



*Fairfax County*  
**Department of Family Services**  
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## Life in the State of Poverty: A Simulation Experience

What is it like to live in poverty in Fairfax County? State and local policy makers, community leaders, and human service providers ate peanut butter sandwiches and briefly walked in the shoes of someone living in poverty as they participated in the Life in the State of Poverty simulation program sponsored by the Fairfax County Community Action Advisory Board (CAAB) on April 16, 2004.

Fairfax County supervisors who attended the simulation took time at a recent board meeting to tell their colleagues about the experience.

Supervisor Catherine Hudgins, Hunter Mill District, commented: "We need to internalize the real meaning of poverty to make policies... That is the contribution made by the program."

The simulation exposes participants to the hard choices and realities facing low-income families. Participants take on the roles of family members facing the daily frustrations of not having enough money and resources. Time constraints relating to jobs, illness, inadequate transportation and child care combine with the pressures of insufficient funds for rent, groceries and debts. After just an hour, participants feel the stress.

The mission of the CAAB, an advisory board to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, is to make a positive difference in the lives of low-income families and individuals.

According to Philip Rosenthal, CAAB vice-chairman: "The simulation offers a glimpse of the stresses and frustrations experienced on a daily basis in all the families that have a limited income. We hope this experience will strengthen the community's understanding and commitment to advocate for programs and policies that deal with the everyday needs of low-income individuals and families."

The CAAB, in conjunction with the Department of Systems Management for Human Services, is sponsoring another simulation on May 20, 2004 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at the First Baptist Church of Springfield. It is open to the public, but registration is required. If you are interested in attending, need more information or special accommodations, please contact Shannon Speidell, Department of Family Services, at 703-324-5848; TTY 703-222-9452.

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