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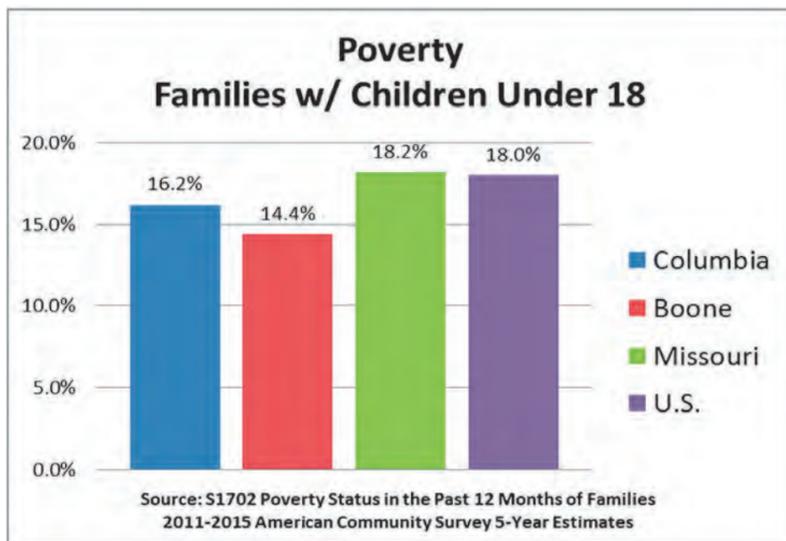
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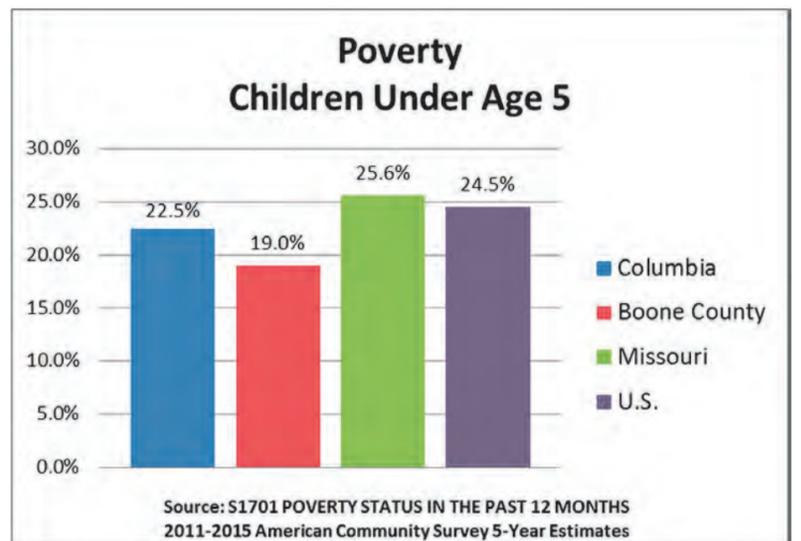
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What does poverty look like in education?



Socio-Economic and Health Inequity in Columbia & Boone County, Missouri (Steve Hollis, 2017).



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This is the first in a new series on poverty in our community provided through a partnership between Heart of Missouri United Way and the Columbia Daily Tribune. The focus of this issue is the effect poverty has in educating our youth. As you read more about the experiences our children face from early learning through high school, you will gain a better insight on the impact that poverty has in and outside of the classroom and how we as a community are fighting to help those in need.

So, where does our community stand when it comes to children living in poverty?

If we look at current data collaborated from the Boone Indicators Dashboard (booneindicators.org) 16 percent of families in Columbia and 14 percent of families with children under 18 in Boone County live in poverty. The 2017 Cradle to Career baseline reports that 22.5 percent of our kids under the age of 5 in Columbia and 19 percent in Boone County lives in poverty. In Columbia Public Schools, nearly half of our kids qualify for free and reduced lunch, which is a proxy for poverty. Research also connects poverty to trauma induced stress in our kids, which creates additional

barriers to learning. Imagine the challenge of an eight-year-old who has to focus on memorizing her spelling words when she is unsure about her basic needs like food, a safe home, medicine, etc. So, the numbers above are more than just a snapshot in time. If we fail our kids in school now and fail to help families with children from 0-5, the issue will persist. United Way is committed to helping the next generation as well. Our commitment is evidenced by the programs we fund which address early childhood education, mentoring programs for middle school students, and academic

support and enrichment programs for high school. As you will see, we as a community have recognized this problem and have achieved success in some areas and "moved the needle" in others. We know we can make a difference when we come together and fight for everyone in our community. But the challenges persist and are very real to too many of our kids and families.

