

It's no secret that people experiencing poverty have a hard time meeting their basic needs—but so do many working families in our community. With incomes above the federal poverty level, they earn too much to be considered poor, but not enough to cover the cost of living or receive additional support. These are ALICE households: Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed.

Anyone can be ALICE regardless of zip code, gender, age, race, or ethnicity. In fact, one out of every four households in Kent County is ALICE. They struggle to afford necessities like housing, food, healthcare, childcare, and transportation. One major financial setback like a car repair, doctor's visit, or job loss could be enough to put them over the edge.

The Making Ends Meet simulation walks you through a month in the life of an ALICE individual or family. You'll have to make some difficult decisions just to get by—decisions that ALICE households face every day. Can you balance money and stress for 30 days?



Which character did you choose, and why?

Did you make it through the month? If not, how far did you get?

What sacrifices or cuts did you have to make?
How did you feel about making these choices?

What was your main strategy while navigating through the month?

- Balance budget
- Balance stress level
- Find a balance between stress and budget
- Base choices on your real life

What did you learn about having to make certain choices on a limited budget?

What was the most difficult decision you had to make?

What obstacles or scenarios did your character experience that are easier to overcome?

What obstacles or scenarios did your character experience that are very difficult or even impossible to overcome?

What were your thoughts about the individual or family you selected?

In what part of the story do you see yourself?

What did you like and/or dislike about this experience?

How can the following groups in our community help ALICE?

- 1. Elected Officials/Policies 2. Workplaces
- 3. Nonprofit Agencies 4. Individuals

WE ARE CHAMPIONS FOR ALICE

Heart of West Michigan United Way funds programs that support those who live below the ALICE threshold. [Learn more at hwmuw.org](http://hwmuw.org).