



TANGLED WEB? CHRISTIE GAVE CONFLICTING STATEMENTS ON WHEN HE KNEW ABOUT BRIDGEGATE EMAILS. STORY, PAGE A3

SUNDAY Courier News

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MAKING ENDS

No longer is the label of poverty limited to the individual or family sleeping on the street or in a homeless shelter. The faces and the circumstances of those struggling to survive in New Jersey are changing.



By MaryLynn Schiavi
Special to the Courier News

“People are now looking around and realizing that this isn’t just the guy at the soup kitchen, this is our neighbors, our parents, our children,” said John Franklin, chief executive officer of the United Way of Northern New Jersey, which includes affluent Somerset County. A Rutgers researcher said a growing number of people are beginning to realize that a profound shift has taken place. “More and more people who used to consider themselves to be middle class are realizing that the poor is not an individual or family they can point to over there. They are realizing that it is ‘us,’ ” said Stephanie Hoopes Halpin, assistant professor at the School of Public Affairs, Rutgers University in Newark. While the record highs on Wall Street tell one sto-

ry, the statistics shared by social service agencies in New Jersey tell a very different story. In just one year, the percentage of people seeking assistance with heating and electric bills almost doubled in Somerset, Hunterdon, Middlesex and Morris counties, according to James Jacob, president and chief executive officer of Ewing-based NJ Shares. In August 2013, the Franklin Township Food Bank in Franklin, Somerset County, distributed more packages of food than it had since it was established in 1975, with the exception of superstorm Sandy. And July 2013 was the fourth busiest month in the food bank’s history, according to Frank Hasner, executive director. Hasner said that, based on his observation, the situation is worsening. “More and more people in New Jersey have to decide whether they are going to pay their rent or have a meal that

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United Way seeks to launch nationwide dialogue around working Americans falling into poverty, **Page A6**

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This farmer’s market is a year-round event

Stangl Factory site in Flemington open Saturdays

By Pamela MacKenzie
@pammackenziemcj

FLEMINGTON — Do you hanker for fresh, organic produce and all-natural salads? How about handcrafted wares such as custom baskets, locally spun yarns from Central Jersey farms and custom furniture from area artists? Stangl Factory Farmers Market may be for you. Located on Stangl Road at Mine Street, close to Liberty Village Outlets, and open every Saturday from 9 to 3 p.m., the farmers market is a haven for vendors and shoppers alike, a community for people who value the personal touch and the integrity of pure, unprocessed foods. The market, which has



Peg Fagan (right) of Flying Avocado Whole Foods, helps a customer on Saturday at the farmers market at Stangl Factory in Flemington. KEITH A. MUCILLI/FOR THE COURIER NEWS

been operating for about a year, offers everything from organic meat and eggs, artisan breads, handmade fudge and herbal teas designed to chase away sniffles to

handmade soaps and soy candles, hand-dyed alpaca yarns and hand-knitted accessories, hand-crocheted jewelry, custom cards and notebooks, and furniture handcraft-

ONLINE
For a video, visit MyCentralJersey.com/MyCJvideos

ed by local artisans. The market also features bakers, chocolatiers, organic vegetables and salads, handmade baskets, beaded jewelry and a knife sharpener named Neil. Most of the vendors are there every week, though some will miss a week to do a craft show elsewhere or because they don’t have sufficient product to sell. Manager Martha Mulford-Dreswick said Chickadee Creek Farm usually comes with organic produce, but on Saturday they were sold out. However, two of the members of Croton Farmers Coop-

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COLOR IN BLACK & WHITE

Voting a disgrace in baseball hall



Jay Jefferson Cooke

COMMENTARY

I am letting you know right from jump street (the start of this episode, for all of you “slang challenged” readers) that the so-called “baseball purists” most assuredly will take offense to what I have typed for today. Here is some clever back-story that explains the next quip: Nearly 25 years ago, I got my master’s in journal-

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HAYWARD

United Way seeks national dialogue on hidden poor

Echoing President Johnson's initiative, poverty study planned in 5 states

By MaryLynn Schiavi
Special to the Courier News

Calling it "the great unfinished work of our society" President Lyndon B. Johnson launched a war on poverty 50 years ago.

For Johnson, the fight was personal. His early life was threatened by economic instability, and according to biographer Robert A. Caro, often there was little food and the family lived in constant fear that the bank would take their home.

