



## Charleston County News Release

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### **Charleston County Senior Citizens Begin Tax Work-Off Program**

*Participants of the pilot program begin work this week in various County offices*

Twenty-one citizens are currently scheduled to work as part of Charleston County's pilot Senior Citizen Tax Work-Off Program. Seven of the participants are already beginning their work assignments, and an additional 14 will be scheduled to work during September.

In April, County Council voted to initiate a pilot program to allow senior residents the opportunity to work in County offices for reimbursement of their 2007 Charleston County Government property taxes.

County staff then worked with the media to announce the program and began taking applications. All 21 applicants were accepted to the Senior Citizen Tax Work-Off Program.

In order to be a part of the program, participants must be 65 years or older, reside in their primary residence in Charleston County, and have paid their entire 2007 property tax bill.

"Program positions were offered on a first-come, first-served basis, taking into consideration applicants' skills, location, transportation and physical limitations," said Johnna Murray, a project officer for the Charleston County Grants Administration Department, who is managing the pilot program. "All positions are administrative in nature. County staff worked to provide positions at offices throughout the county in order to ease the burden of long commutes."

The majority of the job opportunities are in the North Charleston and downtown Charleston areas. The seniors who have begun the program are working for the Charleston County Building Services Department, the Records Management Department and at various branches of the Charleston County Library. Participants are responsible for transportation to and from their assigned job site.

The seniors will be paid the new minimum wage rate of \$6.55 per hour for the period of time equivalent to their county tax liability. The compensation is a reimbursement for 2007 Charleston County Government property taxes already paid.

The amount of hours a senior must work in order to be reimbursed for taxes paid is calculated by dividing the individual's Charleston County Government portion of their tax bill (County operations and debt service only) by the prevailing minimum wage (currently \$6.55). All Homestead Exemptions and Local Option Sales Tax Credits are taken into account.

"Out of the applications we received, the average county portion of the tax bill is \$121, which allows the senior citizen to work 18 hours for reimbursement," Murray said.

The seniors are asked to complete their assignment within a two-week timeframe and may either choose a 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. or 1 – 5 p.m. schedule. The participants will be paid biweekly, similar to regular County employees.

By law, participants must be categorized as temporary County employees. However, participants do not receive health insurance or retirement benefits, but they do have state and federal taxes withheld from the income they make through the tax work-off program.

Seniors had to provide a copy of the following when applying for the program:

- South Carolina driver's license or picture ID
- Original Social Security Card
- 2007 Charleston County property tax bill or tax bill receipt (only the individual listed on the tax bill/receipt is eligible to participate)

For more information on the Charleston County Senior Citizen Tax Work-Off Program, contact Andrea "Andy" Umbreit at (843) 202-6986.

Visit the Charleston County Web site at [www.charlestoncounty.org](http://www.charlestoncounty.org) for news, services and up-to-date information relating to Charleston County Government.