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## LIVE PREP FOOTBALL PLAYOFF SCORING UPDATES

### Q-C child poverty explored in PBS film

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**By Jonathan Turner, jturner@qconline.com**

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The Quad-Cities and the issue of child poverty will get national exposure on Tuesday with "Poor Kids," a new Frontline PBS documentary that airs at 9 p.m. on Iowa Public Television.

A film crew spent eight months in the region earlier this year, following three families (and six children) who live in poverty. Based on a similar BBC documentary in the United Kingdom last year by Australian director Jezza Neumann, the hour-long program does not have a narrator or interview experts in the field. Told nearly all from the voices of the children themselves, "Poor Kids" offers a perspective on the nation's flagging economy and the impact of unemployment, foreclosure, homelessness and financial distress as seen through the eyes of kids.

"This was brave on PBS' part," Mr. Neumann said on Sunday at the Salvation Army Family Service Shelter in Davenport, where he profiled one of the families, and returned this weekend to visit. "The idea of the film is to be used as the human face of statistics. The film is what the experts can now use to make a difference. They don't need to be in it. The children tell the story."

"As Americans prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving, one in five of the nation's children is living below the poverty level," Maj. Gary Felton, the Salvation Army's Quad-Cities coordinator, said. "One in 45 children in the United States is homeless."

The Salvation Army and other area social-service agencies helped the filmmakers become acquainted with the families interviewed, he said.

"This is an opportunity not only for viewers across the nation, but also the Quad-Cities especially, to see the homelessness through the eyes of a child," Maj. Felton said. "When viewers watch children face such difficult situations as those depicted here, people will better understand the work of The Salvation Army and how we meet the needs of both children and families."

Mr. Neumann chose the Quad-Cities to make the U.S. version of "Poor Kids," as a little-seen alternative to major cities such as Detroit, Chicago and Las Vegas. A vision of poverty in the heartland represents the national tragedy so anyone can relate to it, he said.

"Food banks were supposed to be used just in emergencies. Now they're being used as regular sources of food," Mr. Neumann said. "It's a real acute problem."

"We need to let people know what the real situation is, let people see what we see," Caren Laughlin, marketing director of Moline-based Riverbend Food Bank, said, which worked with Mr. Neumann to find families and suggest places to film. "Part of our mission is to raise awareness this is a problem in the Quad-Cities."

The food bank distributes about 500,000 pounds every month in a 22-county area, and its program that supplies food to 1,300 disadvantaged kids per week in 30 schools is featured in the film at Eagle Ridge School in Silvis.

"It's mostly just to open people's eyes to what it's like for our children. We're hoping that will inspire people," Ms. Laughlin said of the documentary. "If people realize the severity of the situation, they will support the programs even more. We aren't able to reach enough people through them."

Mr. Neumann is impressed with how the Quad-Cities responds to families in need, but places such as The Salvation Army need more help. The state of Iowa recently cut funding for its homelessness prevention program, which offered financial help and counseling to people in danger of losing their homes.

"The support structure is there for sure, but it's so underfunded," the director said of local agencies. The poor he visited work hard, want to better their lives and are embarrassed to accept help. As a result of the film, Mr. Neumann said, "I hope that people will re-think how they see people in poverty."

"I wanted to get kids in the film that people could identify with," he said. "That could be the kid next door." He also tried to feature families that have seen better times, and fallen through no fault of their own.

One is jobless Chicago native Tom (who asked his last name

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### PHOTOS



**Photo:**  
 A Frontline film crew spent eight months following local poor families, including 10-year-old Kaylie, shown here. The children talked about growing up against the backdrop of their families' struggles with financial ruin.

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not be used) who lives with his wife and four kids at the Davenport shelter, and saw his construction business in Florida go under because of the recession. "I don't want any handouts. I want somebody to give me a chance," he said, noting he's earned a welding certificate from Scott Community College.

"If I had one wish right now, most people want a big bag of money, but mine is to get a job like at John Deere, bust my hump and people see I'm worthy to buy and keep a house," Tom said.

