



## **Study: More than 40 percent of Jackson County households struggle to make ends meet**

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JACKSON COUNTY, MI – Nearly 25,000 households in Jackson County are struggling to make ends meet — with more than half of those homes earning more than the federal poverty level, a new report released Sunday, Aug. 31 by the United Way of Jackson County reads.

Conducted by Rutgers University, the "ALICE – Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed" report spotlights a large population of hard-working residents in Michigan who struggle financially, and why.

Ken Toll, president and CEO of United Way of Jackson County, said the report doesn't advocate for specific policy changes, but rather highlights data "to get the conversation going."

"It sheds some light on a terrible reality that some area families are facing," Toll said. "It questions the American dream, and if we're setting up families to achieve it."

Some 14,162 households in Jackson County, or 23 percent, meet the definition of ALICE, earning more than the U.S poverty level but less than the basic cost of living. In all, 41 percent of county households fall below the ALICE threshold.

"We found that a typical family of four needs to make much more than we originally thought to have a basic standard of living," Toll said. "Both wage earners should be making \$25 an hour to make ends meet with two children."

More than 60 percent of all jobs in Michigan pay less than \$20 an hour, and the jobs forecast shows low-paying jobs will dominate the state economy well into the future, holding back ALICE households, a press release reads.

"The more people who struggle to become financially stable, the harder it is for our community and our state to regain its economic strength," Toll said.

Municipalities in Jackson County with a percentage of ALICE households ranged from Spring Arbor Township's 22 percent to the city of Jackson's 58 percent.

Toll said strategies for the United Way and organizations like it moving forward include providing as much assistance to families as possible.

"A poverty program **modeled after Cradle2Career** would be a long-term goal," he said. "Better access to social services would be a good start."

**CMS Energy donated \$25,000 to the Michigan Association of United Ways to launch the county-by-county study earlier this year.**

More information on the report and data are available at [www.UnitedWayALICE.org](http://www.UnitedWayALICE.org). The report includes all Michigan counties.

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