

Central Albertans Experience Realities of Poverty

Red Deer, Alberta – May 14, 2014 – United Way of Central Alberta and CAPRA (Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance) have partnered to present Central Alberta’s first poverty simulation event. The event was designed to bring awareness to corporate leaders and influencers in the community about the everyday challenges faced by people who live in poverty and low-income situations.

Participants took part in four 15 minute sessions that each represented one week of the month. As the month progressed, they faced challenges and obstacles people in poverty experience daily, like fixing their car to get to work or buying groceries to feed their kids. The participants briefly experienced the stress associated with poverty and what it is like to make financial decisions - often with negative outcomes.

“The poverty simulation gave me a greater understanding of just how hard it might be for people who live in poverty. Very quickly I felt the stress about what my next decision would be and how it would impact the rest of the month,” said John Mulgrew, who took part in the poverty simulation.

After the simulation, participants took the opportunity to debrief and discuss their different experiences. The discussion allowed them to share how they felt through the month, the challenges they faced and whether they felt they were in a better position at the end of the month than they were at the beginning.

Alberta is one of the most expensive provinces to live in Canada, but it also has the country’s lowest minimum wage. This ultimately puts people at a greater risk of falling into the cycle of poverty. In 2012 it was estimated that the cost of poverty in Alberta was \$7.1 - \$9.5 billion. These costs show up in health care, the justice system and lost opportunity costs.

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