needs; and inspire, engage, and mobilize volunteers. The Center accomplishes this mission by connecting people with opportunities to serve, offering volunteer management training and the promotion of volunteerism. The Center also provides more than 3,000 volunteer referrals per year, works with more than 250 nonprofit and public agencies in its service area and offers more than 650 volunteer opportunities through its Web site at www.volunteer.ws

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