Poverty is multi-layered and complex, just like people. While this issue focuses on education, it's important to understand that addressing it from all angles is necessary. The stories and articles that you will read speak to this complexity.

However, before reading further and reflecting on the content from these articles, please consider a few ground rules:

- Kids in our community are "our kids". While we may not have the direct responsibility for every child, we should know that a struggling child does have an impact on everyone in our community. Outside of our concern for the individual child and his/her well-being, think about the teacher that needs to devote extra time to the student, or the other students, perhaps your own son or daughter. Think about the

societal costs as a whole and the public funds that are expended later in a person's life because we failed when they were younger. Yes, every kid truly is our community's responsibility.

-Successful kids come from successful parents. This rule isn't about climbing the corporate ladder and having an office in the C-suite. Successful parents are those who have the opportunities to have an income and social capital that achieves self-sufficiency and stability. Therefore, the opportunities we put forth as a community to help a parent, helps our kids.

-Investment in social programs creates outcomes to help individuals out of poverty but it's not enough. United Way utilizes community dollars to support forty programs in education, health, financial stability and basic needs. As a community, we can have programs that help individuals avoid or escape poverty; however, there are other factors to consider that fall outside of nonprofit work such as wage growth and racial and residential segregation.

-Finally, partnerships and collaborative work is essential to success. United Way



ANDREW GRABAU

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR / CPO
HEART OF MISSOURI UNITED WAY

partners with 54 agencies but we also work closely with over 240 area businesses, the faith community, the City of Columbia, Boone County, the University of Missouri and other organizations. As the community's largest convener, we work in all of the various "buckets" in our community to make sure that we are a valuable partner, leader and supporter in making Boone County a place with opportunity for everyone.

I hope this series creates a deeper level of understanding of the challenges we face in our community and the opportunity to do something about it. Giving, advocating, and volunteering are ways to make a difference in our community. I hope these stories will inspire you, the reader to take action in whatever way you can.



What is poverty?

As I thought about that question, I thought a better question might be "Who" is poverty, because it's not a "what," but rather an ugly and awful reality for real people. Real people who have often known no other way. Real people who, through the loss of income for one reason or another, have instantly been slapped in the face with the realization that they can no longer provide even the basics for themselves and their families. Real people who, perhaps through some minor legal offense are no longer even afforded the option of being able to better themselves. Real people—real young children who love coming to school for the simple reason that they know there will be a meal (or two) provided. People, human beings, who

Every individual really does feel better when he/she is able to provide for themselves and their families.

should never have to worry about where their next meal is coming from on a planet so rich in resources. Poverty is innocence lost. It is adulthood that comes on too soon and too harshly for too many real people.

As an educator of 17 years, I have continuously seen the relationship between poverty and academic success. When a student enters the school building, it should be an exciting and fun new learning adventure. Sadly, when more than 50 percent of our students in Columbia enter their buildings, they may often have other things on their minds, such as "am I going back to the same home I was in last night?"

or "Will there be anything to eat when I get home?" Add to that the concern about clothing and shoes that are not clean or are too small/too big, and the internalized inferiority begins, possibly compounded by external forces such as comments from classmates. And yet, they come in yearning to learn but perhaps their young brains are developmentally in chaos because of the stressors they must endure day in and day out. This often plays out in ways such as inattentiveness, moodiness, anger, sadness, withdrawal, or the inability to sit still for any length of time, among other things. The body and mind are in

survival mode, so the A, B, Cs and 1, 2, 3s may end up taking a back seat.

Every human being deserves to be able to earn a living wage. I am thankful for the viewpoint my parents instilled in me which is that "every individual really does feel better when he/she is able to provide for themselves and their families." That is counter to much of what the media would have you believe that people "choose" to not work, even though our system is set up in many ways to discourage employment through jobs that pay less than government assistance, "daring" you, as it were to choose between continuing to accept a "handout" vs. taking a job that you know won't be able to pay the bills. Does it get any more insulting than that?!

