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NEWS RELEASE

Heritage Community of Kalamazoo Names New President & CEO; Julie Deppner Brings National-Caliber Leadership Skills To Retirement Community ‘Gem’

KALAMAZOO, Mich. [Sept. 3, 2024]—Heritage Community of Kalamazoo announced today that Julie Deppner, M.S., Ed.S., will join the senior living community as its new president and chief executive officer starting Sept. 16.

Rex Bell, chair of the Heritage Community Board of Directors, called Deppner a national-caliber leader who outshone more than 80 potential candidates from a nationwide search.

“We’re thrilled to welcome Julie Deppner to Heritage and to Kalamazoo,” said Bell. “She brings leadership skills that are rich, diverse and people-focused. She’s the leader Heritage Community needs as we move toward the next level as the in-demand destination for senior living.”

Deppner comes to Heritage from Silver Maples of Chelsea (Michigan) Retirement Neighborhood, where she served as executive director and CEO since 2016. She called Heritage “a gem of the Kalamazoo community.”

“I’m so excited to come here,” she said. “I know how much this community means to Heritage, and what Heritage means to the community. I’m honored to come alongside the staff, the residents and so many partners to build upon that powerful legacy.”

Broad Background as Leader

Bell said the organization decided to do a national search to replace Jay Prince, who left Heritage in 2023 for a role in senior care at a national level. The review process included Heritage leadership, staff, residents and family members, and community volunteers.

“The board is deeply grateful for the leadership of Interim CEO Paul Barber, Heritage leadership and the staff for staying focused on our residents and our mission during this time of transition,” Bell said.

In choosing Deppner, Heritage gains a leader with experience spanning both senior living and educational administration.

During her time at Silver Maples, Deppner led a number of key quality improvement initiatives; strengthened communication and culture within the organization; ensured financial integrity in what can be a challenging industry; earned six national awards for employee and resident engagement; and earned the prestigious Leading In Action Award from LeadingAge Michigan.

Prior to joining Silver Maples, Deppner spent 20 years with the Chelsea School District, serving as a teacher, assistant principal and principal at Chelsea High School before becoming the District's assistant superintendent in 2012. She earned her master's degree and education specialist advanced degree in educational leadership and administration from Eastern Michigan University, as well as her bachelor's degree from Central Michigan University.

"I've always had a passion for working with people," said Deppner. "That passion led me to a wonderful, rewarding career as an educator. Then I had the opportunity to shift into the senior living profession, and I felt an instant connection."

She credited her relationship with her grandmother as the key to that connection.

"I was always close with my grandma. She was my relationship mentor," Deppner said. "I loved hearing her history, how she was raised and how her life unfolded. She taught me to listen and learn from other older adults. That's how my people passion evolved beyond the school room."

That passion gives Deppner vital strengths as a leader at Heritage and a member of the Kalamazoo community.

"The work Heritage does with older adults is meaningful. That value is woven into every facet of the staff, the residents and their families, and the community's relationship with Heritage. I'm proud of what happens here, and I'm proud to become part of that," said Deppner.

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About Heritage Community of Kalamazoo

For nearly 80 years, Heritage Community of Kalamazoo has defined the possibilities of a vital and connected life for older adults and those who love them here in our region. As Kalamazoo's only locally centered nonprofit Life Plan Community and services provider, our campus has remained an integral thread in the fabric of the city since its founding in 1945, evolving and adapting to embrace each new generation of older adults we serve. Heritage Community has established a benchmark for a progressive vision of aging, setting the stage for the next incarnation of a rich and fulfilling way of life in retirement. For more information about Heritage Community of Kalamazoo, go to www.heritagecommunity.com.

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