

In celebration of Labor Day, try this thought experiment

By **HEBER TAYLOR** | Posted: Monday, September 2, 2013 12:00 am

Today, the nation is celebrating the social and economic gains of the American worker, including the eight-hour day and the 40-hour week.

On the same day, we ought to remember that many people in Galveston County are working two or three jobs. They forgot about the eight-hour day and 40-hour week long ago.

Workers, like managers, have to get to their numbers.

They have to make enough to buy food and to pay rent. If they can't hit those numbers with one job, the next step is to forget about all that social progress and get a second job.

Hence the concept of a living wage. The idea was originally developed by the Economic Policy Institute.

The Living Wage Calculator is now maintained by Dr. Amy K. Glasmeier and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Basically, you're looking at the income you'd need to meet average expenses, adjusted for average prices in this county.

Here are Galveston County's numbers for annual income before taxes:

One adult: \$19,213 — \$9.24 an hour

One adult, one child: \$39,758 — \$19.11

One adult, two children: \$47,960 — \$23.06

Two adults, two children: \$40,386 — \$19.42

If you're wondering why the single adult with two kids needs to earn more than the two adults with two kids, the answer is child care. The Living Wage Calculator suggests the single adult with two kids should budget \$717 a month for child care, an expense the two adults could skip.

In celebration of Labor Day, try this thought experiment. You're on your own, a single adult, no children. Here is the proposed monthly budget:

- Food: \$242
- Child care: \$0

- Medical: \$131
- Housing: \$661
- Transportation: \$318
- Other: \$77
- Required monthly income after taxes: \$1,429

Annually, that's \$17,148. And, since a single adult making that much money would pay \$2,065 in taxes, the required income would be \$19,213, or \$9.24 an hour. That's about \$2 more than minimum wage.

Politics aside, could you do it?