The relationship between the multiple identities of race, gender, ability, national origin, age and poverty is pretty difficult to ignore as studies consistently show that individuals in what are known as "targeted" areas earn less across the board. (And, please, no one say "but Oprah did it!!" If it weren't an anomaly we wouldn't care or even know who she was!)

Becoming aware of one's privilege and removing the "fear" from that word, is one of the things we're attempting to do in Columbia Public Schools. By examining our own backgrounds and cycles of socialization, our experiences, we're learning how we might combat some of the ugly (and untrue) messages that have been taught to us by even the most well-meaning indi-



CARLA LONDON

CHIEF EQUITY OFFICER
COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

viduals in our lives. It's not an option—we owe it to our children whom we proudly come in each day to serve. Teachers' loads are heavy—no longer are they just the academic instructor in the classroom. They nurture, soothe, counsel and teach each and every day and I'm proud to be a part of the journey we are on as a district.

MISSION

The Heart of Missouri United Way fights to improve lives in our community.

VISION

Our community wins by Living United. By responding to changing community needs. By forging strategic partnerships and fostering effective solutions to tackle local issues. By harnessing the best resources and inspiring others to join the fight in defeating barriers to basic needs, health, education and financial stability.

VALUE STATEMENT

Heart of Missouri United Way

- Secures community dollars
- Raises awareness of community issues
- Builds organizational capacity for the nonprofit sector

Child Welfare League offers a sobering exercise

At this year's National Homeless conference, Carla London, our school district's chief Equity Officer, learned of a sobering exercise authored by the Child Welfare League of America. Though simple in its execution, this exercise is profound in that it will be remembered by participants forever. A volunteer, taking on the role of a narrator, assumes a character named Jennifer Marshall. Jennifer struggles with the perils of poverty. She is 30 years old, a single mother of three children (ages 15, 5, and 6 months), and after being evicted from her home, she is living with a cousin in public housing. Jennifer loves her children and wants to do everything she can to help them overcome

the overwhelming odds facing them. If you're like me, you can't imagine what it feels like to be evicted. Just that alone would likely render me paralyzed. This is, unfortunately, a common story for countless families in our community. If you would, allow me to share with you one day in Jennifer Marshall's life. As I do that, for each statement I read, I want you to imagine yourself picking up an inflated balloon. At some point, it will be hard to hold on to all the balloons!

• **6:00 am** - Jennifer discovers her baby is sick. If she misses work, she'll be fired, so she sends her sick child to daycare.

• **6:45 am** - She sends her other two children to school for the free breakfast program. If it weren't for that program, she's not sure how she would feed them breakfast (or lunch).

• **9:00 am** - Jennifer gets a call from the daycare. Her child has a fever over 100 degrees and must be picked up immediately. She may not send her child back until she has been fever free for 24 hours (that's the policy). Her employer tells her she is out of sick days and needs to prioritize coming to work. She says she has no choice but to get her child from the daycare. They agree to talk the following day.

• **10:30 am** - Jennifer notices her child is listless. She doesn't have a primary physician making the emergency room her only option. She bundles her baby up and heads to the bus stop to take public transportation to the hospital.

• **1:00 pm** - After sitting in the emergency room for what seems like a millennium, she begins to worry about being home in time for her 5 year-old. She calls acquaintances, but they are either busy or unwilling to help.

• **2:00 pm** - Jennifer

learns her baby has strep throat and asks the doctor for help with the cost of the medication.

• **4:00 pm** - Jennifer arrives home and finds her 5-year old son sitting in the building manager's office. The building manager wants to know why Jennifer is living there (her name is not on the lease) and insists she must leave immediately. They give her the name of a local shelter she can call.

• **5:00 pm** - Jennifer apologizes to her cousin for putting her in a difficult position and calls the local shelter. They do have a space for her and her children.

• **6:00 pm** - Jennifer and her children stop by a corner store to pick up some snacks (the children know the chips and microwaveable sandwich will be their dinner - again). Jennifer also tells the 15-year old that he will need to stay home to babysit the baby while she is at work. The 15-year old is angry to have to miss another day of school.

