

NEWS RELEASE

Community Action Partnership's Lorana Kelly to retire after 38 years of helping people, changing lives

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In her 38 years with Community Action Partnership of the Greater Dayton Area, Community Development Coordinator Lorana Kelly has seen many changes, including technological advances, the loss of major employers in Dayton and the "new poor." She's worked under five agency chiefs and experienced three agency name changes.

In the field of social services, Kelly's seen it all, through her customer's eyes and through her own experiences. She came to Community Action after being on welfare herself, quitting school, and then going back for her GED and later a degree from Central State University.

"If you've been through it, you know how to work with people," Kelly says. She's seen thousands of people over the years, helping to provide them with social services and advocating for issues that affect low-income persons in our community. The biggest change since 1972? The rise of technology.

"We still have so many people out there who aren't into the technical field," Kelly says. We have to keep our emphasis on those people who don't have (computers)."

In recent years, the area has been battered by layoffs and closings such local stalwarts as GM, NCR and Mead. This has led to what Kelly calls the "new poor," people needing social services for perhaps the first time in their lives.

"They don't know how to use our services," Kelly says. "They've never had to use the services so they don't know where they have to go to seek help. We have to make sure people know we have services for them."

Advocacy issues have also been a major part of Kelly's career. She's helped identify issues and advocate for the low-income community. These efforts have included local rallies, testimony in Columbus, and

in the early 70s, taking eight busloads of people to Washington, D.C. to advocate on welfare and food stamp issues. Advocacy is time-consuming, requires much work, and the results are not always immediate.

“Advocacy is not something you can do right then and there,” Kelly says. “People just don’t want to wait on things to happen. They think it should happen right then.”

Kelly’s many accomplishments include being named one of the Ten Top Women in 1986 and receiving the Social Service Award from the Mary Scott Nursing Home. While on the Dayton Priority Board, she worked for the naming of CJ McLin Parkway and James H. McGee Blvd.

After her retirement Sept. 3, Kelly hopes to enjoy some time off with Michael, her husband of 51 years, and their four children, 22 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. She’ll also do some volunteer work.

After 38 years, Kelly believes the need for Community Action Partnership is greater than ever.

“I feel it’s been a very viable and needed organization,” she says. “I think the programs are really good for everybody. I have always loved my job.”

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EDITORS: A photograph of Lorana Kelly is attached. Her last day at Community Action Partnership is Friday, Sept. 3. After that time, she may be reached at (937) 278-4930 or (937) 397-4942.