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## THE BUFFALO NEWS

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### Advocates ask: Can you live on \$9.25 a day?

By Jay Tokasz NEWS STAFF REPORTER

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If you had \$9.25 a day, how would you spend it?

Would you be able to drive a car, watch cable television, surf the Internet at home or pay for medical insurance — and still eat?

The Homeless Alliance of Western New York says \$9.25 is about how much someone living under the federal poverty line has per day after paying for housing and clothing.

And, to call more attention to poverty in Buffalo, the second poorest large city in the U. S. according to the Census Bureau, the group has issued a “poverty challenge.” Participants in the challenge are being asked to start with an allotment of \$9.25 on Tuesday and Wednesday and to live within those means for two days.

“We ask people to make some choices,” said William O’Connell, executive director of the homeless alliance. “What I think most people will find is, they can’t do it.”

For example, if a participant drives a car on Tuesday or Wednesday, he would have to subtract from his allotment \$6.81 — the average cost per day of driving a vehicle. If he takes the bus, the cost goes down to \$2.20.

A cell phone costs \$1.66, medical insurance \$1.60.

Simply driving, using a cell phone and watching cable in one day will put a person well over budget, without any meals.

The challenge then asks participants to determine the approximate cost of meals by dividing the cost of items used by the amount used. Two slices of bread from a loaf with a total of 10 slices that cost \$2.50 would amount to 50 cents.

The goal is to fall into as little debt as possible and to reflect on purchases made that are often taken for granted.

“This is not playing poor for a couple of days. This is a solidarity exercise,” said O’Connell.

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The Homeless Alliance has recruited several area lawmakers and human service workers to participate in the challenge and has started a blog to convey thoughts about sticking to a poverty budget, [homelessalliance.wordpress.com](http://homelessalliance.wordpress.com).


The federal poverty line currently is \$866 per month. Fair market rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Buffalo is \$513, including utilities and repairs.

That leaves \$353 for the month, or, divided by 30 days, \$11.76 per day. The challenge also factors in the average cost of clothing and apparel at \$918 per year, or \$2.51 per day — thus leaving \$9.25.

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