At what point do you think the balloons would slip out of your arms and fall to the ground? For me, it was the thought of finally getting back to the cousin's house and finding the 5-year old sitting in the property manager's office.

Having worked in Columbia Public Schools for 13 years, I've seen a lot of changes. I've seen the percentage of students participating in free/reduced lunch climb from about 25% to nearly 50%. I've seen more and more children struggle to make it through the day because, like Jennifer's story, our families battle childcare insecurities, health-care insecurities, food insecurities, and housing insecurities. These traumas increase stress for our children, which explains why so many of them anger more easily, communicate poorly, act more impulsively, and have a more difficult time making friends.

As a principal in the Columbia Public Schools, I knew families struggled. We worked hard to help families get connected to services. Our home school communicators worked with the Food Bank to make sure children had food on the weekends. Our counselors made appointments with counseling services to support children in crisis. Our teachers gave their own time and money to improve the lives of the students in their care. When I became the superintendent, I became better aware of the powerful work of the United Way. It was as a board member that I learned an interesting (and disturbing fact). Did you know that families in our community use their children's social security numbers to activate basic services in their new homes because their own social se-



DR. PETER STIEPLEMAN

SUPERINTENDENT
COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
UNITED WAY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

curity numbers will reveal they still have outstanding balances? Families are essentially saddling their children with bad credit scores, putting them at a distinct disadvantage, well in advance of their adult lives. And before I could even begin to evaluate how I felt about that, I was presented with this question: What choice do they have?

Luckily, in Columbia, Missouri, there are ways to intervene. That work is being led by the United Way. Through compassion and empathy, they have engaged our community so that every citizen has a chance to succeed. If you're a veteran or a child, if you're chronically homeless or situationally struggling, the United Way will connect you to agencies whose priorities are to get you back on your feet and equipped with a plan for success. The United Way reminds us that we live in an amazing community that will extend a hand and instill hope.



Inequality gap widens as 'world's richest 1 percent get 82 percent of the wealth,' Oxfam says

My name is Eryca Neville and I am the principal of Frederick Douglass High School, Columbia Public School's small school alternative. This headline sticks with me daily as I work with some of Columbia's most vulnerable students and their families. Each day we expect for students to work hard and pursue an education in the hope of attaining their share of the American Dream. The reality of the situation is a great deal of our students come from families that struggle economically each day. This year 45 percent of students in Columbia Public Schools receive free or reduced lunch. The following are facts that I would like for my fellow community members to consider:

1. In addition to Oxfam recognizing that 1 percent of the world's richest acquired 82 percent of the world wealth last year, it was also noted that the 50 percent poorest acquired 0 percent of the last year's gen-

erated wealth. That leaves just 18 percent of the last year's economic growth to be shared by 49 percent of the world's population.

2. Free and reduced lunch eligibility is based on the Federal Poverty Guidelines. According to the Federal Poverty Guidelines, a family of three can have a gross income of no more than \$20,420 a year.

3. Free and reduced lunch guidelines require that families of three can make no more than 130 percent poverty level which is a gross annual income of \$26,546 to qualify for free lunch.

4. Free and reduced lunch guidelines require that families of three can make no more than or 185 percent of the Federal Poverty rate a year which is \$37,777.

5. According to the U.S. census Bureau, the median household income for Columbia is \$44,907, lower than the state average of \$51,713.

Picture this. Almost half, 44 percent of students in Columbia, MO, live with families whose gross annual income is no more than \$37,777 a year or \$3,149

a month. Let's do a quick mock budget:

- Gross Pay: **\$3149**
- Federal and state taxes: **\$649**
- Average rent 2-BD apt.: **\$723**
- Average Utility Bill: **\$144**
- USDA Low Cost Food Plan: **\$600**

That leaves a family of three roughly \$1,033 to figure out how to pay for health insurance (I pay \$466 a month for health insurance and \$49 a month a dental insurance), transportation costs (average car note on a used car is \$361 a month plus the costs of gas, maintenance, and insurance), clothing, phone bill, internet, cable, and various incidentals. The monthly math problem could be a serious and consistent exercise in frustration.

