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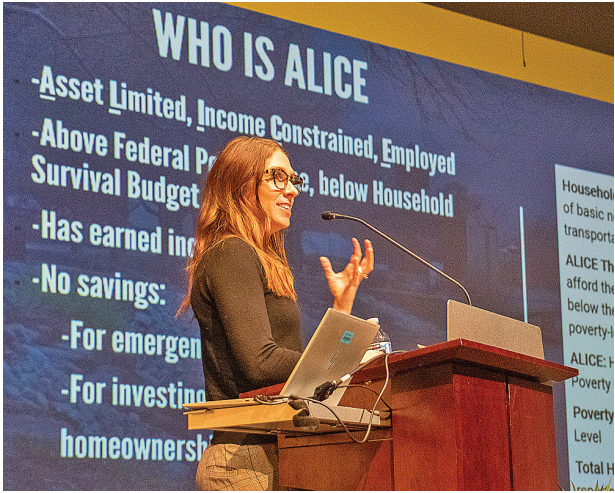
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United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region Vice President Impact & Engagement Alyssa Stewart speaks at the United Way Montcalm-Ionia Community Leadership Conference on March 18 at Belding High School where she addressed the significance of “Asset Limited Income Constrained and Employed” (ALICE) households in the region and how those families struggle to make ends meet. — DN Photo | Cory Smith

## ‘ALICE is everywhere’

Montcalm, Ionia households struggling on ‘bare-bones’ budgets have become ‘rent-burdened’ due to flat wages, rising costs

CORY SMITH  
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BELDING — When addressing the issue of affordable housing, one element of that crisis can be identified through a specific demographic of people — ALICE.

ALICE is an acronym used to identify those who are “Asset Limited Income Constrained and Employed.”

More specifically, it identifies those households that generate enough income to place them above the federal poverty line, but below a “household survival budget” — the bare minimum of costs of necessities such as housing, childcare, food and transportation.

As the vice president of impact & engagement at United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region, Alyssa Stewart spoke at length on ALICE and its use as an evaluation tool regarding affordable housing during the annual United Way Montcalm-Ionia Community Leadership Conference on March 18 at Belding High School.

According to Stewart, who localized the statewide data specifically to Montcalm and Ionia counties, people identified as “ALICE” are more prevalent in the area than most might realize.

“ALICE is everywhere,” she said. “ALICE is teaching kids in school, ALICE is caring for your children, ALICE is caring for those people that you love. If you went to a store today, if you went to a gas station — all of these essential workers we have grown to appreciate more than ever — they are ALICE.

“ALICE is also invisible, sometimes we don’t see ALICE,” she continued. “ALICE has high school diplomas, associate degrees, bachelor’s degrees and Ph.D.s. There are adjunct professors in our communities who are ALICE.”

According to data from the 2019 ALICE report presented by Stewart, both Montcalm and Ionia counties have more ALICE households than the statewide average of 25%.

With a median household income throughout the county of \$49,448 in Montcalm, 29% of households are ALICE households.

With a median household income of \$57,043 in Ionia, 26% of the households are ALICE households.

Additionally, Montcalm possesses a poverty rate of 14% and Ionia a rate of 11%, meaning 43% of households in Montcalm and 37% of households in Ionia either struggle to make ends meet or sit below the poverty line.

While ALICE households statistically make enough to pay either rent or a monthly house payment, Stewart said a variety of factors make it nearly impossible for these individuals and families to secure stable hous-

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# Noticing Douglass



Douglass Township Treasurer Amy Laper, left, answers a question from a resident during Tuesday evening’s budget workshop as Clerk Ronda Snyder takes notes. — DN Photo | Elisabeth Waldon

## Questions raised about Douglass Township public notices, deputy votes

ELISABETH WALDON  
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DOUGLASS TOWNSHIP — The Douglass Township Board did not properly publish notices of budget meetings/hearings recently, leading to multiple rescheduled meetings.

Also, the township’s deputy treasurer voted multiple times at the last regular board meeting — something state law forbids.

### BUDGET MEETINGS

The township board attempted to meet on March 24 for a budget workshop, but township resident Wendie Switala was in attendance and pointed out that notice of the meeting wasn’t posted on the township website until about five hours before the meeting.

“You guys didn’t give adequate notice for this meeting tonight,” she said.

Switala read aloud from the Michigan Open Meetings Act which states that notice of a meeting must be posted on the township website at least 18 hours in advance, as well as at the township hall.

Township board members still began to proceed with the meeting until Treasurer Amy Laper noted they could hold the budget workshop next week instead. The meeting then abruptly adjourned and was rescheduled for Tuesday evening (see below for a recap).

Meanwhile, the township posted a public notice in the Daily News on Monday, March 28, stating that the annual budget hearing was scheduled for Friday, March 31. However, MCL 141.412 requires a notice to be published at least six days in advance, and this notice was only published four days in advance. Also, the notice didn’t say where a copy of the proposed budget was available for public inspection, nor did it reference the property tax millage rate proposed to be levied — two items that are required by state law in a budget hearing notice.

On Monday afternoon, a notice posted on the township hall door stated that the budget hearing would now take place at 5 p.m. on April 6; however, that same day, the township’s own website said the budget hearing would take place at 4 p.m. on April 8.

By Tuesday afternoon, the notice on the door had been corrected to match the notice on the website. A new public notice stating the same — that the budget hearing will take place at 4 p.m. April 8 — is scheduled to be published in Friday’s Daily News, along with the rest of the required information.

The Daily News reviewed the township’s prior budget hearing public notices in recent years. While the majority were published correctly, the township’s budget hearing notice in March 2020 was similar to this year’s incorrectly published notice in that it didn’t list where a copy of the

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## Douglass Township Board goes into closed session with attorney over ‘electronic security breach’

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DOUGLASS TOWNSHIP — The Douglass Township Board met in closed session with their attorney on Tuesday afternoon to consider a written legal opinion concerning “an electronic security breach.”

The meeting was originally scheduled for Monday afternoon, but when the Daily News and multiple other residents arrived for that meeting, a notice on the township hall door said the meeting had been rescheduled for Tuesday.

Clerk Ronda Snyder told the Daily News the meeting was rescheduled on Monday morning “because apparently it hadn’t been posted long enough.”

During the rescheduled meeting on Tuesday, four township residents were present along with the Daily News. The township board voted 5-0 to go into closed session with



Douglass Township Supervisor Terry Anderson, right, and the rest of the township board met in closed session with their attorney Ron Redick on Tuesday afternoon to consider a written legal opinion concerning “an electronic security breach.” — DN Photo | Elisabeth Waldon

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Governor's Council approved and USATF certified. Starting in the middle school parking lot, the 5K course runs along the scenic Fred Meijer Flat River Trail, through neighborhood streets and back to the high schools campus for an exciting finish through the football tunnel to the south 30 yard line of beautiful Legacy Field. View course maps online.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 2022**

Greenville High School  
111 North Hillcrest, Greenville, MI

**Race Day Registration**  
12:30 – 1:45 PM

**Run/Walk starts at 2 PM**

Fun Runs, Refreshments & Awards to follow

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