



Above, Britney Aubin, Global Policy Project presenter, presented "1.4 Billion Reasons" to a crowd of students April 8 in Violette Hall. Below, a van for the "Live Below the Line" advertised a challenge for anyone who saw it. The presentation attempted to raise awareness of poverty in developing countries.

Sam Gorden/Index

BY EMILY WICHMER
Staff Reporter

Ramen noodles and Chinese food often are referred to as college staples. However, a recent presentation challenged Truman State students to forgo these items and survive for one day on the same price as a cup of coffee.

The Global Poverty Project, launched during 2008 in the U.S., gave a presentation titled "1.4 Billion Reasons" to a group of about 70 students April 8 in Violette Hall. Melissa Riepe, Logistics Road Scholar for GPP, said the event was created to call attention to poverty throughout developing countries and gave the hopeful message that poverty can be overcome and challenged listeners to experience what it is like to some extent to live in extreme poverty. She said those living in extreme poverty typically survive on about \$1.50 per day.

Riepe said she thinks it is important to raise awareness of the prevalence of poverty, especially to high school and college students. She said members of this age group have many obligations during their daily lives, but they still can have an effect on those in poverty. Raising awareness is not a permanent solution to eliminating poverty, but it is a step in the right direction, Riepe said.

To raise awareness, the GPP encourages audience members to join the "Live Below the Line" challenge, Riepe said. For this challenge, the participant pledges to spend no more than \$1.50 per day on food and drink items — the same amount of money as someone in extreme poverty — for five days, she said.

Through the "Live Below the Line" campaign, participants also can raise money for one of 11 organizations dedicated to serving those in poverty, Riepe said. If participants sign up on the "Live Below the Line"



website, they can choose to partner with a charity and post the page to social media to ask friends to donate.

Riepe said she and six other office members of GPP tried the "Live Below the Line" campaign earlier this year. She said they were strategic with their resources, and pooled their money each day to buy enough for everyone.

"The biggest challenge was having to constantly deny yourself," Riepe said. "It really gave me an insight into a world where you can see that people all around you have more than you."

Riepe said she thinks GPP serves as a rally because they portray poverty as something that can be overcome. She said while other organizations dedicated to ending poverty sometimes focus on the grim side, GPP tries to show that the 1.4 billion suffering from poverty around the world have a realistic, hopeful story. GPP shows those living in poverty have the same thoughts, goals and feelings as those who are not poverty-stricken, she said.

Bertha Thomas, Assistant Dean of Multi-

cultural Affairs, said Riepe introduced her to GPP and piqued her interest in the project. She said the organization's "1.4 Billion Reasons" presentation gave the hopeful message that poverty could be ended during a generation. She said she thought it would be interesting for Truman students because she thinks many students are interested in community service and social justice.

The students who attended the presentation were exposed to the problem of poverty in a hopeful light, Thomas said, because it showed that this global problem has a solution. She said she hopes Truman students will realize there are those around them who are worse off than they are and who need their help. She said GPP helped listeners understand there are concrete ways to aid those in poverty, especially through teamwork.

Thomas said she plans to participate in "Live Below the Line" because she wants to share in the experience of living in extreme poverty on a smaller scale.

"The fact that people can survive on only \$1.50 a day is astounding to me," Thomas said. "Not only because they are able to sustain themselves, but because they often have to take from that amount to cover emergencies."

Junior Nicola Fish, student coordinator for the project, said GPP's email list and Twitter feed share information about how to make a difference.

"The group said that to eliminate poverty, donating money isn't enough," Fish said. "We need to give money to develop communities that will sustain a prosperous environment in the long term."

She said she plans to participate in "Live Below the Line." She said she jokes that as a college student, she now knows that with \$1.50, she could buy a can of Spaghetti-O's.

Individuals looking for more information can check out livebelowtheline.com or globalpovertyproject.com

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