In a message to Congress on March 16, 1964, that introduced the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, Johnson wrote, "The war on poverty is not a struggle simply to support people, to make them dependent on the generosity of others. It is a struggle to give people a chance."

He wrote further, "Our history has proved that each time we broaden the base of abundance, giving more people the chance to produce and consume, we create new industry, higher production, increased earnings and better income for all."

In an effort to continue Johnson's war on poverty, United Way announced on Thursday the launch of national research project focused on the ALICE population, to ignite a nationwide dialogue around the size and scope of working Americans who are unable to afford basic needs today. ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed.

United Way is partnering with Rutgers University-Newark, School of Public Affairs and Administration to undertake a study of the ALICE population in five states.

"Just as President Johnson sought to mobilize the entire country on this date in 1964 to attack

TO LEARN MORE

For more information about United Way of Northern New Jersey visit: www.UnitedWayNNJ.org.

For more information about Rutgers University-Newark School of Public Affairs and Administration, visit: <http://spaa.newark.rutgers.edu/>

Read President Lyndon B. Johnson's message to Congress online at: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26109>

poverty from the local, state and national level, United Way is working to mobilize communities and corporations by redefining the struggle for social and financial stability in terms that fit the needs of our day," said John Franklin, CEO of United Way of Northern New Jersey, which serves Morris, Somerset, Sussex, and Warren counties as well as portions of suburban Essex County.

Through the ALICE Project, United Way hopes to better understand the issues and challenges faced by residents who earn more than the U.S. poverty line, but less

than the basic cost of living.

Building on a 2012 study of New Jersey's ALICE population that found one-third of the state's households cannot afford basic needs, United Way organizations in five states are taking the lead to shed light on the issue across the country. United Ways in Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Michigan and New Jersey will unveil the results of ALICE studies later this year.

The reports will serve as a launching pad for United Way to engage policy makers at the local, state and national levels, corporate America, aca-

demics, the faith community, ALICES and others to pursue solutions for financial stability.

"The ALICE project can reinvigorate a nationwide focus on the hidden poor, with a grounding in objective data," said Marc Holzer, dean of Rutgers University-Newark School of Public Affairs and Administration. "This type of data-driven project gives us the best opportunity to understand and attack the barriers keeping our citizens from realizing their potential."

United Way's ALICE project has its roots in New Jersey, where the first report in 2009 looked at the ALICE population in Morris County. In 2012, United Way of Northern New Jersey released the first statewide report, detailing the magnitude and challenges facing ALICE in New Jersey's 21 counties, using measures developed by Rutgers University-Newark School of Public Affairs and Administration Assistant

Professor Stephanie Hoopes Halpin.

In partnership with Rutgers University-Newark, the same approach will be used to examine ALICE in the four new states as well as an updated report on New Jersey's households.

Fifty years after Johnson delivered his call to action to Congress, poverty in the U.S. is on the rise.

Johnson wrote in March 1964, "The Congress is charged by the Constitution to 'provide ... for the general welfare of the United States. Our present abundance is a measure of its success in fulfilling that duty. Now Congress is being asked to extend that welfare to all our people."

"The President of the United States is President of all the people in every section of the country. But this office also holds a special responsibility to the distressed and disinherited, the hungry and the hopeless of this abundant nation," he said.

ALICE

Continued from Page A1

night," he said.

Last month the state Department of Labor reported that the unemployment rate in New Jersey dropped to 7.6 percent, but according to Halpin, there is little hope of long-term economic recovery because most of the jobs expected to be created in the state during the next decade are low-paying jobs — those paying less than \$20 an hour.

Who is ALICE?

Halpin has examined the plight of the new working poor in a study called the ALICE Report, which was published by the United Way of Northern New Jersey. The agency also serves Morris, Sussex, and Warren counties as well as portions of suburban Essex County.

Coined in 2009 by United Way, the term ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed.

In her report, Halpin presented a new methodology that for the first time provides a comprehensive look at the size of this population.

In New Jersey, ALICE totals more than 1.1 million households, according to the report.



John Franklin, CEO of United Way of Northern New Jersey, explains the term ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) at a talk this fall.

PHOTO COURTESY OF UNITED WAY OF NORTHERN NEW JERSEY

"These are the people who are technically earning above the national poverty income level but less than what it costs to reasonably cover basic living expenses," Halpin said. "These are people who are working hard, playing by the rules, and yet still falling behind."

