

Study: 39 million Americans in working poor families

WASHINGTON (AP)— One in every five U.S. jobs pays less than a poverty-level wage for a family of four, according to a study by the nonpartisan Working Poor Families Project.

The result of so many low-paying jobs is that nearly 39 million Americans, including 20 million children, are members of "low-income working families" — with barely enough money to cover basic needs such as housing, groceries and child

care, the study found. The study classified a "working family" as one in which there was one or more children and at least one family member had a job or was actively seeking work.

Besides staying current on bills, many of these folks also struggled to save up for a bigger home or for a child's college education, said Brandon Roberts, one of the report's authors.

"These 20 million children are the future of our

workforce," Roberts said. "Their future economic abilities are at risk growing up in families that don't have the resources to support them."

The report said federal and state lawmakers should put more money into adult education and job training programs, increase the minimum wage and expand subsidized child care for low-income parents. Doing so would create more skilled workers who will make more money and, in turn, increase the tax base,

the study said. "We do not think that the current federal-state system designed to support these families is sufficient for the task," Roberts said.

The report is based on Census Bureau data from 2002 and was to be officially released Tuesday, the day before the third and final debate between President Bush and Democratic challenger John Kerry. The debate focused on domestic issues, with an emphasis on jobs and the

economy. The government's poverty threshold varies depending on the size of a family. For instance, a family of four with two children was considered impoverished if its income was less than \$18,244 in 2002.

The study, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey, Ford and Rockefeller foundations, looked at working families with kids that earned no more than twice the poverty level. Anyone below that level was

considered "low-income." For a family of four, that threshold was \$36,488. The median U.S. income for such families is \$62,732.

About 28 million jobs in the United States provided less than a poverty-level wage, which works out to about \$8.84 an hour for a family of four, the study said. The median wage for a waiter was about \$6.80 an hour; for a cashier it was \$7.41 an hour.

That points to the need for (See *Working Poor*, Page 15)

BIFCO

(Continued from Page 1) company, restaurant, and grocery industry.

Diane Fontes, president and CEO of the Nevada Minority Business Council, was excited about the new development.

"BIFCO has the capacity to really perform in a diverse situation that many other companies have been unable to do," Fontes said. "They have the funding and staff to deliver on time and we're excited about their entrance into the marketplace along with their food recovery program."

BIFCO is expected to create more opportunities for minority and women business entrepreneurs to enter the growing industry of food service and distribution. The

company will also be a conduit for businesses unable to access and compete successfully in this market.

BIFCO's plans are to acquire existing businesses and build joint ventures similar to the approach recently taken with the majority-interest purchase of Desert Foods and the mentor-protégé relationship with SYSCO Food Service of Las Vegas.

Wesley R. Buford, BIFCO founder, told those gathered at last week's press event that he moved the business to the Silver State to take advantage of a void in the areas of hospitality, restaurants and grocery trade in this region and the country as a whole. Buford noted huge plans his company has for showing itself as a strong addition to the

economic base in Southern Nevada.

"We have a mandate to serve as a vehicle for women and minority-owned businesses to showcase their products in addition to creating jobs."

Companies will know for certain that BIFCO operates with high integrity and can access top decision makers within the food industry, Buford said, adding that he anticipates business "will be in the pipeline in short order."

Buford is optimistic about the company's performance and predicts that within three to five years, the business will be generating up to \$300 million in annual revenues. Commenting on the anticipated success of the company,

Buford said, "I hope to show Las Vegas that an African-American can be successful at running a company that can be both balanced in its profit-making goals and charitable giving."

The company's philanthropic endeavors involve a partnership with Amer-I-Can, a program that works to reallocate surplus food to social assistance programs. Buford hopes to establish a food recovery program for the homeless in Las Vegas.

This program would work with the hospitality and grocery industry to redistribute to local charitable organiza-

tions food that would be discarded daily.

Legendary former pro football player Jim Brown is the president and founder of the Amer-I-Can program established in 1988. In addition to feeding needed people, Brown's program teaches self-empowerment skills.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for poor people to be fed, given the opportunity to learn life management skills, and work with ex-felons and ex-gang members of Amer-I-Can to penetrate these communities and stop some of the violence there, and is a multi-level approach

that we as African-Americans have not experienced before," Brown said.

"This program will allow those participating an opportunity for economic growth through job placement along with education that will foster better lifestyle choices."

The food recovery and distribution program will mirror New York's City Harvest, a program that services more than 800 community food programs providing 200,000 meals weekly.

Last year more than 21 million pounds of surplus food from restaurants and other sources was reallocated.

Cancer

(Continued from Page 2) challenging when I first found out about the disease. After going through my pity party and crying, the reality set in and I knew that I needed to take care of this. I wanted to live, and I didn't want to die. I discovered in my research that the cancer cells are more aggressive than others and all grow excessively. When you experience this situation you look at life different and it's a happy time that you are still here to enjoy life. I'm at peace with what happened to me."

Hattie Bailey, also a member of Sisters Network was diagnosed with breast cancer over a year ago and underwent surgery and had follow-up treatments.

"In February of 2003, I had a mammogram and they sent me a letter stating that they found something suspicious in my left breast. They later found a lump and said that it was malignant. I did not immediately respond to the need for surgery, but later I went and had my breast removed along with some

lymph nodes. It was a struggle at first because I had never experienced a situation like this, but I have managed and now I am feeling fine. I am now cancer free. At the time of the initial diagnosis, I felt like it was like a death sentence, but I give credit to the Creator who created me and allowed the lump to be discovered and removed."

Stories like Bailey and Presley's offer encouragement for women living with cancer and knowledge for

others so that they understand the importance of early detection and routine self-breast exams.

The Las Vegas chapter will be sponsoring a fundraising event Saturday, October 16, at Sunrise Hospital from 3 to 6 p.m. Admission is \$12 and the event features a fashion show by Lord & Wolf Fashions. For more information, contact Beatty at 702-648-3410.

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

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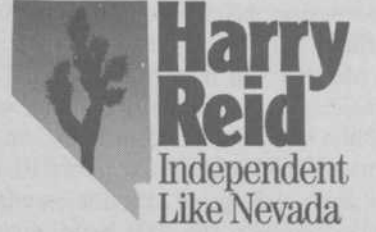
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