POVERTY IN SAN JUAN COUNTY: 2017

- With a population of approximately 16,000, during the last five years the county population has increased by about 2000.
- San Juan County ranks number one in Washington counties in terms of health outcomes and quality of life, but is the least affordable county to live in the state. (County Health Rankings 2016).
- 25% of our islands' households are experiencing a housing crisis. San Juan County has the greatest gap between household incomes and housing prices of any county in the state.
- According to the last Point in Time Count, the total number of people in situations of homelessness on our islands was 155, but we know that not all people in situations of homelessness are represented. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, on average there are 14 homeless individuals per every 10,000 people in rural areas like ours (while there are 29 in urban areas). So our numbers are proportionately very high. Although we do not have an accurate count yet, there are indications that the number of people in situations of homelessness in the San Juans is increasing.

ALICE: Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed

- 12% of our Islanders lived below poverty level in 2014, where “poverty level” refers to an annual income $24,230 for a family of four.
- According to the 2014 ALICE report, in San Juan County almost 5000 people struggle to survive on insufficient income – a full one-third of our island population; 22% were ALICE.
- 34% of our households are struggling to make ends meet. According to County Health Rankings,’ our county ranks ‘poor’ in terms of housing affordability, while it ranks ‘fair’ on job opportunities and ‘good’ on community resources.

Trends indicate that poverty is increasing:

Orcas Community Resource Center has noted an increased reliance on food stamps among families with children, up from 20% in 2009 to 54% in 2014 (Orcas Island Community Foundation).

Another indicator of the number of students living at or below poverty level is the number of students on free and reduced lunch, which on San Juan Island is:

- Elementary 48%
- Middle 44%
- High school 35%

A study done by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (FRED), based on U.S. Census data, notes that San Juan County’s poverty level increased from 10.7% in 2013 to 11.6% in 2015.[i] From 1990 to 2014 the number of people in situations of poverty in San Juan County grew from 800 to an estimated 2000 people, more than doubling in 25 years.[ii]

Would you like to help, today?