

at work

Getting families financial help

Program director for Baltimore CASH oversees 20 sites across region that offer free tax preparation for working families

BY NANCY JONES-BONBREST | *Special to The Baltimore Sun*

Name

Rob Bader

Salary

\$55,000

Age

38

Years on the job

Four

How he got started

Bader received his bachelor's degree from Siena College in New York and attended law school at the University of Toledo, graduating in 1995. He volunteered for a year while living in Boston, working in a soup kitchen and a legal aid office. He moved to Pennsylvania and worked as a legal aid attorney for the next six years.

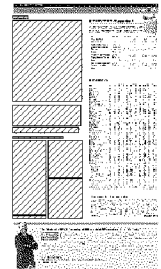
Although he was doing good work, Bader said it became somewhat monotonous, so he and his wife joined the Peace Corps, heading to Africa for two years. When their Peace Corps service was over four years ago, they moved to Baltimore, and Bader took a job with Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service, one of the partners of the Baltimore CASH Campaign. From there he began helping out with the tax operation program. This is his first year as director of the tax program.

Typical day

The Baltimore CASH Campaign is a coalition of organizations that works to promote financial stability for working families. The bulk of Bader's job right now is gearing up for tax season. Later this month, the Baltimore CASH Campaign will begin offering free tax preparation services to people who made less than \$42,000 in 2008. Much of his work is coordinating efforts at 20 tax preparation sites in and around Baltimore. He must also review and familiarize himself with any new tax laws.

"It's a lot of work, but it seemed like something that would be exciting to me," Bader says.

During tax season, Bader's hours are long and in-



clude Saturdays. He spends much of his day meeting with managers and volunteers at the various sites to make sure everything is in compliance and ready to go. He's there to answer any questions or deal with any problems that might arise. He also helps with volunteer training.

Bader said he also tries to personally complete about 100 tax returns throughout the season to keep his skills up.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

This credit will pay some families more than \$4,500 based on family size and income. Promoting the EITC is an important part of Bader's work. "That's really what we're out there for."

Last year

They provided about 13,000 low-income taxpayers with free tax preparation assistance, helping them claim over \$15 million in refunds.

Average income of clients

\$16,000 a year

Average return for clients

\$1,600

Rising expectations

Bader said the number of people served goes up every year. This year with the declining economy it's likely that number will go up again.

The good

"I love doing the tax returns," said Bader, who refers to the tax season as a big rush. "For three months I'm on a lot of adrenaline."

The bad

"During tax season I don't get as much time with my family."

Philosophy on the job

Not only do many clients get refunds, but they are also offered free tax preparation services, which keeps them away from predatory tax preparers, Bader said.

"I know where this money is going; it's going to very positive, necessary things for many of our clients."

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Rob Bader of Baltimore CASH is gearing up for tax season. BALTIMORE SUN PHOTO: KIM HAIRSTON