

Marsha Kreucher, CEO of Community Action Agency in Jackson, is retiring after 25 years on the job

October 19, 2012 at 5:00 PM by [Tarryl Jackson](#) | tjacks01@mlive.com



Marsha Kreucher is retiring from Community Action Agency.

JACKSON, MI – After leading the charge to help Jackson County’s less fortunate get themselves back on their feet for 25 years, **Marsha Kreucher** is stepping down from that role. Kreucher is retiring as CEO of the Community Action Agency, which serves more than 26,000 residents in Jackson, Hillsdale and Lenawee counties and runs more than 80 programs, from adult education to foreclosure counseling to financial literacy.

Under Kreucher's leadership since the late 1980s, the nonprofit also has spearheaded projects such as the revitalization of Partnership Park, **the Center for Family Health** and the Community Foreclosure Coalition. “It’s going to be a pretty dramatic shift for me,” Kreucher, 64, said about her departure. “It’s almost hard to comprehend the difference my life will have without it.” Kreucher will retire in December and will be replaced by Toby Berry, who has worked for Community Action Agency for almost 13 years. The 38-year-old started her career there as a housing advocate for the nonprofit’s homeless programs.

Berry was chosen by the agency’s board of directors out of 33 applicants and will start her new role as CEO in January. Berry said she is excited to start. “I really don’t sit still ever,” Berry said. “Being out in the community and making sure we’re doing what is needed is important.”



Toby Berry

As the nonprofit's neighborhood development director, Berry was responsible for carrying out the \$15 million investment into revitalizing Partnership Park, a neighborhood of 700 residents bordered by Washington Avenue and Morrell, Blackstone and Francis streets and once concentrated with high crime and blight. The investment led to housing rehabilitation, installation of new streetlights and sidewalks and a partnership with YouthBuild and **the Greater Jackson Habitat for Humanity**.

"Toby has the vision," Kreucher said. "She's just risen steadily with taking on more responsibilities and has so many ideas on where we should go. I can't really think of anyone who would be better." Kreucher started working for the Community Action Agency in 1985 as the director of the Hillsdale County operation. In 1988, the Detroit native was selected as CEO of the three-county agency.

When she started, the agency had a budget of about \$4 million with 20 to 25 programs. Now, the annual budget averages about \$20 million. Most of its funding comes from the federal government. Early in her tenure, Kreucher turned her attention to Jackson County's high infant-mortality rate. Thanks to a collaborative effort spearheaded by the Community Action Agency, the Center for Healthy Beginnings opened in 1991 to address the county's infant mortality rate of 11.7 deaths per 1,000 live births. At first, it provided prenatal care to expectant low-income mothers.

During the center's first four years, the rate dropped to 8.7 per 1,000 births, falling below the state average. Today, the community health center -- now known as the Center for Family Health -- provides primary health care and dental care to about 27,000 adults and children across the county. Working with Kreucher has been a privilege, and her compassion for people has been an inspiration, said Georgia Fojtasek, president and CEO of **Allegiance Health**. "As a result of her commitment, we have been able to collaborate and achieve so much," Fojtasek said in an e-mail. "In particular, the model that our Center for Family Health has become for the nation is a tribute to her work." Irene LeCrone, community solutions manager for **the United Way of Jackson County**, has worked with Kreucher on different community projects and said she brings a lot of experience and knowledge to the table.

“Marsha has done a fabulous job,” LeCrone said. “She has a real passion for at-risk people and people in need in our community.” LeCrone said she was thrilled when she heard Berry was going to be the new leader of Community Action Agency. “I have a great amount of respect for Toby,” LeCrone said. “She’s very collaborative and cooperative. She can really see the big picture.”

David Stimpson, board chairman for Community Action Agency, said the nonprofit is sad to see Kreucher retire after so many years of service. “However, she leaves the agency in good hands with Ms. Berry as she is an experienced leader with a passion for service and a creativity that will inspire and assist others in the future,” he said.