Income tax help is now online

PC TALK

MIKE WENDLAND

The stacks of receipts and the W2's are just sitting there, aren't they?

You know you have to get to them before April 15th but its such a dreadful task that you keep putting it off as long as you can.

The Internet may not make the tax bite any easier to take but it can make the task of figuring out the bottom line and filling out the right forms a bit easier.

There are dozens of online sites up and running and promising to help you cut down on the calculating time.

The site to start, of course, is the source of all this trouble - the IRS (**http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/**)

The taxman's official site starts with the picture of a mailbox. Click on it and you're led to "The Digital Daily," the IRS's online newspaper that tries to present tax information in a light and breezy style.

The IRS has had big problems in past years with its online efforts.

This year, the agency is trying hard to encourage more "e-filing," or electronic filing. But instead of letting us zap off our 1040 through our own computer, the IRS site works with "industry partners."

That means that you can only send your form electronically with the help of someone else.

In this case, you can use a professional tax preparer or, if you want to do it yourself, one of the following three companies:

•TurboTax Online (**http://www.intuit.com/turbotax/ttonline/irshello.htm**) the top-selling do-it-yourself taxsoftware.

•Universal Tax Systems (**http://www.securetax.com**) make a product called SecureTax for online tax form completion.

•Nelco, accessible by a direct link from the IRS site, lets you download its Tax Wizard software and prepare your return on-screen.

Last year, some 19 million Americans sent their forms off to Uncle Sam electronically.

The agency hopes it has the bugs worked out and that number will rise significantly this year.

My absolute favorite online site is from the people who make the personal finance software Quicken (**http://www.quicken.com/taxes/**).

Since they also make TurboTax, their Web site links to lots of how to information on putting the software to use. If the news is really bad, you can even apply for a loan from the Quicken site.

Here are some other sites you may want to check out.

•The Michigan Department of Treasury has a tax form page (**http://www.treas.state.mi.us/formspub/frmindex.htm**) is a pretty comprehensive site, offering all sorts of tax-related publications and reports and information on starting a business in Michigan.

•The Tax Web (**http://www.taxweb.com/**). .This site claims to be the Internet's first and most comprehensive site geared towards consumers, offering answers to general tax questions, plus hyperlinks to lots of federal and state-sponsored tax sites that will allow you to conduct more detailed tax research.

•1040.com (**http://www.1040.com/**) prides itself on being a place that provides "tax info for ordinary people." There's an extensive series of Internet links and questions and answers about the tax laws as they apply to the typical individual taxpayer.

•Money Magazine (**http://pathfinder.com/money/goals/taxes.html**). The magazine's online tax section tells you how to make sure you're now "audit bait" and shows you several strategies aimed at cutting your taxes.

•Nolo's Guide to Tax problems (**http://www.nolo.com/ChunkTAX/TAX.index.html**) This walks you through the information you need if you have a big tax bill due or, worse yet, end up being audited.

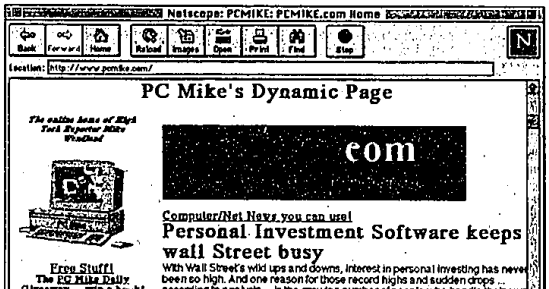
•The Tax Prophet (**http://www.tax-prophet.com/**). Maintained by a tax attorney, this site deciphers the Internal Revenue Code for individual taxpayers.

•And if you really want to find that loophole, try the U.S. House of Representatives Internet Law Library (**http://law.house.gov**) for the complete Tax Code itself... as well as hundreds of other laws, too.

The Internet's Usenet has two tax-related newsgroups that are worth checking out.

Look at misc.taxes for a freewheeling, anything goes discussion or misc.taxes.moderated , for more structured postings.

Mike Wendland covers the Internet for NBC-TV Newschannel stations across the country and can be seen locally on WDIV-TV4, Detroit. His "PC Talk" radio show airs Saturday and Sunday afternoons from 4-6PM on WXYT-Radio AM1270 and he is the author of a series of Internet books (call 888-222-1866). You can reach him through his Web site at http://www.pcmike.com.



PCMike: *You can check out Wendland's Web site at www.pcmike.com.*

Mittra *from page B4*

• **General.** Subject to income limits described below, an individual may make a non-deductible contribution (up to $500 annually) to an Education IRA for each child under age 18, and amounts (including earnings) withdrawn for qualified higher education expenses will be tax free and not subject to the 10% early withdrawal penalty.

