

Volunteer of the Year – Southwest Wisconsin

Joe Byrnes

Goodwill SCWI Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program



In 2018, as a recent retiree from the world of accounting, Joe Byrnes joined the Goodwill of South Central Wisconsin's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program and it has not been the same since.

Prior to Joe joining the team, VITA, an IRS-supported program that provides free tax preparation services to low-to-moderate income individuals and families, did not have the number of volunteers or locations to have the impact they desired.

As the Program Coordinator for VITA, Joe developed a comprehensive plan to expand VITA service across the region.



Joe now leads a team of more than 30 volunteers who each commit to 16 hours or more of training, serving at seven locations. Together they have dramatically increased the number of people served by 125%. This has tangible results for the community. In 2021 they were able to return nearly \$1,000,000 back into the community as families and individuals received their full income tax refunds.

With Joe's planning and passion, Goodwill SCWI was one of the few agencies that provided this helpful service during the height of the pandemic by quickly pivoting their services to drop-off and virtual tax preparation. During the tax season, Joe works tirelessly to provide service to each person that is meaningful, informative, and efficient. Joe drives to all seven locations across several counties to deliver returns to eager community members and helps them to understand their finances in ways that set them up for long-term success. Joe has a reputation for taking on more complex returns and spends countless hours ensure that each person receives the refund to which they are entitled.

Kate Buenger with Goodwill SCWI describes that "Joe's experience, expertise, and passion for service are evident in each interaction with both the volunteer team and the community. He takes the time to talk through each and every concern people have and treats every single person with dignity, respect, and kindness. We are privileged to have each of our volunteers and that Joe has helped us to grow and evolve into an even stronger program."

