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GROUNDBREAKING NEW UNITED WAY STUDY REVEALS PERCENT OF LOCAL HOUSEHOLDS STRUGGLING TO AFFORD BASICS

United Way ALICE Report details size and scope of financial hardship in Virginia

IMPORTANT NOTE: To read an embargoed copy of the report and find county and city-level data on the size and demographics of ALICE, as well as the costs and community conditions faced by ALICE households, visit www.UnitedWayALICE.org/Virginia. The case sensitive password is LiveUnitedVA. This report and advance information is embargoed until the press conference on July 18th

Nadine Pottinga, United Way NSV CEO and local staff lead for the Virginia ALICE Project, in addition to other United Way representatives, ALICE Families, and Research Advisory Committee members have provided quotes (in addendum) and are available for interview.

A press conference will be hosted at 10:00am July 18th at Handley Library in the East Reading Room, 100 W Piccadilly St, Winchester, VA 22601.

To access login information for the press conference, visit www.UnitedWayALICE.org/Virginia
The case sensitive password is LiveUnitedVA

Winchester, Virginia – In Virginia more than 1.2 million households – 39 percent of the state’s total population – are unable to afford the state’s cost of living, according to the United Way ALICE Report for Virginia released today.

In United Way of Northern Shenandoah Valley’s service area, the number of ALICE households ranges from 34% in Frederick County up to 50% in the City of Winchester.

United Way coined the acronym ALICE, which stands for Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed, 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 away from falling into poverty. The United Way ALICE Report is the most comprehensive depiction of financial needs in the state to date, using data from a variety of sources, including the US Census. The report unveils new measures, based on present-day income levels and expenses that show how many Virginia workers are struggling financially, and why.
“Every one of us knows ALICE,” said United Way NSV CEO, Nadine Pottinga. “Many of us are ALICE - child care providers, home health aides, mechanics, retail workers, service providers, store clerks, or office assistants. ALICE can be a new graduate just starting out in life, a young family, or a retiree. Some households become ALICE due to an unforeseen life event: a life-altering health diagnosis, job loss, or family crisis such as a death or divorce.”

Under the leadership of Rappahannock United Way, local United Ways from throughout the state of Virginia have come together for the first time to produce the Virginia ALICE Report project; along with the generous financial backing from state-wide sponsors Union Bank and Trust and GEICO.

The Report shows that ALICE households move above and below the ALICE threshold over time. For instance, a young ALICE household may capitalize on their education and move above the ALICE threshold. An older ALICE household may experience a health emergency, lose a job, or suffer from a personal crisis and slip into poverty. The success of our communities is directly tied to the financial stability of ALICE households.

When households cannot make ends meet, they are forced to make difficult choices such as foregoing health care, accredited child care, healthy food, or car insurance; these ‘savings’ threaten their health, safety and future – and they reduce productivity and raise insurance premiums and taxes for everyone.

The Virginia ALICE Report reveals:

- 39% (1.2 million) of Virginia Households Struggle to Afford Basics such as housing, food, transportation, and health care.
- The Federal Poverty Level reports that 11% (342,112) of Virginia households face financial hardship, an additional 28% (859,079) qualify as ALICE.
- The basic cost of living outpaces wages - the cost of basic household expenses in Virginia is more than most of the state’s jobs can support. The average annual Household Survival Budget for a Virginia family of four (two adults and two children) is $61,068 – significantly more than double the U.S. family poverty level of $24,250.
- The number of ALICE households in Virginia has steadily increased from 715,465 in 2007 to 859,079 in 2015 – a 20% increase.
- Nearly one third – 32 percent – of senior households in Virginia qualify as ALICE, more than triple the 9 percent of senior households in poverty.
- There are 890,549 families with children in Virginia, and 37 percent of them have income below the ALICE Threshold.
- Families headed by single women with children are much more likely to struggle financially. They account for 22 percent of all Virginia families with children, but 48 percent of households with children below the ALICE Threshold.