• **Limits on eligibility to contribute.** The full $500 contribution is phased out between $150,000 and $160,000 (for married couples) and between $95,000 and $110,000 (for single individuals).

• **Contributions.** Contributions must be in cash, made before the beneficiary is 18, and except for rollover contributions must not exceed $500 per year per Education IRA. Contributions are treated as taxable gifts from the IRA contributor to the IRA beneficiary, eligible for the annual gift tax exclusion.

• **Structural requirements.** Like traditional IRAs, the *trustee must be a bank or otherwise* IRS-approved trustee, no assets may be invested in life insurance, and assets of two or more Education IRAs may not be commingled except in a common trust fund. The IRA must be designated as an Education IRA when first established.

• **Distributions.** All qualified distributions are tax free with no early withdrawal penalty. Qualified tax free distributions are for qualified higher education expenses and may not exceed actual expenses. Qualified higher education expenses include tuition, fees, books, supplies, and equipment required for attendance at eligible higher educational institutions or certain vocational educational schools. Upon death of the beneficiary, all amounts must be distributed to the beneficiary's estate.

• **Designated beneficiaries.** Any person under age 18. Change of beneficiary is not a taxable event as long as the change is to a family member (ancestor, spouse, child, grandchild, or spouse of child or grandchild of the giver).

Milestones *from page B4*

Grabowski

Laura Grabowski of Warren has joined Triad Performance Technologies, Inc. in Farmington Hills as a consulting associate. She previously worked for Creative IDEAS as a project coordinator.

Hays

Steven Hays has been appointed vice president of recruitment at AmeriClerk Temporary Legal Staffing in Troy. He previously worked in the Law Offices of Dick and Harries in Chicago as an intellectual property associate.

Hinderleider

Kevin Hinderleider of Novi has joined Triad Performance Technologies, Inc. in Farmington Hills as a network administrator. He previously worked for Ajilon and EDS in the same position.

Alan Kalter has been promoted to chairman of the board at W.B. Doner & Company in Southfield.

Lawson

Christine Lawson of Detroit has joined the staff of Providence Hospital's department of family practice in Southfield. She recently completed her residency in family practice at Providence.

INTERNET ADDRESS DIRECTORY

Find these sites on the World Wide Web - Brought to you by the services of O&E On-Line!

To get your business On-Line!, call 313-953-2038

ON-LINE!

