

Nearly 3 in 10 near 'cliff to poverty' in Livingston

Jim Totten, Livingston Daily 12:50 a.m. EDT September 1, 2014



(Photo: ALAN WARD/DAILY PRESS & ARGUS)

A new study shows that close to 3 in 10 of Livingston County households are living from paycheck to paycheck.

The report takes a close look at residents who are struggling financially but are above federal poverty guidelines; it calls those people asset-limited, income-constrained, employed, or ALICE.

The Michigan Association of United Ways released the report, created by Rutgers University.

"There's this whole other group of people — could be you or me — (who are) one failed transmission away from going over the cliff to poverty," said Nancy Rosso, executive director of the Livingston County United Way.

Rosso and Donna Gehringer, United Way community investments director, have been reviewing the 250-page study.

"This will give a whole new dimension to our discussion about people in need in our local economy and our new economy," Rosso said.

The report showed 13,437 Livingston County households were struggling, and there are another 4,443 households living in poverty. This means 27 percent of the households are struggling financially.

Rosso said this report reveals "what does it mean to make it or not be making it."

In all, about 40 percent of Michigan households with at least one worker don't make enough money to meet basic survival needs, it was reported.

The report said ALICE households are living below a basic survival threshold and struggle with paying housing, child care, food, health care and transportation.

According to the ALICE Report, any family of four living on \$61,149 or less is part of this struggling group.

Gehringer said the report came at the right time.

"We really had no measure of the impact that the last decade of economic decline had left on us," Gehringer said.

The study also was created for California, Florida, Connecticut and Indiana. The first ALICE study was made in New Jersey.

United Way officials said it's great having research-based data to show what is happening in the county.

Rosso said this new report will help steer the nonprofit in how it can help residents.

The nonprofit will review the report and begin a dialogue with the community and other nonprofits about how it can assist residents.

Rosso said the figures are a good way to address a belief some still have about the county.

"There still are people who live here and think that we are very affluent, as in all of us, and that couldn't be further from the truth," Rosso said.

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