A growing number of people are realizing that they are ALICE despite their efforts to work more and spend less, she said.

"And these are people who constitute an important part of our community," she added. "These are our teachers, social workers, nurses, home health-care aides, and others who play a vital role of service to the community."

Among the ranks of

ALICE is Betsy Sloan, 56 of Iselin, who is struggling to keep food on the table from week to week since her husband became disabled four years ago.

Sloan formerly worked as licensed practical nurse, but because of her own health issues, she now works part time as a teacher's aide in a daycare center. She earns \$11 an hour.

Barely able to pay her taxes and for heating oil, she said she is not eligible for food stamps because the household income is too high — almost \$40,000 annually.

"Sometimes I'm standing in Shop Rite and I just break into tears. I don't know what to feed my family anymore," Sloan said.

She is fortunate that she has no credit card

debt and their mortgage is paid, but she does carry home equity and car loans.

"My taxes just keep going up along with the price of food. I just don't know how we're going to make it," she said.

Most people now face a new reality

Halpin and Jacob of NJ Shares are concerned that the economy emerging from the worst downturn in U.S. history since the Great Depression is creating a very different reality for most people.

In 2012, Hunterdon, Somerset, Middlesex and Morris counties received 8.75 percent of the NJ Energy Grants, which help residents pay for heating fuel and electricity. In 2013, the request for help from these four counties grew to 15.1 percent of the grants, according to Jacob.

"Our most recent household data indicates that 71 percent of the households assisted had a vulnerable household member, 20 percent were unemployed and/or receiving unemployment benefits and 80 percent had employment income but faced a financial crisis," Jacob said.

According to the ALICE Report, 27 percent of Hunterdon County's households were living below what is considered to be a basic survival budget of \$71,751 for a family

of four in 2010.

The numbers were not much different for Somerset and Middlesex. In Middlesex, 28 percent were living below the basic survival budget of \$58,587 for a family of four and in Somerset, 28 percent were living below the basic survival budget for the county set at \$66,160 for a family of four.

The ALICE Report also revealed that statewide, between 2010 and 2011, the number of ALICE households grew 7.7 percent.

Halpin said that during the same period, those living below the poverty line also grew by 2 percent bringing the total of struggling New Jersey households to 1,149,000 in 2011.

She said while 2012 census data have not yet been released, she expects that they will reveal that the numbers of number of ALICE households have continued to rise. United Way plans to release new figures this fall.

"When we consider the impact of superstorm Sandy and continued high unemployment in the state, at this point many ALICE families are likely to have depleted any savings they might have had without much opportunity to increase their income," Halpin said.

The Rutgers Sandy Report gave the United Way the opportunity to put the ALICE measure to use for disaster recovery, said Laura Bruno, public relations manager, United Way of Northern New Jersey.

She said the report found that households earning below the ALICE threshold were disproportionately hit by the storm. Most ALICE families lost wage income due to the power outages and did not have insurance to cover damage to their house or car.

"It did not take much actual damage to cause hardship for an ALICE family. Federal government and nonprofit assistance is not nearly enough to fill the gap," Bruno said.

According to the re-

port, ALICE households were especially hard hit in Middlesex County which ranked fifth in the Rutgers Household Hardship Index, and eight towns ranked in the top 100 in the state. These towns are the most vulnerable to ongoing hardship.

Job creation key

"No matter what we do to help ALICE, whether it is to help out with child care, addressing issues of care givers and issues around housing, the real big problem we have is a supply-side job problem," said Franklin, the CEO of the United Way of Northern New Jersey.

He said a concerted effort to generate jobs and to continue with an economic stimulus effort is vital to getting funds in the hands of the almost 30 percent of people who are struggling — who would then spend the funds and further stimulate the economy.

"We are in a very difficult place right now because I don't think we have advocates for the worker as we did in the past," he said. "Those who are working are working longer and harder and they are working for less and as a result many businesses are reaping record profits."

In the fall, Franklin met with United Way leaders from around the nation in Washington, D.C., to share best practices and ideas about how to best help the ALICE population.

For Franklin, measuring the growth of the ALICE population offers a place to begin.

He said the United Way is working to make ALICE a household name, and to have policy makers, corporate leaders and elected officials better understand the growing population of those in need around the state and the nation.



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