

## **Report: Poverty In Jackson Co. Is Twice The National Avg.**

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A new report from financial website MINT shows Jackson County's poverty level sits at 25 to 30 percent. Several agencies say it's an unfortunate reality but they're not too surprised.

2009 statistics from the Census Bureau show nationwide 14.3 percent lived at or below poverty level. Across the state, that figure is slightly less at 14 percent. But that number is nearly doubled for Jackson County.

"Jackson County has been hit in unprecedented numbers in foreclosure. I think in the last five years we've lost five or six thousand homes for foreclosure," said Marsha Kreucher, Community Action Agency CEO.

But Kreucher fears in the city that number could be even higher.

"The City of Jackson usually, when we look at Jackson County statistics always is higher in unemployment, they're always higher in the poverty rate," said Kreucher.

You don't need to look beyond Jackson Public Schools to find out why. 68 percent of the students use the free and reduced lunch program. That program is for low-income families.

But other agencies say don't focus on the problem but the solution. Five years ago Wendy Wight launched "Together We Can Make A Difference." The non-profit agency works to help those who are struggling financially. Right now, one of her many big projects is making sure Christmas is enjoyable for all children.

"We're gearing up for a really big Christmas store, last year was our fifth store. And we call it a store, we call it priceless gift toy store and really we're representing Jesus to our families, to our communities," said Wight.

Helping parents give their children Christmas, and using her faith to serve those in need around the county. So instead of dwelling on the problem of poverty she's tackling it one program at a time.