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United Way ALICE® Report Details Size & Scope of Financial Hardship in Stark County

(Canton, OH) October 4, 2017 – There are 1.8 million Ohio households unable to afford the state’s cost of living, according to the 2015 United Way ALICE Report released on **Wednesday, October 4th** by Ohio United Way. This means that 40% of the total households in the state are still lagging behind pre-recession levels, and struggling to make ends meet and afford basic needs. The ALICE Report is available at <http://ouw.org/alice-documents>.

The ALICE acronym stands for the portion of the population that is **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed. This study of financial hardship places a spotlight on a large population of hardworking residents who work at low-paying jobs, have little or no savings, and are one emergency from falling into poverty. The ALICE Report is the most comprehensive depiction of financial need in the state to date, using the latest data from a variety of sources, including the U.S. Census. The Report unveils new measures, based on present-day income levels and expenses, that quantify the percentage of a region’s workforce that is struggling financially, and why. Ohio is one of 15 states participating in ALICE at a national level.

The ALICE data shows that 26% of Stark County households (39,449) fall into what United Way calls the “ALICE Population.” These are households earning more than the official U.S. poverty level, but less than the basic cost of living. This number is more than double the official poverty rate of 12%, which accounts for 18,207 households locally. Combined, ALICE and poverty households, account for 38% of all households in Stark County.

“We all know ALICE,” says United Way of Greater Stark County (UWGSC) CEO and President Maria Heege. “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 people aren’t just statistics; they are our neighbors and friends.”

“ALICE is an employed individual - or a household - being forced to make choices that compromise health and safety,” explains Connie Allton, UWGSC ALICE Coordinator and Vice President of Community Resources. These difficult decisions put ALICE and the wider community at risk of long-term societal and economic repercussions. The ALICE Population is vital to Ohio’s future economic well-being, but they face barriers to financial stability because low-wage jobs dominate the local economy.”

UWGSC has joined a grassroots movement of 450 United Ways in 15 states to use the same methodology for documenting financial need. The reports build on a United Way study first developed in New Jersey. United Way ALICE Reports provide county-by-county and town-level data, and analysis of how many households are struggling, including the obstacles ALICE households face on the road to financial independence.

“This report provides the objective data that explains why so many residents are struggling to survive, and the challenges they face in attempting to make ends meet,” said the report’s lead researcher, United Way ALICE projects National Director Stephanie Hoopes, Ph.D. “Until now, the true picture of need in local communities and states has been understated and obscured by misleading averages and outdated poverty statistics.”

The 2015 Ohio United Way ALICE Report reveals:

- More than half of all jobs in Ohio pay less than \$40,000 a year and low-income jobs are projected to dominate the state's economy for the foreseeable future.
- The ALICE Population closely mirrors the state's basic demographic make-up of gender, age and ethnicity.
- Income differences in Ohio are most striking for those groups who traditionally earn less: women, LGBTQ people, people of color, recent undocumented immigrants, ESL households, younger veterans and people with disabilities, incarceration history or low levels of education.
- 38% of Ohio households are unable to make ends meet.
- 47% of the state's renters are housing-burdened, meaning that many low-income families are paying more than they can afford. This impacts the local economy because families have less money available to pay for goods and services.

The ALICE Report from Ohio United Way contains county-specific data that is specific to each community. There are 73 United Ways in Ohio, and UWGSC is one of the 46 choosing to participate in this project. Because each United Way is developing their own timeline for implementation, their ALICE data can be utilized in a manner that best serves their individual communities and available resources. The data will influence how and when local United Way organizations communicate their message with stakeholders.

"The county-specific ALICE data is a call to action for us." says Cynthia Vignos, UWGSC Vice President of Marketing & Strategic Communication. "This information will help us focus on the specific areas of need in our community. When our Annual Campaign wraps up in December, the marketing strategy will begin to convey more information regarding ALICE and the local relevance. The people of Stark County will be learning a lot more about ALICE in 2018."

The United Way ALICE Report was funded in part by corporate sponsors including AT&T, Atlantic Health System, Deloitte, Entergy, Novartis and The UPS Foundation. For more information, contact Connie Allton at 330-491-9987 or connie.allton@uwstark.org or visit www.uwstark.org/ALICE.

About United Way of Greater Stark County

United Way of Greater Stark County fights for the Health, Education and Financial Stability of every person in every community. The agency collaborates, convenes, and partners to support programs and initiatives that break the cycle of poverty, promote a healthy community where children are successful from kindergarten through graduation to a career, and where families have the tools, skills, and support they need to become financially independent. We win by living United. Visit www.uwstark.org for more information about United Way of Greater Stark County. Offices are at 401 Market Avenue North, Suite 300, Canton, Ohio 44702. (330) 491-0445.

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