

Every Day Miracle  
“I am Blessed!”

**85 percent of Lorain City School District students lived in poverty**

Published: Tuesday, July 31, 2012 The Morning Journal

By GIN A. ANDO

**LORAIN** — Out of the 7,585 enrolled students in the Lorain City School District during the 2011 fiscal year, nearly 85 percent lived in poverty, according to Ohio Department of Education numbers.

85%. Almost 6 out of every 7 children.

6,447 children live in a household that qualifies for some kind of public assistance. *That is 85% of all of the children who go to school in Lorain.*

But what does “living in poverty” really mean?

Children who live in poverty often go to school hungry. For some of them, the only nutritious meal they may get is at school. They get breakfast in the morning and lunch at noon. Some of the children are given food bags at the end of the week to take home so that they will have something to eat when they are not at school. Most of these families receive food stamps, but rarely do they get enough assistance to feed their family properly.

Children who live in poverty often wear clothes that are donated. Sometimes they fit, sometimes they don't. In a school where there are uniforms, mothers search throughout the summer to find something for their children to wear to school in the fall. If they are lucky, they will find someone who has used uniforms in good condition, but these are hard to find because most uniforms don't last long enough to pass on to others. Uniforms that are worn every day wear out and parents have to come up with the money to buy them. There are no funds or grant programs available for this.

The same goes for school supplies. We get calls on a daily basis asking if we know of anyone willing to help with uniforms and supplies. Children often start school with the bare minimum - a couple of pencils, a bookbag, a couple of notebooks, some crayons and a bottle of glue. We wonder why children struggle in school and are behind in their achievement when many lack the proper tools they need to learn.

Children in poverty often do not get enough sleep. Many do not have their own beds and sleep with their parents or with siblings. Some sleep on mattresses or blankets on the floor. Those who do not have a permanent residence may be sleeping in shelters or staying with relatives or friends. Maybe they are sleeping on the couch in a room where adults are up late. Because of their environment they often don't get the proper amount of rest and this affects both their health and their ability to learn in school.

Food, clothing, shelter. The basics in life. For those living in poverty, they are never a sure thing.

A couple of weeks ago, we received a call from a mom who had 5 of her own children. She also had 4 others staying with her, including a newborn baby. This mom worked, but recently lost some hours at work because she had a sudden illness and was hospitalized for a short time. Someone told Mom about Blessing House and she thought maybe we could help her.

Mom told Sr. Mary that she was down to her last meal for her family. She only had a package of noodles and a package of ground beef. She was going to prepare a meal for them that night, but she would have nothing left for the next day. She had 3 days until her next paycheck and no way to get more food. She didn't want to "lose" her children, but she thought that if they could come and stay with us, at least they could eat.

Sr. Mary then asked mom if it would help if we brought her enough food to last until she received her next paycheck. Sr. Mary could tell that Mom did not really want to be separated from her children and thought this might be a better alternative for her.

Mom was ecstatic. So we packed up a couple of boxes with food, grabbed a gallon of milk and went to deliver it to her.

Mom greeted us in the driveway as several of her children played in the yard. 3 of the younger boys came over and asked if they could help. One took the milk, another took a box. Then the youngest came up and when I handed him 2 loaves of bread, his face lit up. "I love peanut butter sandwiches!" We assured him there was a jar of peanut butter in the box for him, too.

You would have thought he won the lottery.

Mom thanked us several times and told us what a blessing we were. She had some catching up to do because she had been sick, but she knew God was with her and they would be OK. She was also very glad to find out about Blessing House, because if she got sick again, she knew she could count on us to help her with her children. She had not been comfortable with their situation when she was in the hospital the last time and now it was such a relief to know there was a safe place where they could go if something happened to her again.

Something to eat. Something to wear. A place to sleep at night. A safe place for children to stay.

Every day we are blessed when we are able to choose how we are going to live our lives.

But for some, there are no choices. They do what they can to get by and have learned to rely on the blessings they receive from others when their options run out. They humbly accept God's gifts and appreciate the goodness of others.

***Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***