This cycle of frustration often plays out in our schools. Students growing up in pov-

erty experience the stressors caused by the monthly household struggles. Daily, I work with students that come to school hungry, lacking sleep due to a wide variety of circumstances, and/or experiencing day to day uncertainty caused by a lack of household resources. Subsequently, Columbia Public Schools, like many other school districts throughout the nation, can identify differences in school attendance rates, school achievement data, and other school related data points for students who receive free or reduced lunch as compared to their non-free or reduced lunch counterparts. Frustration often brews due to "accountability measures" and labels such as "failing" or "ineffective" schools. Societal reactions too often focus on blame of teachers, families, and schools. Opportunities to focus on being solution-oriented and truly collaborative are often missed.

So, beyond the numbers, what does poverty mean? It means that in Columbia, MO, every day, children and their families face an uncertainty that no family in

the richest country on earth should have to face. Every day, members of our community do not know where they will sleep, what's for dinner, and if their utilities will be paid. Every day, members of our Columbia Family have no idea how their loved ones will access healthcare because they lack transportation, money for copays, and quite possibly insurance. Every day, we walk past people, good people, loving people, who are unable to find a job that pays a living wage that allows them to secure the inalienable rights of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness for them and their loved ones. Every week, these wonderful families send their children to schools, hoping that the education they get will propel their next generation to a place that resembles the American Dream.

There are many that believe that this should not be the reality for any of our community members and they ask themselves what can they do. This conversation came up while I was teaching a class last week and we were discussing a TED Talk by Geoffrey Canada. One of our students challenged our class. "Who is willing to give their own children one less dance lesson, sports opportunity, field trip, etc. and sponsor one for someone else's child?" We were stunned to a bit of silence. The question was both challenging and empowering. We all have time, talent and/or treasure that we can choose to share. How we share requires a shift in thought for many. This is not about "us and them". This is about how can we invest in the common good. After all, if you are not securely in the 1 percent, then you, like many others, are just one serious illness or injury, one job loss, or one other unexpected life change away from constant struggle being a part of your story. My suggestion is to look for ways to



DR. ERYCA NEVILLE

PRINCIPAL
DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL
UNITED WAY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

invest your time, talent and treasure.

1. Find a way to meet someone outside of your normal circle and invest in building a real relationship.

2. Volunteer at a local non-profit or school. Suggestions are available at: <https://www.uwheartmo.org/volunteer>

3. Look for volunteer opportunities this fall such as: Day of caring or For Columbia (4/28/18)

4. Donate to your local United Way or another non-profit agency.

5. Find ways to help low income residents obtain low interest loans, so that when the unexpected happens, high interest payday loans are not their only option.

6. Work with local landlords and real estate investors to seek ways to offer lower cost, quality housing opportunities for low income families.

7. We must rethink minimum wage. No family can thrive with breadwinners making less than \$15 an hour.

These are just a few suggestions. At the end of the day, this is about making our community the best place it can possibly be, for ALL of our citizens. Poverty is an impediment to Columbia being the best community it can be. Together we can make a difference.





Too many Boone County students live in poverty

In pondering what I would write for this article, I thought about providing the reader information about the science behind poverty's impact on youth development, educational outcomes, persistence in education and career development. However, I decided that perhaps the most powerful thing I could say about poverty and its impact on education is to start with mentioning how I came to understand poverty myself.

I am a white middle class male who grew up in a white middle class family as an

only child in a home with my two biological parents. I am the definition of privileged in almost every conceivable way, having just about every advantage that a child could ask for. Truly, it was not until I was a junior in college that I discovered and appreciated the intensity of the struggle that is poverty. It was difficult to fully grasp poverty's complexity: the generational and cyclical impact it has on societal norms, perpetuating systems of oppression, and creating a large achievement gap in our educational system. I learned this from lis-

tening to kids' stories about living in poor communities across the country and the thoughts that occupy space in their minds on a daily basis. A small snapshot of this includes: concerns about walking home from school without getting physically harmed, providing meals for their younger siblings and helping them with their homework because their parents were still working, being in charge of helping to pay the bills at the age of 8. When your mind is occupied with these worries and concerns, it leaves little space for school work.