- **Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional ALICE Data:**
  - **Frederick County** - 30,483 total households / 34% Households are ALICE or in Poverty
  - **Clarke County** - 5,526 total households / 40% Households are ALICE or in Poverty
  - **Shenandoah County** - 17,096 total households / 41% Households are ALICE or in Poverty
  - **City of Winchester** - 10,608 total households - 50% Households are ALICE or in Poverty
The United Way ALICE Report for Virginia provides high-quality, research-based information to foster a better understanding of our communities. The research was led by Stephanie Hoopes, Ph.D., United Way ALICE Project National Director. Her staff collaborated with a 13-person Virginia Research Advisory Committee, which represented a range of organizations including academic institutions, social and human services organizations, which advised and contributed to this report.

“The Virginia ALICE report is powerful tool that shows recent and meaningful data about individuals and families who are working hard and yet struggling due to income, housing costs, child care costs, food costs, or any unforeseen medical or life emergency.” Said Jane Yaun, M.S. Deputy Executive Director with Rappahannock Area Community Services Board, who served on the Virginia Research Advisory Committee, “This report will help our community strategize best ways to help ALICE families obtain financial stability, improve health outcomes and ultimately improve the quality of life of not only those who are struggling but also our community as a whole.”

Virginia is the fourteenth state to complete an ALICE study. This collaborative model, practiced in each state, ensures each United Way ALICE Report presents unbiased data that is replicable, easily updated periodically, and sensitive to local context. Working closely with United Ways, the United Way ALICE Project seeks to equip communities with information to create innovative solutions.

“This Report is now a call to action,” said United Way of Northern Shenandoah Valley Board President, Darcus Breneman. “We ask that people read it and share it to raise awareness about ALICE. We invite you to join with us today; contact United Way of Northern Shenandoah Valley and together we will build a stronger and more prosperous Virginia for all.”

To learn more about the Virginia ALICE Report and how to get involved, visit www.VirginiaALICE.org

About United Way of Northern Shenandoah Valley: Since 1946 the United Way of Northern Shenandoah Valley has worked to impact the community human care needs that matter most to the people of Clarke, Frederick, Shenandoah Counties and the City of Winchester. United Way of Northern Shenandoah Valley convenes the people and organizations necessary to create solutions to our region’s most pressing challenges and collaborates with effective partners. United Way of Northern Shenandoah Valley seeks to serve as the catalyst for community change by supporting over 42 partner agencies in the areas of Financial Stability, Health and Education. For more information visit our website www.unitedwaynsv.org. Follow us on Twitter @UWNSV.

About Virginia United Ways
Twenty-three independent local United Ways came together throughout the Commonwealth to collaboratively work together on the Virginia ALICE Project.

Local United Ways are part of a global network of more than 1,800 United Ways, serving communities in 41 countries worldwide. United Ways have a vision for a community where individuals and families achieve their potential through education, financial stability, and healthy living.
Rappahannock United Way called together local United Ways throughout Virginia to join the more than 450 other United Ways across 14 states to give ALICE a voice and create change to improve life for ALICE and our communities as a whole.
ADDENDUM

Quotes from Virginia ALICE Research Advisory Committee members, statewide sponsors, and participating local United Way CEOs – also available for interviews:

“The Virginia ALICE report is a powerful tool that shows recent and meaningful data about individuals and families who are working hard and yet struggling due to income, housing costs, child care costs, food costs, or any unforeseen medical or life emergency. This report will help our community strategize best ways to help ALICE families obtain financial stability, improve health outcomes and ultimately improve the quality of life of not only those who are struggling but also our community as a whole”.

Jane Yaun – Research Advisory Committee Member
Rappahannock Area Community Services Board
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“The gap between having a job and earning the minimum income necessary to live outside of poverty remains very real. This report, and its county by county analysis in particular, prevents people from dismissing the data as “someone else’s problem” by proving that those impacted are our friends and neighbors. Effective solutions to these problems are grounded in a data-informed understanding of the issues at play, and the Virginia ALICE report will be the gold-star resource in kick-starting critical conversations of change throughout the coming years.”

David J. Urso, Ph.D. – Research Advisory Committee Member
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