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Profs say filing jointly for couples is the best

University News Service

Last minute income tax filers ought not to hurry so much they overlook deductions this week, particularly working couples who might forget the year-old deduction which doesn't have to be itemized and offers greater benefits this year, advises a Texas A&M University accounting professor.

The special deduction allows couples filing joint returns to deduct 10 percent — it was 5 percent last year — of the lower of the two incomes with the maximum deduction of \$3,000, said Dr. Clair Nixon.

"If the wife makes \$10,000, the couple can deduct \$1,000 from their incomes, which is pretty good," he said.

Married couples are better off filing joint returns, said Nixon, and short tax forms are best for people with one source of income who can't take advantage of itemized deductions because they don't meet the minimum requirement.

"Itemized deductions are important, but it's really the excess over that minimum amount that does you any good," Nixon said.

"Married couples who buy

houses for tax purposes may pay \$5,000 a year in interest expenses, but because they must have at least \$3,400 in itemized deductions their actual tax benefits in this example is only \$1,600."

Tax benefits from casualty deductions are significantly less this year, as are benefits from medical expenses, he said.

Nixon pointed out if somebody's house burned down during the year the amount they can deduct from the casualty is less because of changes in the tax law last year. The tax benefit is the difference between 10 percent of the family's income and the cost of destruction to the home. If damages amount to less than 10 percent of the income, no deduction can be taken.

Special sales tax deductions are available to everyone. For instance, anybody who bought a car can deduct the sales tax, and interest expenses on a home, charge cards, and personal loans are all deductible, he said, but one of the biggest deductions is the Individual Retirement Account.

"It's another one that you don't have to itemize in order to

take," he said. "Companies usually set up retirement accounts for their employees, people can set up their own retirement accounts. A person can put aside up to \$2,000 a year in an IRA and simply deduct that amount from his income."

Married couples with one spouse working can set aside as much as \$2,250 a year in an IRA account and with both spouses working set aside up to \$4,000 a year.

Self-employed people can deduct self-employment (Social Security) taxes, especially now because the rate has increased significantly due to changes in 1983 tax laws, he continued.

"Self-employment taxes can be paid in addition to income taxes, and right now we're paying about a rate of about 14 percent," Nixon said. He said that more than a fourth of all taxpayers pay more in Social Security self-employment taxes than they pay for income tax.

Americans who work other people pay a large amount of taxes, and rich people don't invest also pay a lot.

Mini-snack bar relocates giving computer a home

By TAMMY KIRK
Reporter

If there is thirst or hunger in the lobby of the Zachry Engineering Center, the Zachry Snackery is now the only option for grabbing a quick snack on that floor.

The coke and candy machines which used to be in the lobby have been moved to the second floor and their former home now is occupied by work horses and construction barriers. The purpose for the construction is to install a new engineering computer system called CYBER — and not all students are pleased with the absence of the snack area, relocated on the second floor.

In an unscientific survey conducted by The Battalion in Zachry, the differences in students' reactions seemed to depend on whether or not one used the new computers.

"I don't like it, it's inconvenient," said Susan June, a junior computer science major. June added that it used to be so easy to get a coke before class, and until the survey, she didn't know where the machines were relocated.

"It's not so much that they moved the machines," said Dan Montgomery, petroleum engineer major, "it's that they didn't tell anyone where they were putting them."

John Degenhardt, another petroleum engineer major, agreed with Montgomery and said that the only reason he knew of the relocation was because he had talked to one of

the engineering professors earlier in the week.

Students working on the computers, temporarily in a basement room, either had no reaction to the change or thought the change was needed.

Senior electrical engineering major Jeff Gokingco said he wasn't even aware the snack machines had been moved.

"I think moving the computers upstairs is a pretty good idea and very practical," said Ron Matthews, a senior electrical engineering major who uses the computers. The room being used now was too small, Matthews said.

The computers are intended for graphics special application, says CYBER Operations Manager Gary Sinton. The computers are available to students in the College of Engineering or to those students who have a special user number signed by a professor.

"We're still getting our feet wet (with CYBER)," Sinton said. "Not many people are using them yet."

Of those who are using CYBER, there are still "how-to-do" problems. During Sinton's discussion of the computers, several students came in for help.

"Gary, how do I transfer part of one file to another file?"

"The computer is assuming the wrong sequence, am I entering the wrong default?"

"How do I install this tape on CYBER?"

But despite the problems,

Sinton said he doesn't think anyone could deny the practical use of the space for the computers. The reason the computers are replacing the snack area because of the limited amount of office and classroom space Sinton said.

"If you could build a riser in the middle of the lobby where all that open space is, could probably get about six or nine classrooms there," Sinton said. But he added, building wasn't designed that way.

The CYBER computers have several advantages, Sinton said. Among the other packages ready used, such as PLATO, supplementary teaching design and graphics design and scientific research packages also can be used on the computers.

An example of how graphics design can be applied is using in 3-D. By punching a command, a student can draw at his drawing from a number of angles, not just one.

One use of the scientific search package is for finding out characteristics of water vibrations, Sinton said. The engineers use this package intensively, he adds.

"The College of Engineering needed a computer," Sinton said. "We're not starving students. The Zachry Snackery is still here and the machines are too — just in a different place."

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