Horace Mann, a pioneering educator of the late 1800s, famously coined the phrase that "education is the great equalizer." His hopeful and passionate comment was the product of a dream that one day our educational system would have the capacity to undo the injustices in our society that create a structure of civilization that is unequal. Unfortunately, in today's society our youth enter a life race in which all start on the same starting line, but some youth, particularly those living in poverty, are carrying a significant amount of psychological and physical weight on their backs and others have no weight to bear. Unfortunately, more than 150 years later our educational system is still perpetuating inequalities, rather than living up to the potential of becoming the "great equalizer" in our society.

In most states, students living in poverty comprise the majority of the state's

student body. Further, in the state of Missouri 45 percent of all students are living in poverty. Finally, in Boone county, we have over 10 school buildings that have at least 85 percent of students living in poverty.

Clearly on the surface, this is a considerable issue, but when one dives deeper into the implications of poverty these statistics are even more alarming. We know from a plethora of scholarly research that the conditions of living in poverty as a child have a negative impact on student well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, communication skills, general knowledge, educational persistence, attendance, discipline referrals, and academic achievement. Further, poverty impacts child mental and physical health, including: higher rates of asthma, obesity, physical injuries, poor social relationships, higher levels of aggression, anxiety, depression, and inattention.

So what do we do? The answer to this is obviously complicated. But, perhaps I can offer a starting point or two.

In order to create change, we must be willing to expose ourselves to individuals that have experienced circumstances that are contrasting to our own. To truly understand poverty, we must be willing to look at poverty, to spend time with those living in poverty, to fully appreciate and empathize with those living in extremely difficult circumstances. I shared my

experience above because if it were not for those experiences that opened my mind to a clearer understanding of the impact of poverty on our youth's educational attainment and persistence, I may still have been living in my privileged bubble. As a community in Columbia, and as a society at large, we need to "wake up" to our society's social inequities. Reading about them, watching a documentary or the nightly news, is not enough. We need to experience firsthand by visiting poor neighborhoods, having conversations with those living in poverty or identify as the "working poor."

In addition, we have very complicated systemic issues that cannot be altered or changed overnight. These issues perpetuate generational poverty and require political action in order to change the circumstances in public schools. Currently, funding public education is largely happening via property taxes that vary depending on county, state, and federal policies, usually resulting in fundamental inequities, or "savagely inequalities" as author Jonathan Kozol posits. This system often rewards affluent communities and perpetuates generational poverty in poor neighborhoods as funding is often a percentage of property taxes. Thus, schools in poor neighborhoods often have significantly lower funding than schools in more affluent areas. Such systems reward those who require the least support and instruct



DR. CHRIS SLATEN

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,
COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA

In Boone county, we have over 10 school buildings that have at least 85% of students living in poverty.

those living in the poorest areas that there is little support for their struggle unless they choose, which assumes they have the opportunity, to relocate.

Ultimately, I hope my story and discussion here can encourage each of us to spend a little more time and attention understanding economic inequality and listening to the voices of youth living in poverty and their needs. As the Greek philosopher Epictetus famously stated, "We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak." As a first step, let us spend time listening to the poor in our community and move towards a place where education has the potential to truly be the great equalizer.



For some students, a daily snack is all they eat

When the final bell sounds through the halls of Rock Bridge High School (RBHS), anywhere between 250 and 310 students grab a sack dinner with a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and a cheese stick from the cafeteria. For some, it is a snack before sports practice or a club meeting. For others, it is a daily staple and the only food they have until the next morning. This contrast permeates our school. Our reputation as being the "rich" school only underscores our disparity. A quick stroll through our student parking lot reveals BMW's, Lexuses and Range Rovers; what isn't apparent, however, are the stories of our students who walk past those cars on the way home where they not only face the normal stress of teens — who to date, what to wear, how to make friends—but also concerns that are well beyond their age — how to pay rent, lower electric bills, and, of course, put food on the table.

Too many of our students step off the bus and into an adult's role. Nearly one in four Bruins qualify for free and reduced lunch or take home food packages provided by the Food Bank. These students will often be in charge of younger siblings all evening at home while their parents work, sometimes at more than one job. Our students hurriedly distribute the food they acquired from school then

clean up. They help younger brothers with math and sisters with reading. Trying to unburden their mothers or fathers, they wash clothes and vacuum. Sometimes they may have a test in U.S. history or a lab report for Advanced Placement Biology, so they close the door to the bathroom to hide out and study. Although the boundary lines for RBHS extend to the north side of town where 200 of our students live, the same transportation does not exist if they want to be part of our nationally competitive debate team or our state-bound basketball team, for instance, thereby leaving some of our most vulnerable students to fall short of the full high school experiences. Out-of-school

hour activities, such as tutoring, athletics or performing arts are a reach for these students, so their only option is to return home, sometimes to a stressful environment. Home, usually a safe-haven for students after a seven-hour school day, can become a place of horrible anxiety depending on how much money enters through the front door.

