Brother Francis Shelter Usage On The Rise

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

As the leaves change in Kodiak and temperatures start to drop, many families in Kodiak are scratching their heads at how to afford another winter on the island. Monte Hawver is the executive director of the Brother Francis Shelter and said high fuel costs and rent have left many families struggling to keep afloat in recent years.

-- (Poor Families Struggle 1 :40 “We’ve been having struggles here in Kodiak for years. But the last two years have really spiked. The cost of living here, you know like I was saying everything from a gallon of milk to a gallon of gas to a loaf of bread that has sky rocketed price wise and for many families that is just an inconvenience or major annoyance, but for others, for many, many others, it’s literally a situation where the arithmetic doesn’t add up. They just can’t make ends meet. They still have eight dollar, nine dollar an hour cannery jobs and service area jobs and you know $1,000-1,600 rents.”)

The high cost of living has also prompted many younger family members to join the workforce as well.

-- (Poor Families Struggle 2 :14 “In many families you even have young teens that are working that are instead of buying clothes and gidgets and gadgets their literally putting their money in the family to make ends meet.”)

Hawver said it isn’t just the lower class that has felt the prices rising in Kodiak. He said many middle class people are finding themselves making less than they did five or ten years ago because of so much money going toward living expenses.

He said usage at the Brother Francis Shelter has been steadily increasing over the last five years, with huge spikes more recently. He said he’s thankful for his staff that works diligently to make sure the shelter can stay open and provide the services it does.

-- (Poor Families Struggle 3 :41 “Well I have very committed staff that just work really, really hard to help people to keep their heads above water. We have feeding services, we feed about 23,000 meals a year. And we have overnight sheltering services and we also have a very dynamic homeless prevention program that can assist families that are you know going under water and to help them enough that they can keep their head above water. But it’s much, much harder than it used to be. I mean there are many families that are right on the edge and it doesn’t take anything to throw them into financial chaos.”)

Hawver said if things don’t change soon many community members may find themselves seeking greener, or cheaper, pastures beyond the emerald isle. He said electricity saving methods like the turbines and hydroelectricity are certainly helping, but another harsh winter will still prove difficult for many Kodiak families.

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