# Former Detroit Free Press reporter, children's advocate to speak at United Way of Jackson County's annual meeting April 18

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JACKSON, MI – "A children's advocate" was a label that former Detroit Free Press reporter **Jack Kresnak** tried to avoid during his journalism career.

Jack Kresnak

People gave him that label because several of his stories – primarily about juvenile justice and child welfare – led to policy changes that impacted children.

Kresnak, now the president and CEO of the nonprofit Michigan's Children, eventually accepted the label.

"I was in a bit of denial," said Kresnak, who worked for the Free Press for 38 years. "I think I was always for children. I was deeply disturbed when things went wrong for kids."

Kresnak will emphasize the importance of a post-secondary education and preparing the state's children for a successful future during his keynote speech at the United Way of Jackson County's annual meeting Wednesday at the Ella Sharp Museum of Art and History.

United Way of Jackson County's annual meeting will be held at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday in the community room at the Ella Sharp Museum of Art and History. New members will be elected to United Way's board of directors, and the final results of the nonprofit's $2 million campaign will be announced. Tickets for the event are $25. Dinner will be provided by the Granary restaurant, and a cash bar will be available. Reservations can be made by

"We need young people to learn in ways that will keep them continued on a path onto post-secondary education or a career after high school," Kresnak said.

He also will offer insights on the challenges facing children and how the community can work to bring a better future to children during his speech.

Ken Toll, executive director of United Way, said the nonprofit has a strong focus on education this year, and Kresnak's speech at the annual meeting will be a great kick-off to that effort.

**United Way is helping to spearhead a project** focused on examining what area low-income students and their families need to be successful in school and what local organizations can do to meet those needs.

Toll said he wants the audience to get excited about making positive changes in

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education reforms in the community.

“We have the resources," he said. "If we have the public will, we can make it happen."

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