At public school, everyone seems equal. We all have

the same access to education, food, water and bathroom facilities, but the intangibles are harder to see. Every teenager notices his friend's new American Eagle shirt or fresh white Adidas shoes. What does it feel like to see these products over and over in our hallways yet assuredly know name brand anything isn't in your reach? What's more, what you wear to high school may be the same shirt and jeans you have worn since you were at Jefferson Middle School, only now these clothes pull at your shoulders and show your socks. Teens have always been aware of their rank among their peers, but when it feels as if everyone is talking about where they are going for spring break

and you know you aren't leaving Columbia, you feel even more isolated.

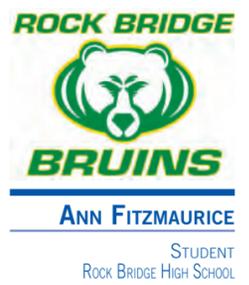
For one RBHS student, the culture shock of coming to school here hindered her self-confidence. Walking into a school where students wear fancy clothes and drive luxury cars intensified the junior's need to fit in. Every day, she shook with fear of what people would say if they found out her mother is disabled because of chronic

health issues and her father is a contractor, unable to bring in a surplus of income to live comfortably. Going to a "rich kid school" she said, is a weird experience and can make someone feel like an outsider. Unfortunately, one day as a freshman, this student's fears came true. When a friend came to pick her up at her house, the friend made rude remarks about her living quarters, describing it as the "ghetto." Additionally, the friend sat uncomfortably until the pair passed through downtown Columbia. This experience plagued the then 14-year-old with shame. Not yet 17, she's already held down two jobs, which added to her stress and tormented her with despair.

No child should have to regard money as their biggest stressor, as this student does. As a high school student, she should be planning her next get-together with friends, not turning down opportunities because she can't pay for them. On one hand, we have a student scrounging for ways to alleviate stress for her family. On the other, RBHS holds students that are lucky enough never to have

to look at the price of items they need, let alone want. We have students who live in million dollar homes with a guest house and tennis courts and others who return to an apartment shared with eight members of their extended family. This divide not only results in envy and helplessness on the impoverished student's side, but also a lack of physical, cognitive and emotional readiness, according to a study by Louisiana State University. Mal-nourishment and unbalanced meals lead children to stunted development and illnesses, such as diabetes and infections. Additionally, impoverished families tend to be led by single-parents, which hinders family relationships and emotional growth because of the workload these adults take on. The lack of a connection between a parent and a child can cause the child to act out in school or give up, feeling as if he or she does not have a reason to learn since, even if Columbia is home to four colleges and universities, paying for higher education is not an option.

RBHS lies south of town, housing some students whose parents are surgeons, biomedical scientists and large business owners. In the same hallways, however, walk students whose parents work two or three jobs just to get by. Columbia's median income is \$44,907, which is less than the median income for Boone Coun-



ty, Missouri and the United States, yet the most expensive house recently sold in Columbia was bought for \$2.5 million; it was south of the center of town in the Rock Bridge district. Section eight housing, which is real estate owned by private landlords and sold at fair market prices to qualified low-income families, closed in 2015 because of the large number of applicants. It recently reopened after a two-year waiting period, Columbia Housing Authority reported. With 1,200 applicants waiting to see where they would live, the instability would hinder any student's high school experience.

We can't all have expensive homes and cars, but the standard for what all of us should expect—plenty of food, a way to participate in school sports and clubs and a quiet place to study—should be non-negotiables.

Nearly one in four Bruins qualify for free and reduced lunch or take home food packages provided by the Food Bank.



**GET INVOLVED.
LIVE UNITED.®**

Learn more about how you can get involved at our website:
www.UWHeartMO.org
or call our office at (573) 443-4523