

MEET ALICE

BY: LARS GILBERTS – UNITED WAY OF BROWARD COUNTY STATEWIDE ALICE DIRECTOR

You meet ALICE every day. ALICE is our sister. ALICE is our father. Some of us are ALICE. United Way of Northern New Jersey developed a new demographic term, “Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed” (ALICE), to increase awareness and unity around the needs of working families. The United Way of Florida commissioned a study about ALICE in our state to help put a face on a population that is often ignored or misunderstood.

The United Way ALICE Report is a comprehensive study of the financial challenges faced by the 30% of Florida households who earn more than the Federal Poverty Level but less than what it takes to independently survive in each county. The ALICE Report equips employers, policy makers, community groups, funders and the media to understand and support this vulnerable but hardworking population.

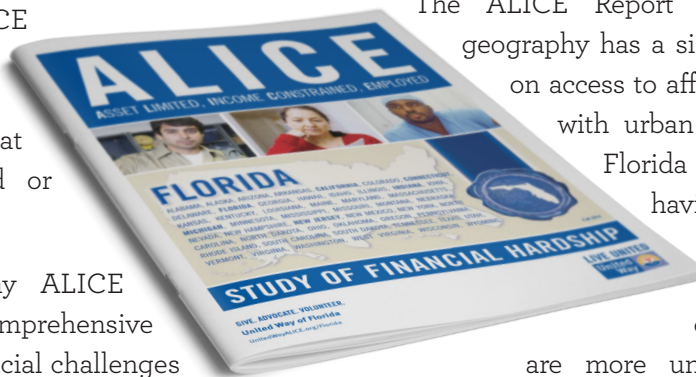
ALICE is not confined to any one ethnicity, age, gender or geography. When ALICE does not have enough income, they have to make difficult choices. ALICE may be forced to use substandard child care, or go without healthcare, healthy food or car insurance.

The high cost of housing continues to be the biggest drain on most households’ budgets, and each of Florida’s 67 counties needs more affordable housing. And with the projected increase in senior residents, there will be more demand than ever for the existing supply of smaller, lower cost units.

The ALICE Report highlights that geography has a significant impact on access to affordable housing, with urban areas in South Florida generally having the highest housing costs. However, job opportunities are more uniformly limited across the state. While housing costs and well paying jobs are two of the largest and most challenging issues, the United Way ALICE Report shows how many factors impact the budgets and wellbeing of our families, counties and state.

To see what the ALICE Report says about your community and its needs, please visit www.uwof.org/ALICE. For a webinar that highlights its housing findings, go to http://www.flhousing.org/?page_id=6497) **HNN**

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Lars Gilberts is the statewide director of the United Way of Florida’s ALICE program, based in the United Way of Broward County office. Previously, he was the Director of Financial Stability for Branches, Inc., a Miami-based nonprofit organization that provides families with financial planning and youth development services.