

## Tis' the tax season

By Heather Gurewitz

At the end of the year, many business owners turn their books over to their accountants and return only to sign the tax returns and write the checks.

However, as the sole proprietor of your business, hiring an accountant or tax preparer does not absolve you of the responsibility of correctly filing your taxes. If there is a mistake, the IRS doesn't go after your accountant. It is your tax document, it is your responsibility.

So how do you find out what you need to know? Here are a few options:

Option 1: Come to the Keith Hall TaxTalk Seminar in Ukiah on Wednesday, March 24. I got the chance to see Keith present his TaxTalk in Orlando last September and not only was it enlightening, but very entertaining. Keith is a C.P.A., as well as chief operating officer and National Tax Advisor for the National Association for the Self Employed. This is a very valuable opportunity, and a great write off.

Option 2: Call West Company. We are not accountants and we don't give tax advice, but we

have resources available to help business owners learn about taxes. For example, we know it has been a tough year for businesses throughout the county and many people are now eligible for the Earned Income Credit (EIC). The EIC ranges from \$32 to \$5,667 and is based on income and family size.

Option 3: Visit the IRS website. It sounds daunting, but the IRS website has some very user friendly audio-visual tutorials for small business owners.

In the end, you may still need an accountant. You may go to someone your friends recommend or you may find someone in the yellow pages. However, the only way to know if you are finding someone who is right for you is to understand your taxes.

Now, if your 2009 taxes are a nightmare, you may want to rethink your book keeping. It's a new year, and now is the time to start organizing your finances for the year to come.

*Heather Gurewitz is director of the Women's Business Center at West Company, 760 B. Stewart St., Fort Bragg. Contact her at 964-7571 or [heather@westcompany.org](mailto:heather@westcompany.org).*