ACCOUNTING
Kessler & Associates P.C. ---- http://www.kesslercpa.com
ADVERTISING PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS
Monograms Plus ---- http://oeonline.com/monoplus
AD/HD HELP
AD/HD (Attention Deficit) ---- http://www.adhdoutreach.com
ANNOUNCEMENTS
Legal Notice ---- http://oeonline.com/~legal
APPAREL
Hold Up Suspender Co. ---- http://www.suspenders.com
ART and ANTIQUES
Haig Galleries ---- http://rochester-hills.com/haigg
ART GALLERIES
The Print Gallery ---- http://www.everythingart.com
ART MUSEUMS
The Detroit Institute of Arts ---- http://www.dia.org
ASTROLOGY-METAPHYSICS
The Turning Point ---- http://www.psychicpoint.com
ASSOCIATIONS
ASM - Detroit ---- http://www.asm-detroit.org
Building Industry Association of Southeastern Michigan ---- http://builders.org
Society of Automotive Engineers-Detroit ---- http://www.sae-detroit.org
Suburban Newspapers of America ---- http://www.suburban-news.org
Suspender Wearers of America ---- http://oeonline.com/swaa
ATTORNEYS
Thompson & Thompson P.C. ---- http://www.taxexemptlaw.com
AUDIO VISUAL SERVICES
AVS Audio ---- http://www.avsaudio.com
Slidemasters ---- http://www.slidemasters.com
AUTOMOTIVE
Huntington Ford ---- http://www.huntingtonford.com
John Rogin Buick-Isuzu-Suzuki ---- http://www.johnrogin.com
Ramchargers Performance Centers http://www.ramchargers.com
Universal Bearing Co. ---- http://www.unibearco.com
AUTOMOTIVE MANUFACTURERS REPRESENTATIVES
Marks Mgmt. Services ---- http://www.marksmgmt.com
AUTO RACING
Milan Dragway ---- http://www.milandragway.com
BAKING/COOKING
"Jiffy" Mix—Chelsea Milling Company ---- http://www.jiffymix.com
BASEMENT WATERPROOFING
Mr. Sponge ---- http://www.mrsponge.com
BICYCLES
Wahu! Bicycle Company ---- http://rochester-hills.com/wahu
BOOKKEEPING PRODUCTS
BIG E-Z Bookkeeping Co. ---- http://www.bigez.com
BOOKS
Apostolate Communications ---- http://www.apostolate.com
BUSINESS NEWS
Insider Business Journal ---- http://www.insiderbiz.com
CERAMIC TILE
Stewart Specialty Tiles ---- http://www.specialtytiles.com
CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE
Livonia Chamber of Commerce ---- http://www.livonia.org
Birmingham Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce ---- http://www.bbcc.com
CHILDREN'S SERVICES
St. Vincent & Sarah Fisher Center ---- http://oeonline.com/svsf
CLASSIFIED ADS
AdVillage ---- http://advillage.com
Observer & Eccentric Newspapers ---- http://observer-eccentric.com
CLOSET ORGANIZERS/HOME STORAGE
Organize-It ---- http://www.organizes-it.com
COMMERCIAL PRINTING
Colortech Graphics ---- http://colortechgraphics.com
COMMUNITIES
City of Birmingham ---- http://ci.birmingham.mi.us
City of Livonia ---- http://oeonline.com/livonia
COMMUNITY NEWS
Observer & Eccentric Newspapers ---- http://observer-eccentric.com
COMMUNITY SERVICE
Beverly Hills Police ---- http://www.beverlyhillspolice.com
Sanctuary ---- http://rochester-hills.com/wocare
Wayne Community Living Services ---- http://www.wcls.org
COMPUTER GRAPHICS
Logix, Inc. ---- http://www.logix-usa.com
COMPUTER HARDWARE/PROGRAMMING/SOFTWARE SUPPORT
Applied Automation Technologies ---- http://www.capps-edges.com
BNB Software ---- http://www.oeonline.com/bnb
Mighty Systems Inc. ---- http://www.mightysystems.com
COMPUTER PRODUCT REVIEWS
HORSERACING HANDICAPPING SOFTWARE
CyberNews and Reviews ---- http://oeonline.com/cybernews
CONSTRUCTION
Frank Rewold Construction ---- http://rochester-hills.com/rewold
DUCT CLEANING
Mechanical Energy Systems ---- http://www.mes1.com
EDUCATION
Fordson High School ---- http://oeonline.com/~fordsonh
Global Village Project ---- http://oeonline.com/gvp.htm
Oakland Schools ---- http://oakland.k12.mi.us
Reuther Middle School ---- http://oeonline.com/~rms
Rochester Community Schools Foundation ---- http://rochester-hills.com/rcsf
The Webmaster School ---- http://rochester-hills.com
Western Wayne County Internet User Group ---- http://oeonline.com/wwciug
ELECTRICAL SUPPLY
Caniff Electric Supply ---- http://www.caniff.com
Progress Electric ---- http://www.pe-co.com
ELECTRONIC SERVICE AND REPAIR
ABL Electronic Service, Inc. ---- http://www.ablserv.com
EMPLOYEE LEASING COMPANY
Genesys Group. ---- http://www.genesysgroup.com
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
Employment Presentation Services ---- http://www.epsweb.com
ENVIRONMENT
Resource Recovery and Recycling Authority of SW Oakland Co. ---- http://oeonline.com/rrrasoc
EXECUTIVE RECRUITERS
J. Emery & Associates ---- http://www.jemeryassoc.com
EYE CARE/LASER SURGERY
Greenberg Laser Eye Center ---- http://www.greenbergeye.com
FLOOR COVERING
The Floor Connection ---- http://www.floorconnection.com
