

## **Editorial: Jackson community will lose a real leader when Marsha Kreucher retires from Community Action Agency**

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Marsha Kreucher

JACKSON, MI — Marsha Kreucher could testify that most who go into the work of fighting poverty are not out for glamor. There's no ego fulfillment, as there is in politics, nor the potential for personal wealth that comes from building a business or becoming a captain of industry. Still, Kreucher — **who retires at the end of the year** — has shown how a person in her position can wield tremendous influence for the good. In nearly a quarter-century leading the Community Action Agency, she has unceremoniously established herself as one of Jackson's true leaders.

We say "unceremoniously" because we at the Citizen Patriot are as guilty as anyone in overlooking her work. When election time comes around, we devote stories piled upon stories devoted to candidates and their positions. We faithfully cover government, and we want you to be the first to know when the next restaurant — or dollar store — opens. We think you care about that information, too.

An institution like the Community Action Agency falls between the cracks, much of its work measured over the slow arc of years or even decades. President Lyndon Johnson announced a

"War on Poverty" in 1964. We will soon reach the 50-year anniversary of that declaration with precious little progress as a nation.

In Jackson, look at what the Community Action Agency has done under Kreucher's watch.

It laid the foundation for what would become the Center for Family Health, a major provider of low-cost medical and dental care in Jackson County. The agency pushed the makeover of Jackson's Partnership Park neighborhood, eclipsing the local government as a visionary within the city limits.

And speaking of city government, Kreucher's organization was denied a major accomplishment in 2004, when the City Council turned down a plan to turn the Hayes Hotel into affordable housing.

**(2009 Brad Flory column: Hayes Hotel saga has idiotic ending for City Hall)**

Putting aside the milestones, it is easy to point to the significant effort the Community Action Agency puts into Jackson County on a daily basis. It recruits volunteers to prepare tax returns and administers the Warm the Children program, which is about to start, allowing children of low-income families to receive coats or boots for the winter.

Sure, this agency works almost entirely with your money, taxpayer dollars. Yes, Jackson remains afflicted by poverty. But that's not for lack of trying by Kreucher or those who work under her. The Community Action Agency has sustained this community's social safety net and taken demonstrable steps to keep people out of it.

With editorials like this, there's a tendency to say that Kreucher will leave behind a major legacy. True, but when you look at all Kreucher has done, you also have to hope more people will be willing to follow her example and build on it.

— *Jackson Citizen Patriot*

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