

# A NEW SCHOOL FOR KROGER CHEFS [ Business, Page 16A ]

## more local + business

### Devising a strategy to combat poverty

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On Saturday, roughly 650 people are expected at Xavier University's Cintas Center for a community summit hosted by the Child Poverty Collaborative.



Lynn Marmer, executive director of the organization, said input from the summit will be used to guide an action plan to reduce poverty in the region.

"We are going to have opportunities to learn, to share ideas and to critique," Marmer said. "We want to build a clear picture of what poverty looks like in our city, the inner relationships that exist, what kind of barriers there are and what our aspirations are for the future."

The summit is designed to be an interactive day for participants of all walks of life. Registration is free, breakfast and lunch will be served and child care will be provided.

"We want everyone to leave thinking their voice was heard," Marmer said. "They may not agree with everything we have to say, but they will have their voice heard."

The Child Poverty Collaborative formed last year and was announced in October by Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley in his State of the City address. The broad-based community effort, which is funded by private donors, aims to lift 5,000 families and 10,000 children out of poverty in five years.

In mid-December, Marmer was named executive director of the effort. She assumed that role after retiring from Kroger on Feb. 1 as group vice president for corporate

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### This summer camp hammers home lessons



Roofers Union Local 42's Rodney Toole keeps a watchful eye on 11-year-old Jashanti Butts as she nails shingles to the roof of a storage shed that youngsters are building during a three-week summer camp in Lower Price Hill.

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Gripping a 20-ounce roofer's hammer at the center of its handle in her right hand, Jashanti Butts, 11, squats atop a shed in Lower Price Hill 7 feet off the ground and takes aim at the

galvanized roofing nail between her left thumb and forefinger.

She strikes the nailhead, driving it through a strip of shingles and partially into the plywood sheeting below.

"That's it," says Rodney Toole of Roofers Union Local 42, as Jashanti

strikes a few more blows securing the shingles to the shed roof.

Toole is one of several members of different construction trades who volunteer to help teach youths 11 to 14 years old various trades at Con-

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## COVER STORY



Hard hat-wearing D.J. Felton, one of about a dozen kids participating in the camp, straightens out a tape measure inside a garden shed under construction.

## Camp

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struction Camp, sponsored by the Spirit of Construction Foundation, a local organization dedicated to promoting the achievements of the construction industry, teaching trade skills to young people and making them aware of job opportunities in the industry.

Next to the shed is the Aaron Raines Memorial Garden on Depot Street between West Eighth Street and Pardee Alley. Above it, on the side of a vacant brick building, is a mural featuring a young boy with angel's wings ascending. Near this spot in 1992, two men savagely beat to death 10-year-old Aaron Raines, who lived in the neighborhood, after luring him into a vacant building. They left his body "in a dark and dirty room in the basement," a prosecutor said.

The shed will be used by neighborhood residents who use the garden to store tools and other materials, said Anne Mitchell, construction advocate for middle schools for the Spirit of Construction Foundation.

"It's kind of a cool building because we wired it. It's not connected to anything, but if there's an event at



PHOTOS BY PATRICK REDDY/THE ENQUIRER

Construction Camp participants and volunteers nail into place the final wall of a storage shed being built at the Aaron Raines Memorial Garden in Lower Price Hill. Neighborhood youths are learning various skills of the building trades.

the garden site, they can plug in an extension cord and they have power throughout the building. It kind of makes for a nice centerpiece for their activities," she said.

About a dozen neighborhood students took part in building the garden shed. Working from plans provided by the Architectural Foundation of Cincinnati, the 10-by-12 wooden structure was built over three weeks, with the students working Monday through Thursday, Mitchell said.

The highlight of the camp for 12-year-old Iziah Royles was operating a mini-excavator under the supervision of volunteer Aaron Green of R.J. Beischel Building Co. in Winton Hills. Perched at the controls, he lowered a small blade on the front of the machine and leveled the dirt in front of him. As Green instructed him, Iziah reached out with a bucket arm and

lifted several scoops from a pile of dirt and created a second pile to the right of the machine.

"It's almost almost like a video game," said Iziah, who will enter seventh grade at James N. Gamble Montessori High School in the fall. "There are two switches like game controllers. It was interesting and it helps you bring focus to everything you're doing."

During a break, with the temperature hovering near 90 degrees, Mitchell and the students sit in the shade of the only tree near the garden and snack on watermelon, cookies and water from a 5-gallon orange container of the type often found on construction sites.

"We put pegboard on the inside and a little planning desk. It's a nice shed," said Mitchell. "I wish I had one."



Anne Mitchell with the Spirit of Construction Foundation gives 12-year-old Iziah Royles a hug. Her group is dedicated to teaching trade skills to young people and making them aware of job opportunities in the industry.

## Poverty

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affairs.

Since Marmer has been on board, the collaborative has stressed the importance of collecting community input from business leaders, social service providers, concerned citizens and people living in poverty.

Marmer has also talked about the importance of not jumping to solutions.

"There is a lot of money in the system and there are a lot of people who are working really hard, but our poverty rate is going up both in the city to the suburbs," she said. "We need to do something different."

Beginning in April, the Child Poverty Collaborative began hosting a series of smaller forums with non-profit organizations and groups of

concerned citizens. The collaborative hopes to host 100 such discussions before August, Marmer said.

So far, the collaborative has hosted roughly 50 forums with various groups, including the Avondale Youth Council, Leadership Scholars and a group of Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority residents. Some discussions have been hosted in both Spanish and English.

Participants talk about the lack of job opportunities, problems with public transportation, lack of child care access, institutional racism and employment barriers for men who have a criminal history, Marmer said.

"But it's not all negative," Marmer said. "They also talk about good police-community relations – although that obviously isn't always the case. They talk about the sense of community and the number of groups that aim to empower women."

On Saturday, the collaborative

hopes to cultivate similar frank, engaging discussions.

The event will include remarks from Sister Sally Duffy, executive director of SC Ministry Foundation; Dr. O'Dell Owens, interim director of the Cincinnati Health Department; and Michael Fisher, president and CEO of Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, all of whom are involved with the collaborative in some capacity.

There will be live jazz and rap music – which Marmer promises has a larger purpose – and small-group discussions. Graphic artists will sit at the tables, trying to artistically capture what is being discussed.

After Saturday's summit, the collaborative will go over the input. It will help shape the collaborative's action plan, which is expected to be released in October.

"We knew from the beginning that we wanted to be accountable to the

### IF YOU GO

- » **What:** The Child Poverty Collaborative's Community Summit.
- » **When:** 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday.
- » **Where:** Cintas Center at Xavier University, 1624 Herald Ave., Evanston.
- » **Who:** Everyone is welcome.
- » **Registration:** Encouraged but not required. You can register at [www.childpovertycollaborative.org](http://www.childpovertycollaborative.org) or call 513-762-7245.
- » **Details:** Free parking and child care. Breakfast and lunch provided.

public," Marmer said. "We wanted to let them know what we were learning, and we wanted them to be part of that learning process."