



## Poor people spend money as soon as they receive it

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YOUNGSTOWN

People living in multigenerational poverty view the world differently from those who've been raised in a more comfortable middle-class environment, a police sensitivity-training workshop presenter said.

Guy Burney, the city's Community Initiative to Reduce Violence coordinator, is presenting the workshop this week as part of mandatory training for city police officers at the Arlington Heights Center, 801 Park Ave.

The workshop's goal is to sensitize officers to the challenges faced by people in poverty and to the mind-set those challenges produce, which are different from the experience and mind-set of many police officers who've come from middle-class backgrounds.

One concrete example, Burney said, is that middle-class people have the luxury of taking a long-term, deferred-gratification view of money management, including saving and investing for college or retirement, and possibly passing money from generation to generation in the form of inheritance.

On the other hand, poor people spend their money on life's necessities as soon as they receive it, Burney said. "There's no thought of saving or administering the money because there are so many needs" that demand immediate attention, he explained.

Some 59 percent of poor renters spend 50 percent of their income on shelter, whereas 25 percent to 33 percent for shelter is typical in the middle class, he noted.

"We're going to try to look at it from another side," Burney told the audience of 14 police officers, who attended Monday's session. The training is being offered in multiple sessions this week.

"Individuals that we're dealing with, a lot of times, are in poverty or low-income families. It gives us a perspective on how they view police officers and some of the ways that they view societal values," Capt. Kevin Mercer of the city police department said of the workshop.

"I'm just hoping officers get a broader perspective, a little bit more cultural diversity [training], and that the officers have empathy towards other individuals of maybe a different background or social-economic status," he added.

"Police officers deal with a wide variety of people in different socioeconomic statuses throughout the city.

Since most officers didn't come from an impoverished population, it's important that they know how to deal with that," said Lt. Jason Simon.

There are four reasons people escape poverty, Burney said:

The life of poverty is so uncomfortable that they feel an urgency for change.

They have a skill or talent that propels them out of poverty.

A mentor guides them concerning the way out of poverty.

They obtain an education that leads to more financially rewarding employment.

"They have to want to make the choice" to escape poverty, Burney said.

Burney's presentation is based on the book titled "Bridges Out of Poverty," written by Ruby K. Payne, Philip E. DeVol and Terri Dreussi Smith.

Training programs based on the book are given nationally to police, lawyers, judges, probation officers, counselors, social workers, educators, clergy, community volunteers and employers, whose businesses connect them with people in poverty.

The daylong continuing education program here also included an explanation of the city's new towing ordinance and a hands-on Taser training session.