UNITED WAY
Henry County
and Martinsville

For Immediate Release

United Way of Henry County and Martinsville will hold The Stretch — An Economic Reality Simulation on Tuesday, October 27, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at West Piedmont Higher Education Center. This unique event allows participants to assume the role of a low-income family member living on a limited budget. The experience is divided into four 15-minute sessions, each representing one week in which participants must navigate the challenges of providing for their family and maintaining their home.

Each day, more than forty-three million Americans, including eleven million children under the age of 18, face harsh realities of poverty. Many more have income levels that fall just above the poverty line, yet not low enough to qualify for food programs or Medicaid to make ends meet. The recent economic turndown has seen unemployment rates rise, and the use of emergency resources and food pantries increase. While the state average for families living in poverty is 9.9%, here in Henry County, 16% of families live in poverty with the median household income hovering just above $50,000. Similarly, 23.5% of Martinsville City households are below the poverty level with the median household income of $46,727.

It is difficult for many who have sufficient incomes to grasp the daily struggles of families living in these conditions—the weight of the decisions that must be made, the fears that loom over them, and the frustrations that they endure. One interruption or break in the fragile support system they have created can have long-lasting effects.

Additionally, the official poverty model does not count many homes that struggle to make ends meet with today's actual cost of living. This is where United Way's ALICE model (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) improves a community's view of those who are working but are still stressed to make ends meet. This group includes many who are employed in retail and food services, childcare providers, or other blue-collar jobs, such as mechanics. Across Henry County and Martinsville, more than 50% of families fall below the ALICE threshold, meaning they cannot consistently meet the required household sustainability budget of $105,000 for a family of four.

The Stretch will allow participants to take a small step to better understand the stressors households face and how they might be involved in affecting change to make a difference. We invite you to join us.

For more information on The Stretch or to sign up, please visit our Facebook event page or contact Brandy Lawless, 276-638-3946, x109, or Brandy@UnitedWayofHCM.org.

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