

Southwest Iowa Zest

by Thriving Families Alliance’s Lemonade for Life



Acts of Kindness

February 17th is **National Random Acts of Kindness Day!** What better way to boost employee morale and team spirit than encouraging acts of kindness throughout the month? We’re sharing with you a calendar of weekly acts of kindness focused on bringing your team together. The timing is perfect as many teams who have been separated by remote working arrangements since 2020 are now having the chance to come back together. According to the 2022 Global Culture Report, stronger connections at work lead to:

- ✓ Employees who are 8x’s more likely to produce great work
- ✓ Staff who is 5x’s more likely to be satisfied with their work experience & culture (this is a measure that often leads to higher staff retention and production)
- ✓ Organizations that are 11x’s more likely to thrive!

When not feeling connected, you can imagine the results show otherwise. Organizations with any staff size and budget can foster stronger connections at work. Use the weekly suggestions below or customize them to suit your team best.

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5
<p>Thank you notes! Provide staff members with a couple note cards, encourage them to write a heartfelt thank you to someone at work and an additional one outside of work. Handwritten notes are unique and greatly appreciated, and this shows you recognize the importance your staff plays both at work and beyond. Leave some extra in the break room in case someone's further inspired!</p>	<p>Give a gift! Give a "random" gift that's not attached to a specific task or project. The type of gift will depend on your staff size and company's capabilities. Maybe it's a grocery gift card, a cute succulent for everyone's desk, or even the ability to leave a few hours early on their day of choice in February. Be sure to include a message of appreciation.</p>	<p>Make it a team effort! Host a drive for a need in our community. Could be gently used clothing for shelters, needed items for the food bank, books for free libraries around town. Children's Square is in need of art supplies, and Micah House could use household items and toiletries. Track the collected donations with a visible chart (think thermometer) to encourage participation and goals!</p>	<p>Spread the joy! If you haven't already, explain to your staff that you've been celebrating acts of kindness this February. Encourage them to pass it along to their families or community. Maybe it's holding the door for others, treating the next person in line to their smoothie or coffee, donating blood, or visiting with an elderly neighbor. Enjoy the kindness chain reaction you've started!</p>	<p>Bonus Week! Since week 5 technically only includes a couple days, start planning for the future. Group volunteering is fantastic for team building. Habitat for Humanity can organize your group efforts for a day or more, Open Door Mission has a variety of options, or for an ongoing project, you can plant a community garden and share the produce with Together, Inc.</p>

No act of kindness, however small, is wasted. -Aesop

ALICE's Silent Struggle

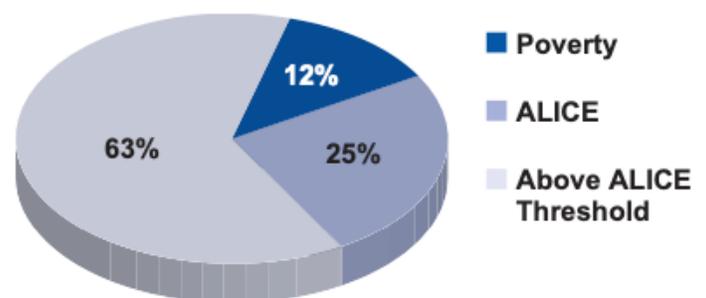
Numbers and statistics regarding our workforce are often reported without clear or complete background details. For example, minimum wage vs livable wage has been a common topic recently. A critical step to completing this discussion is understanding where we lowans stand with household income vs cost of basic needs. This month, we're encouraging you to strengthen your workforce by simply *learning* more about our local households.

Human services and programs, studies, legislators each often refer to the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) as a reference point. It's important to know those numbers. This chart shows the income levels by household size that equate to a person or family being at the FPL for the past several years. You'll notice those numbers seem painfully small, and don't increased much annually.

Year	1 Person	2 Persons	3 Persons	4 Persons	5 Persons	6 Persons
2022	\$13,590	\$18,310	\$23,030	\$27,750	\$32,470	\$37,190
2021	\$12,880	\$17,420	\$21,960	\$26,500	\$31,040	\$35,580
2020	\$12,760	\$17,240	\$21,720	\$26,200	\$30,680	\$35,160
2019	\$12,490	\$16,910	\$21,330	\$25,750	\$30,170	\$34,590

These numbers become more tangible when pairing them with another helpful resource. [The ALICE Report](#) of our **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed lowans provides a snapshot of the households in our communities that earn *more than* the FPL but *not high enough* to afford the cost of basic needs. These are people living paycheck to paycheck, regularly making difficult decisions with their earnings, and hoping the car doesn't break down, rent doesn't increase, and that everyone at home stays healthy because there's no room financially for surprises. To access The ALICE Report, [click here](#) for the full report, beginning with a comprehensive Executive Summary. Here are a few of the poignant details you'll find:

- Before the pandemic, 37%, or 457,223, of Iowa's households struggled to afford basic needs.
- In Pottawattamie County, this is 41%.
- The cost of household basics - housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, technology, and taxes - increased by 26% for a single adult and 41% for a family of four in Iowa from 2010 to 2016.
- Median earnings increased by 17%.



When workers live below the ALICE threshold, living in substandard housing causes stress leading to staff being late, absent, or less productive at work. Inability to afford healthy food results in increased demand for health care, missed work. Limited or no transportation leads to less opportunity for workers and a smaller pool of valuable candidates for employers.

Happily, you can incorporate workplace celebrations and initiatives, as well as ongoing learning to build your staff's resilience, engagement, and productivity. We're here help!

Along with incorporating suggestions you find in our newsletters, share the featured ingredient we provide each month with your staff. Providing a continuous stream of resources empowers staff to ask for help instead of spending time independently researching solutions, increases resilience through engaging with a variety of useful supports, expands the number of no- or low-cost resources available to you as an employer, and reinforces the compassion with which your leadership team is backing your staff.



Photo by fauxels-pexels

Department of Human Services

Who is supported: A broad range of the community

Where do they help: Across the State of Iowa, through regional offices

What kind of assistance is provided: A wide range of services are offered. For a complete list use this link: <https://dhs.iowa.gov/a-z-services> The following are included in DHS services: food, healthcare, and child care assistance; financial resources, disaster relief, family services, mental health & disability, refugee support.

When can you reach them: 24/7 hotline below, hours vary by department needed

How can you connect with them: <https://dhs.iowa.gov/contact-us>
800-972-2017

Featured Ingredient



Learn more by visiting Thriving Families Alliance's Lemonade for Life Initiative online:
<https://www.thrivingfamiliesalliance.org/advocacyandawareness>
Contact us at: 515-230-9186 or kallen@promisepartners.org
Join our email list to receive our newsletters by [clicking here](#).