His wife, Classie, said they agreed to be in the film to show how many people really struggle today. "What do I have to hide?" she said. "I'm anxious to see it. I know I'm going to cry."

"Anything that can bring the issue to light is positive," Scott Crane, president of United Way of the Quad-Cities area, said, which funds many agencies that support poor families. "The economy is turning around, but we still have a lot of people that are hurting."

United Way helps provide a "basic safety net," but also supports education to alleviate long-term poverty, he said, and that's what Mr. Neumann wants to see. He found the local kids eager to improve themselves and their lives.

One in five Rock Island County children younger than 18 lived in poverty in 2011, up from 18.2 percent in the 2010 American Community Survey. In Scott County, the child poverty rate fell to 13.5 percent from 15.1 percent in 2010. Median income for households increased from \$47,206 to \$49,549 in 2011 in Scott County, and in Rock Island County it slipped from \$45,005 to \$43,597.

Mr. Crane said films such as "Poor Kids" helps personalize and humanize the issue.

"If you're putting a face on it, that resonates with folks That makes it much more real," he said. "The awareness, just to get the door open, for organizations whether it's United Way or government groups, they can begin to change their practices, move forward and really help people."

"Especially at this time of year, with our annual bell-ringing fundraising effort under way, we hope that Quad-Citians will open their hearts and remember the children who literally are their neighbors in need," Maj. Felton said.

#### Preview "Poor Kids" and help

To see a 30-second clip from the documentary "Poor Kids," or for more information, visit [pbs.org/Frontline/poor-kids](http://pbs.org/Frontline/poor-kids) or [facebook.com/Frontline](http://facebook.com/Frontline).

The program also can be viewed in its entirety after Tuesday at [pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline](http://pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline).

The writer/director Jezza Neumann has made documentaries about troubled children all over the world, including China, Tibet, Zimbabwe and Gaza. He has been named one of the United Kingdom's top 10 directors by Broadcast Magazine, and a version of "Poor Kids USA" with added footage from San Francisco will be shown in the U.K. in early 2013.

Mr. Neumann has established a charitable foundation through his company, True Vision, that supports children (and those like them) profiled in his documentaries. For more information, visit [truevisiontv.com/foundation](http://truevisiontv.com/foundation) or email [petra@aletheiafoundation.org.uk](mailto:petra@aletheiafoundation.org.uk).

The Salvation Army's Red Kettle Campaign this year in the Quad-Cities aims to raise \$725,000 to help continue the nonprofit agency's services, including the family shelter at 301 W. 6th St., Davenport. For information about how to volunteer as a bell-ringer, or donate, visit [ringbells.org](http://ringbells.org).

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#### TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Monday, Nov. 19, the 324th day of 2012. There are 42 days left in the year.  
1862 -- 150 years ago: Starting today the post office opens at 8 a.m. and closes at 8:30p.m. On Sundays the hours are from 9 to 10 a.m. only.  
1887 -- 125 years ago: Andalusia residents are frightened by the prevalence of typhoid fever in that area.  
1912 -- 100 years ago: Dr. A. B. Meldrum will speak at the 75th anniversary service of the Central Presbyterian Church, Rock Island, on Sunday.  
1937 -- 75 years ago: The Tri-Cities had received 1.7 inches of snow by noon yesterday, the first measurable amount of the season.  
1962 -- 50 years ago: Quad-City Marine reservists have launched their annual "Toys for Tots" campaign. Capt. James F. Schulz, commanding officer, and Ordnance Field Maintenance Co., Force Troops, FMF, USMGR, Moline, announced. The toy drive will conclude on Dec. 9. This will be the 10th "Toys for Tots" drive conducted in the Quad-City area.  
1987 -- 25 years ago: The Festival of Trees is ready to dazzle you with its spectacle and beauty. After a \$25-per-person "First Night" preview on Sunday, the second annual festival will open for the public on Monday in Davenport River Center and will run through Nov. 29. It will be closed Thanksgiving Day.



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