

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for December 19, 2022
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about poverty, and as always look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

I remember sitting in the shelter like it was yesterday, writing in my journal while a rooster crowed, and three hens cackled about. I can still smell the sweet fragrance of ripe mangos. And see the smiles on the beautiful faces of the Haitian people. Especially those with a deeply rooted faith in our good and gracious God.

I tried to prepare myself for poverty before our weeklong mission trip to Pignon in July 2021. But it is hard to imagine another place, a third world, when nearly all you have known is middle class America. For several months before our journey, our youth group read "Helping Without Hurting in Short-Term Missions" by Steve Corbett and Brian Finkert. (Their first book was "When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor and Yourself.")

There is something about going there, wherever "there" is, to help you understand the place and the people more fully. This week I had the opportunity to lead members of the Leadership Coshocton County adult class and Coshocton County Youth Leadership participants through a Poverty Simulation created by Missouri Community Action. This would not have been possible without over a dozen community volunteers from a variety of social service, health, financial, and educational agencies, organizations, and businesses.

During the morning, the participants were in family groups and were tasked to complete a month's worth of activities to keep their families safe and provide for their needs. None of the families had income below the poverty line. Instead, they had life circumstances that left them in challenging situations including disability, family members who were incarcerated, loss of jobs, health emergencies, or recent loss of head of household. They were able to experience the lack of hours in the day to be able to get everything done, especially when presented with a chance card, which represented a challenge more often faced by those earning low incomes.

Several years ago, when I was member of the United Way board, Lyn Mizer introduced me to the term "ALICE." This stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. These are

people in our communities who are earning above the Federal Poverty Level yet are struggling to afford basic expenses. According to the United Way, there were 35 million ALICE households (29%) nationwide in 2018. In Ohio this is slightly lower at 25%.

In Coshocton County we are close to the national average with 28% ALICE households. Once poverty numbers are combined, this means that 43% of Coshocton County residents live below the ALICE threshold. Think about that for a moment the next time you are out and about. Chances are that at least 2 of every 5 people you see are struggling.

During this time of year when giving and receiving tends to be front and center, how much of your giving is for those who are struggling? There are some families and individuals who take this to extremes. They agree to give no gifts and only support legitimate charities that are trying to make a difference. For those with the love language of gift giving, that can be difficult. But it may be a discussion to consider with your family, possibly for next season.

It is tempting to get sucked into last-minute deals and sales for material things in these next few days. Be mindful. Maybe that additional gift is the right choice, but maybe that money could go toward something even more meaningful for a family or individual who has experienced different circumstances than you have this year.

Today I'll leave you with Luke 6:20, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."

And now let's look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension. Direct food marketing in Ohio is hot. The latest USDA survey identified over 7,000 Ohio farms with direct food sales—third highest in the nation. OSU Extension is hosting a three-part webinar series on "Starting a Food Business," to help producers wanting to sell home-based and farm-raised foods directly to consumers and retailers. I hope you'll join me for this free webinar series which includes *Start-Up Basics* on January 24, *Selling Home-Based Foods* on February 29 and *Selling Meat and Poultry* on March 28. Find details and the registration link at go.osu.edu/foodbusiness.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!