



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Understanding the struggles of poverty

Red Deer, Alberta – March 8, 2016. Poverty is real for many individuals and families, but unless you personally experience poverty, it's difficult to truly understand. This is why United Way Central Alberta and the Central Alberta Poverty Reduction Alliance (CAPRA) are helping the social work students at Red Deer College make the connection between theory and practice.

The two organizations hosted the first poverty simulation in Central Alberta two years ago, and offer the program to community groups and businesses across Central Alberta. The program promotes poverty awareness, increases the understanding for the realities of poverty and inspires local change on the issue.

"We are happy to help support students who will soon be dealing with families living in poverty on a daily basis. It's critical hands on learning that will help them immensely to really understand and empathize with their clients." stated Danielle Klooster, CAPRA's Community Mobilizer.

At a previous simulation, local attendees had strong reactions to the experience, such as: "Getting out of poverty is a real challenge", "Breaking the cycle seems like an impossible task" and "There is a high toll paid on family relationships. People are frustrated, worried, stressed and exhausted."

Red Deer College Social Work instructor Rosemary Ignacio agrees that the presentation to the social work students will be invaluable. "This is such a great opportunity for those who have never experienced poverty in their lifetime to put themselves in the shoes of those who live the struggle daily. We know the students will come away much more prepared for their future roles."

400,000 Albertans are living in poverty, including 143,000 children. Approximately 15% of Red Deer families are living in poverty. 1 in 10 households are food insecure with an increase of 75% food bank usage from 2014 to 2015.

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About United Way Central Alberta

United Way's mission is to improve lives and build community through engagement and mobilized collective action. By investing in programs that get to the root causes of complex social issues, United Way is able to change people's lives and lift them to new levels of possibility. All donations are invested by active community volunteers and directed into Central Alberta communities to create community impact. Established in 1965, United Way Central Alberta celebrated its 50 anniversary in 2015.