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Poverty levels in Michigan reach an all-time high

One in seven Michiganders lives in poverty, according to Michigan League for Human Services, putting **Michigan in 17th place for highest poverty level in the country**. These statistics, published today by the *Michigan Information & Research Service*, illustrate the extreme destitute of many in Michigan this holiday season, unlike those in years past.

“These numbers mean that many families in Michigan are newly poor and many more need help meeting their basic needs,” said Sharon Parks, president and CEO of MLHS.

The report (executive summary enclosed) provides startling statistics about poverty in Michigan:

- 22 percent of children under age 5 live in poverty (a family of four making \$22,000 or less is considered to be at or under the poverty line)
- Among minorities, 38 percent of Hispanic and 45 percent of African-American children under age 5 live below the poverty line
- The median household income in Michigan has fallen below the average of other states (it has declined more than 10 percent since 2001, when adjusted for inflation)
- African-American workers had 22.8 percent unemployment in the second quarter of 2009. That is nearly double the rate of white workers (12.9 percent)
- Affordable housing is proving problematic for many. More than 50 percent of renters in 2008 spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing. (Spending more 30 percent or more on housing is considered unaffordable.) A startling 36 percent of homeowners were spending more than 30 percent of their income on mortgage payments in that same year.

At Guiding Light Mission’s website, www.lifeonthestreet.org, localized homelessness statistics can be found, including:

- 1,967 children under the age of 18 are homeless in Kent County
- Homeless men have a 19 percent less change of reaching the age of 75 than the average population
- 6,022 people in 2008 were homeless in Grand Rapids

These statistics are especially impactful to the community missions and agencies that work to support the homeless or those living in poverty.

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“We have seen a steady increase in the number of patrons that sleep in our emergency shelter,” said Stuart Ray, executive director. The shelter averages 125 men nightly in its men’s shelter. These patrons are in addition to the 36 men that live in Guiding Light Mission’s recovery program dorms.

Guiding Light Mission helps men to transition out of homelessness by providing a biblically-based, residential substance abuse recovery program, and assistance finding jobs and housing.

On average, 8,000 meals per month are provided for men, women and children in the community and nearly 10,000 pounds of food are donated monthly to local charities.

The Mission is funded entirely by private donations and relies extensively on volunteers.

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