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Contact: Devin McCain
Office: 806.747.2711
Direct: 806.905.5987

Lubbock area ALICE families priced out of survival as COVID-19 hit

LUBBOCK, TX – When COVID-19 hit, nearly 3 million Texas households were already one emergency away from financial ruin – a 10-year record high – setting the stage for the unprecedented economic impact of the crisis, according to the state’s latest ALICE Report, released today by United Ways of Texas, in partnership with United For ALICE.

ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed – these are households that earn above the Federal Poverty Level but still don’t make enough to make ends meet. In Lubbock County, the latest available data shows that 30% were ALICE in 2018, up from 2016. Meanwhile, 18% were in poverty in Lubbock County— which means that 48% of households in Lubbock County are struggling.

Lubbock Area United Way Community Impact Director Devin McCain said, “Almost half of our community is struggling to get by, and we are concerned that the pandemic has pushed even more families into the ALICE demographic. These are everyday people who do not make enough to pay for basic necessities.”

ALICE in Texas: A Financial Hardship Study shows that in 2018, the average cost of survival in Lubbock County ranged annually from \$28,080 for a single adult, to \$31,104 for a senior citizen and \$72,312 for a family of four with an infant and a preschooler. Putting these numbers in perspective, the median hourly wage for Retail Sales, the most common occupation in Texas, was \$11.06, or \$22,120 per year.

The new ALICE Essentials Index in this report chronicles how the cost of housing, child care, food, transportation, health care and a smartphone plan rose at nearly twice the rate of inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index. The result is that in 2018, two parents working full time needed to earn \$16.12 an hour in order to afford the Household Survival Budget for a family of four. That’s up from a wage of \$10.88 an hour affording that budget in 2007. During the same period, the number of low-wage jobs grew by 62%.

“ALICE represents those individuals and families who are working – and yet struggling. They are basically one emergency away from a crisis. COVID-19 became that one universal emergency,” said Adrianna Cuellar Rojas, president and CEO of United Ways of Texas.

The report calls for stakeholders across all sectors to use its findings to remove obstacles to financial stability, identify gaps in community resources and to build data-driven solutions to help ALICE families achieve economic stability. Much of this data was confirmed in the *2020 Community Status Report* released by Lubbock Area United Way earlier this month. Gifts to the United Way Annual Campaign go toward addressing many of the challenges faced by ALICE families through the work of United Way Community Partners.

ALICE data for Lubbock County can be found at <https://www.liveunitedlubbock.org/alice>. To learn more about numbers across the state, the entire report is available at <http://www.unitedforalicetx.org>.

ABOUT LUBBOCK AREA UNITED WAY

Since 1946, Lubbock Area United Way has worked to address the root issues of the most significant challenges facing our South Plains communities to create lasting, positive change. The keys to United Way's success are its long-term partnerships with its Community Partner Agencies and involvement with various local coalitions. More about Lubbock Area United can be learned at www.lubbockareaunitedway.org.

ABOUT UNITED WAYS OF TEXAS

United Ways of Texas works collaboratively toward a future where all Texans thrive by building nonprofit organizational capacity and enhancing the impact of local nonprofits including United Ways across the state. With a long history of supporting the charitable sector, UWT aims to build a unified voice for all nonprofits in Texas by supporting, protecting, and promoting the nonprofit sector. For more information, visit uwtexas.org

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