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Editorial – Numbers emphasize need for charity

The annual report on who can and cannot afford to live in Delaware was released this week.

Combined with news about critical shortages in the stocks at the Food Bank of Delaware, the start of the dog days of summer takes on a particularly harsh reality for many Delawareans.

According to the Annual Report on Housing Affordability in Delaware, 54 percent of the state's renters cannot afford a two-bedroom apartment in their county.

Fair market rent for two-bedroom apartments range from a low of \$750 in Sussex County to \$812 in Kent County to a high of \$1,077 in New Castle.

At those prices, a Delaware worker must earn at least \$18.74 per hour -- or \$38,979 annually -- to be able to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment.

Additionally, since a year ago, donations to the Food Bank of Delaware have fallen by more than 3 million pounds, a worrisome decline.

The drop in donations -- from 8.3 million pounds in fiscal year 2010 to 5 million pounds in fiscal 2011 -- comes as demand remains high, with more than 240,000 Delaware residents drawing on emergency food supplies last year.

And there is little comfort to take in the state's rate of "food insecurity" being slightly better than the national average.

The associated fallout for the struggling poor is visible, with the presence of more traffic-stopping beggars around the state. And they are just a fraction of the invisible Delawareans falling through the social safety net.

These numbers especially put a face on Delaware's long-term unemployed and undertrained workforce. Both groups are a reflection of paltry national job growth -- last month only 180,000 new jobs were added to a workforce of 14 million.

It's always important to take stock of such circumstances, not to guilt-trip fellow Delawareans but as a reminder of the unmet need.

And also as encouragement to consider a spin on the peculiar summer observance of a winter holiday: Christmas in July. It's meant to stoke cooler memories of a holiday steeped in charitable giving. A number of nonprofits, including the Food Bank, the Delaware Housing Coalition and the United Way of Delaware stand ready in these dog days to receive and distribute charitable gifts for needy fellow Delawareans.