

**For Immediate Release**

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**‘Trading Places’ offers insight Into poverty  
in Columbia County**

What happens when the primary income-earner of the family loses his or her job or is faced with a catastrophic illness ... or dies? Is there a safety net to allow the family to continue to function successfully? What should an employer or neighbor do when they realize that the family is struggling to keep afloat?

What happens when a single parent with subsidized childcare experiences job advancement and increased earnings? Does she lose the childcare subsidy? Will she have to make a decision to earn more, but have more expenses?

Labor force challenges, such as transportation, childcare, financial problems and more will be the focus of an interactive workshop on June 14 sponsored by the Columbia County Labor Forum.

The goal of the workshop is to allow participants – employers, social service providers and community -- to learn about challenges some limited income families experience, and to discover how a company can examine its policies and procedures to better accommodate people experiencing long-term or situational poverty.

During the workshop, the participants will be divided into different ‘families,’ all facing poverty. The challenge for the families will be to provide for basic necessities and shelter during the course of one month, divided into four 15 minutes ‘weeks.’ They need to feed their families, keep the children in school and pay the bills. A grocery store, employment office, human resources center, school and other resource tables are situated around the room.

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Comments from those who have participated in the workshop indicate an increased awareness of poverty in the community, the emotional toll on those affected, and the response a community can take to ease the effects.

The program was developed in Missouri, and in Wisconsin is sponsored by UW Extension. The workshop will be held Tuesday, June 14 at the Village Community Center in Poynette at 106 S. Main St. The morning's activities will begin at 8 a.m. with an employer profile, followed by the interactive exercise, then discussion in small groups, and an overview of Columbia County's poverty profile, ending at 11:15 a.m. A complementary continental breakfast will be provided. There is no fee to attend, but registration is required. Contact UW Extension Columbia County at 742-9688 to register or for more information. Registration deadline is June 7 and is limited to 75 participants.