

IRS might be after you — to mail you a check

Incorrect addresses stall nearly 1,500 Tennessee refunds

By **BONNA de la CRUZ**

Staff Writer

Now that Tilcia L. Menifee knows that she'll be getting \$500 in a tax refund from Uncle Sam, she can do some Christmas shopping, she said.

Menifee is among 1,471 Tennesseans who are owed refund checks by the Internal Revenue Service — just as soon as the taxpayers update their addresses with the IRS.

Some \$1.34 million in refund checks were returned to the government this year as undeliverable, the IRS said. The average refund was \$909.

The highest average refund — \$5,773 — will go to Williamson County taxpayers. There are 27 such taxpayers in Williamson with undeliverable refunds.

Taxpayers can claim their refunds as soon as they update their addresses with the revenue service.

Menifee, a Wal-Mart sales clerk, was delighted to learn she would be getting her refund. "I want it," she said. "I've been looking for it."

The 22-year-old said she moved from Nashville to Florence, Miss., about seven months ago, but did not make arrangements for her refund check to follow her south. The

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Tennessean was able to locate Menifee by telephone in less than 10 minutes.

The IRS does not try to find refund recipients by telephone, said Dan Boone, an IRS spokesman.

Rather, when the post office returns a tax refund as undeliverable, a notice is sent to the same address. The IRS also will comb the taxpayer's filings for alternate addresses and try to locate the taxpayer that way, Boone said.

If all that fails, their names go on a list, he said. Looking for people with undeliverable refunds is the only circumstance in which the IRS publicly discloses names of taxpayers, he said.

"The IRS would like to get this money into the hands of the intended recipients as quickly as possible," Boone said.

Many taxpayers get their refund check the following year when they file income taxes using an updated address.

he said.

Among the names on the IRS list is Letonio C. Swader of Nashville. A Letonio Swader, 20, is in Riverbend Maximum Security Institution serving a life sentence for the 2003 murder of a Murfreesboro woman, but it was unclear yesterday whether he was the same man.

In Middle Tennessee, there are 563 taxpayers with more than \$489,000 in refunds coming their way, Boone said.

Williamson, Davidson, Rutherford and Montgomery counties are among the counties with the highest dollars in undelivered checks, he said.

Shelby County had the most undeliverable refunds, 318. Davidson County had the second highest number, 235.

Last year, 1,121 taxpayers were due \$831,000 but had given the IRS bad addresses, Boone said. He did not know how many updated their addresses, but said, "we end up with very few holdovers from year to year." ■

Contact Bonna de la Cruz at 726-5990 or bdelacruz@Tennessean.com.

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