

Poverty numbers a worry

More than 7 percent in Loveland

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About 7.2 percent of Loveland residents — nearly 5,000 of them — are living below the poverty line, according to a 2008 U.S. Census Bureau survey released this week.

Among those in poverty are 10 percent of local families with children.

Additionally, the survey reported more than one out of every four single mothers, 26.6 percent, are below the poverty level.

“I think it’s very concerning,” said Mary Atchison of the United Way of Larimer County.

“What it means is a lot of a families in Loveland are really struggling day to day to make ends meet.”

According to federal standards, a family of four is considered below the poverty line if it earns less than \$22,050 a year. An individual in poverty earns less than \$10,830 a year.

The American Community Survey, which released a portion of its findings Tuesday, surveyed a portion of the community to create its estimated results.

Overall, it found Loveland has fewer individuals living in poverty compared to the Larimer County average, which was reported at 12.4 percent.

However, Loveland was found to have more families living in poverty compared to Larimer County, which reported families in poverty at 6.5 percent.

For many community members, it may not be obvious that thousands of residents are so poor, Atchison said.

“I think its a hidden population,” she said, noting those in poverty extend beyond the chronically homeless who visibly live on the streets.

“It’s families that are just trying to make ends meet. They struggle every day to make it work.”

This is the first year the American Community Survey has conducted a one-year estimate report for Loveland because it was the first year the city reached a population of more than 65,000 — the bureau’s standard for yearly surveys.

However, in a three year survey ranging from 2005 to 2007, the report found 7.1 percent of Loveland families were living below the poverty line.

Those who work with that population know it’s not a problem that can be quickly fixed, Atchison said.

Yet community members can help end the cycle by volunteering with local human service agencies or by getting involved with United Way’s community initiative Pathways Past Poverty, she added.

The long-term, multifaceted plan aims to provide people the tools needed to move out of poverty, from job training to childcare.

“Hopefully, over time, we’ll see these (poverty) rates decline,” Atchison said.

ON THE NET: For more information about the American Community Survey, visit www.factfinder.census.gov.

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