FROZEN DESSERTS
Savino Sorbet ---- http://www.sorbet.com
HAIR SALONS
Heads You Win ---- http://www.headsyouwin.com
HEALTH CARE
Family Health Care Center ---- http://oeonline.com/ehrmann
HERBAL PRODUCTS
Nature's Better Way ---- http://oeonline.com/nbw
HOSPITALS
Botsford Health Care Continuum -- http://www.botsfordsystem.org
St. Mary Hospital ---- http://www.stmaryhospital.org
HYDRAULIC AND PNEUMATIC CYLINDERS
Hennells ---- http://www.hennells.com
HYPNOSIS
Full Potential Hypnosis Center ---- http://oeonline.com/hypnosis
INDUSTRIAL FILTERS
Elixaire Corporation ---- http://www.elixaire.com
INSURANCE
Cadillac Underwriters ---- http://www.cadillacunderwriters.com
J. J. O'Connell & Assoc., Inc. Insurance ---- http://www.oconnellinsurance.com
INTERACTIVE CD ROM PUBLISHING
Interactive Incorporated ---- http://www.interactive-inc.com
JEWELRY
Haig Jewelry ---- http://rochester-hills.com/haigj
LANDSCAPE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
Rolling Landscaping ---- http://www.rollingdesign.com
METROLOGY SERVICES
GKS Inspection ---- http://www.gks3d.com
MORTGAGE COMPANIES
Enterprise Mortgage ---- http://www.getmoneyfast.com
Mortgage Market Information Services ---- http://www.interest.com/observer
Spectrum Mortgage ---- http://www.spectrummortgage.com
Village Mortgage ---- http://www.villagemortgage.com
NEWSLETTERS
GAGGLE Newsletter ---- http://oeonline.com/gaggle
NOTARY SERVICES
Notary Service & Bonding Agency, Inc. ---- http://www.notaryservice.com
NURSING EDUCATION
Michigan League for Nursing ---- http://oeonline.com/mln
ORIENTAL RUGS
Azar's Oriental Rugs ---- http://www.azars.com
PARKS & RECREATION
Huron-Clinton Metroparks ---- http://www.metroparks.com
PERSONAL GROWTH
Overcomer's Maximized Living System -- http://www.overcome.com
PLANNING AND TRAFFIC CONSULTANT
Birchler Arroyo Associates, Inc. ---- http://www.birchlerarroyo.com
POWER TRANSMISSION
Bearing Service, Inc. ---- http://www.bearingservice.com
PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR
Profile Central, Inc. ---- http://www.profile-usa.com
PUBLIC AND INVESTOR RELATIONS
Rein Nomm & Associates, Inc. ---- http://www.nomm.com
REAL ESTATE
REALnet ---- http://oeonline.com/realnet.html
Birmingham Bloomfield Rochester South Oakland Association of Realtors ---- http://www.justlisted.com
Chamberlain REALTORS ---- http://www.chamberlainrealtors.com
Cornwell & Company ---- http://www.michiganhome.com/cornwell
Dan Hay ---- http://dancan.com
Marcia Gies ---- http://s0a.oeonline.com/gies.html
Hall & Hunter Realtors ---- http://s0a.oeonline.com/hallhunt
Langard Realtors ---- http://www.langard.com
Max Broock, Inc. ---- http://www.maxbrock.com
Sellers First Choice ---- http://www.sfcrealtors.com
Bob Taylor ---- http://www.bobtaylor.com
Western Wayne County Association of REALTORS ---- http://www.michiganhome.com
REAL ESTATE APPRAISAL
BBRSOAR Appraisers Committee - http://justlisted.com/appraisal
REAL ESTATE - COMMERCIAL/INVESTMENT
Property Services Group, Inc. ---- http://www.propserv.com
REAL ESTATE EDUCATION
Real Estate Alumni of Michigan ---- http://www.ramadvantage.org
REAL ESTATE-HOME WARRANTY
HMS Home Warranty ---- http://oeonline.com/hms
REAL ESTATE SOFTWARE
Envision Real Estate Software ---- http://www.envision-res.com
RELOCATION
Conquest Corporation ---- http://www.conquest-corp.com
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH
Midwest Fertility and Sex Selection Center--http://www.mfss.com
RESTAURANTS
Steve's Backroom ---- http://www.stevesbackroom.com
RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES
American House ---- http://www.american-house.com
Presbyterian Villages of Michigan ---- http://www.pvm.org
SHOPPING
Birmingham Principal Shopping District ---- http://oeonline.com.birmingham
SURPLUS FOAM
McCullough Corporation ---- http://www.mcfoam.com
SURPLUS PRODUCTS
McCullough Corporation ---- http://www.mcsurplus.com
TOYS
Toy Wonders of the World ---- http://www.toywonders.com
TRAINING
High Performance Group ---- http://www.oeonline.com/~hpg
Virtual Reality Institute ---- http://www.vrinstitute.com
TRAVEL AGENCY
Cruise Selections, Inc. ---- http://www.cruiseselections.com
UTILITIES
Detroit Edison ---- http://www.detroitedison.com
VIDEO/WEB SITE DEVELOPMENT
NetWorth Internet Marketing ---- http://netvid.com
WELD GUN PRODUCTS
C.M. Smillie Co. ---- http://www.smillie.com
WHOLISTIC WELLNESS
Roots and Branches ---- http://www.rnbplace.com
WOMEN'S HEALTH
Asghar Afsari, M.D. ---- http://www.gyndoc.com
PMS Institute ---- http://www.pmsinst.com
WORSHIP
St. Michael Lutheran Church. --- http://www.stmichaellutheran.org

3-15-98