



## 24% of Kalamazoo County households live above poverty line but below cost-of-living levels

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**KALAMAZOO, MI** — They have often been called the working poor -- people who live above the poverty line but below basic cost-of-living levels.

They are people who are typically working at low-paying jobs, living paycheck to paycheck and in a constant financial struggle.

They are laborers, skilled workers, drop-outs and college grads who haven't found the work they really want and who, with little or no savings, are one big medical bill or one major car repair payment from slipping underwater financially.

Starting this weekend, the United Way is giving them an interesting new name: ALICE households – Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed.

It is also providing some of the first comprehensive statistics to identify them.

"We all know ALICE," Scott Dzurka, president and chief executive officer of the

### KALAMAZOO

## STRUGGLING HOUSEHOLDS

ALICE, an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, are households that earn more than the U.S. poverty level, but less than cost of living for the country. Combined, the number of poverty and ALICE households equal the total population struggling to afford basic needs.

City or Township	Total households	Households in ALICE or Poverty
Alamo Twp.	1,394	29%
Brady Twp.	1,582	27%
Charleston Twp.	711	23%

Michigan Association of United Ways, said in a press release. "ALICE is the recent college graduate unable to afford to live on his or her own, the young family strapped by child-care costs and the mid-career professional now underemployed. These folks are vital to our state's future economic well-being and they face barriers beyond their control, frustrating their ability to become financially stable."

In **Kalamazoo County**, 24 percent of all households, approximately 24,141, are ALICE households, according to a study conducted by the Rutgers University School of Public Affairs and Administration in Newark, as commissioned by the United Way organizations in six states, including Michigan.

Another 17,245 households in Kalamazoo County, 17 percent, live below the poverty line, according to the study, which used



Michael Larsen

data collected by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Internal Revenue Service and others. The statewide project was supported by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research in Kalamazoo.

In Calhoun County, 29 percent of all households meet ALICE guidelines. That is 15,470 households. Another 8,866 households, 17 percent, live below the poverty line.

Workers who are not making enough to keep up with the cost of living, may choose unlicensed child care

Climax Twp.	887	28%
Comstock		
Charter Twp.	6,112	33%
Cooper		
Charter Twp.	3,954	25%
Galesburg	744	44%
Kalamazoo		
Charter Twp.	9,925	45%
Kalamazoo	27,971	56%
Osthemos		
Charter Twp.	9,790	44%
Parchment Twp.	845	49%
Pavilion Twp.	2,200	33%
Portage	19,058	31%
Prairie		
Ronde Twp.	837	19%
Richland Twp.	2,780	26%
Ross Twp.	1,844	19%
Schoolcraft Twp.	3,305	32%
Texas		
Charter Twp.	4,916	16%
Wakeshma Twp.	525	30%

Sources: HUD, USDA, IRS and state Treasury, Bureau of Labor Statistics, ChildCare Aware, 2012 American Community Survey.

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(rather than traditional and more expensive care) and emergency room visits (over the cost of ongoing health care) in order to have enough money to put food on their tables, said Michael Larson, president and chief executive office of the **United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region**.

He said the ALICE study gives helps the United Way better understand how we can look at supporting individuals and families in need.

"Hopefully it gets the wheels turning for our community to look at different things that we might be able to do," he said.

He said he thinks the data also provides an opportunity for many of the United Way's corporate partners to "find different ways they can be partners with organizations like United Way and the nonprofit world to help support their employees. For us, our hope is that it helps us look at some long-term plans and solutions to address and help people."

Chris Riker, marketing and communications director of the **United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region**, said the data raises awareness of how many working people are struggling and how significant the issue is. It can also motivate people to get involved by contributing money, becoming an advocate for a cause or volunteering their services to help create the change their hope to see."ALICE is not going away," Larsen said. "In my opinion, that population is here. ... But how we can best serve and support those families that are working really hard to make ends meet is very important for our community as a whole. So I think each of us can find different roles to help make that happen and be mindful that we have families in those situations."

### **Kalamazoo County**

ALICE ----- 24,141 households = 24% of all households;

BELOW POVERTY LEVEL ----- 17,245 households = 17% of all households;

ABOVE ALICE ----- 59,403 households = 59% of all households.

### **Housing Survival Budget for Kalamazoo County (What does it cost to afford the basic necessities?):**

HOURLY WAGE ----- \$8.77 per hour for single adult // \$26.39 per hour for a family of four.

HOUSING ----- \$530 per month for single adult // \$688 per month for a family of four.

CHILD CARE ----- \$0 for a single adult // \$1,201 per month for a family of four.

FOOD ----- \$196 per month for single adult // \$592 per month for a family of four.

TRANSPORTATION ----- \$341 per month for single adult // \$681 per month for a family of four.

HEALTH CARE ----- \$130 per month for single adult // \$518 per month for a family of four.

TAXES ----- \$133 per month for single adult // \$319 per month for a family of four.

MISCELLANEOUS ----- \$133 per month for single adult // \$400 per month for a family of four.

**Among statewide findings:**

-Nearly two-thirds of all jobs in Michigan pay less than \$20 per hour;

-Low-paying jobs will dominate the economy well into the future;

-ALICE households are old and young and led by men and women of all races;

-Even when their wages are combined with some public assistance, ALICE households face an average 13 percent income gap with those that are achieving financial stability.

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