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Living hand to mouth

POSTED BY **MATT DANEMAN** • FEBRUARY 24, 2010 • 10:43 AM
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A sobering stat - in 2009, one in four jobs in the Buffalo region were in an occupation where the median wage was below the poverty line for a family of four. That according to a new policy brief from the State University of New York at Buffalo's Regional Institute.

According to federal guidelines, that poverty line is about \$22,000. The median wage of WNY jobs in 2009 was \$31,800. And between 2004 and 2008, jobs in low-paying occupations grew 17 percent, according to UB research, while high-paying jobs grew 6 percent and medium-wage jobs DECLINED by 10 percent.

While the research brief focuses on the Buffalo-Niagara Falls metro area, the stats and trends for Rochester - which has seen a similar decline in its well-paying manufacturing base in the past couple generations - are likely similar. And in fact I'll have to do some digging and see what I can find out.

On a side note, Penn State's Living Wage Calculator estimates that in Monroe County, living wage - meaning what a person must make if working full time in order to cover typical expenses - for a single adult is \$9.06 an hour, while for a family of four it's \$29.72 an hour.

So what are the lifelines to this growing cadre of low-wage workers? According to the UB brief, they range from individuals tightening their belts personally and investing in education, employers providing good wages and benefits, and government providing a secure safety net.

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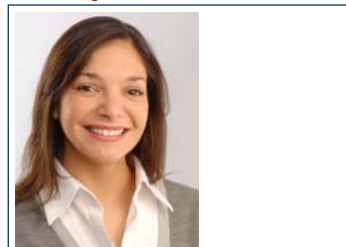
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Enid Arbelo joined the Business Desk as Young Professionals Editor in January, but has been with the *Democrat and Chronicle* for nearly five years. In that time she has worked in various departments at the newspaper from covering the eastside suburbs as a staff writer to serving as editor for *insider*, our young reader publication. She lives with her fiancé, Mike, in the city's Browncroft neighborhood with their two cats, Scribbles and Carter.



Diana Louise Carter was born at Rochester General Hospital the same year it opened and reared in Bristol, Ontario County. After college and grad school, her first reporting job was on a small newspaper in Western Massachusetts. She returned to Rochester in late 1987 to work for the Democrat and Chronicle. Carter covers agriculture and banking. She lives in the Upper Monroe neighborhood of Rochester with her husband and three children.



Matthew Daneman is a business reporter with the Democrat and Chronicle, covering imaging, optics, printing, telecommunications, manufacturing and a host of other topics. He lives in Rochester with his wife, Sheila. If he could have authentic western N.Y. chicken wings morning, noon and night, he would.



Emily Shearing is a business reporter with the Democrat and Chronicle, covering young professionals and up and coming businesses. She is a Saint John Fisher College grad and lives in Rochester. She also has addictions to fashion, cupcakes and [Twitter](#).



Steve Sink became Business Editor of the Democrat and Chronicle in 2006. When he isn't studying economic or market stats, you'll likely find him at an RPO concert or Red Wings game.



Jim Stinson is a business reporter with the Democrat and Chronicle, covering the economy, development, energy, COMIDA, RG&E and other topics. Born (directly) across the big lake in Cobourg, he lives in the South Wedge of

Rochester. His favorite things include film, travel, (very) amateur photography, Canadian butter tarts and contradicting Matt Daneman.



Tom Tobin has 30 years experience with Gannett newspapers as an editor and reporter. He lives in Rochester and has two children: Lia, 16, and Melissa, 11.

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