

Annual Report

2008 - 2009



L e x L i n k

Making the Connection.

- ◆ Families Economically Empowered
- ◆ Children and Youth Poised for Success
- ◆ Strong Thriving Neighborhoods

From the LexLinc Board: It's been quite a year for us all

Which is exactly why working together is so important. LexLinc is about partnering to do what one organization, one individual can't do alone. In tight times, it is critical that we hang tight. As much as those of us in the government, nonprofit and business worlds are hurting, the children and families we serve are struggling all the more. At LexLinc, our partners sustained us through some interesting times this year. As this report shows, your dedication resulted in some incredible results for our families and neighborhoods. For this, we owe you a load of thanks.

Like everyone else, LexLinc cut budgets and staff, at the same time trying to meet increased social and economic needs of our families. While so many have played an important role to focus more intently on our three core strategies, we particularly thank Catherine Warner, who although is now working fulltime elsewhere, continues her passionate leadership.

While the Provider Cabinet and the Welfare Operations Committee have offered the opportunities to network, learn and work collectively for 11 years, with the exponen-

tial growth of other initiatives to build family income and assets (hello CKEEP), we say goodbye to the last phases of our welfare reform initiative, including the Welfare Operations Committee. We will continue to support the work of the state Department for Community Based Services in a myriad of other ways.

As an arm of the Department for Social Services of the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government, LexLinc continues to play an integral role in planning. LexLinc's Data and Outcomes Team spearheaded an evaluation of the department's grant making process. Based on research of local and national models, the team recommended practices that could more effectively build public-private collaboration to achieve community goals.

LexLinc is fixed on the self-sufficiency of our families and the wellbeing of our children. Our neighborhoods and their leadership are essential in creating an environment where families can sustain themselves and our children thrive. The economic winds may shift, but our commitment won't.

About LexLinc

Mission. LexLinc exists to empower Lexington's underserved neighborhoods and families. We are a neutral convener actively connecting people and organizations while mobilizing leadership across all community levels.

History. LexLinc was founded in 1998 as a partnership among local citizens, the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services and the Department for Social Services of the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government. Neighborhood and government partners are integrated into LexLinc's organizational structure. With roots in the welfare reform movement, LexLinc found that its expanding network of partnerships could be used to address additional community issues impacting neighborhoods and families.

Citizens' Leadership Academy

Since its beginning in 2004, the academy has equipped emerging community leaders with tools to organize people in their neighborhood and engage the larger

community leaders and elected officials. Graduates earned LexLinc mini-grants and still continue their activism in the community by starting a community garden and a



community. Through an intense 12-week session, 112 alumni have now completed the academy. The academy of Fall 2008 partnered with the Radcliffe-Marlborough Neighborhood Association. Eighteen graduates connected weekly with commu-

nity church youth program, organizing a neighborhood health fair, joining United Way's Get On Board program, producing a documentary film and collecting supplies for the Hope Center and for foster parents.

CLA Curriculum

- ◆ Creating personal power
- ◆ Introduction to grant writing
- ◆ Building communities based on existing assets: A neighborhood tour
- ◆ Grant writing: Using community resources
- ◆ Strategic and project planning
- ◆ The art of leadership
- ◆ Effective media strategies and presentation skills
- ◆ Strategies on influencing public policy
- ◆ Lobbying and negotiating: Maneuvering on the inside
- ◆ Building community wealth

Highlights of Other Community Partnerships

LexLinc is a lead partner with Let's Lead coalition. Along with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, LexLinc is a founding partner of the Let's Lead coalition, which is cultivating a stronger continuum of leadership development strategies. Partnering with the U.K. Center for Leadership Development, the coalition launched www.letsleadlex.com and was presented as a best practice model at the 2009 International Town and Gown Association annual conference.

Removing Barriers to Work. LexLinc

was founded in 1998 to help state and local governments address welfare reform at the community level. Here is a sample of results delivered by community partners this past year concentrated on personal and professional barriers to work:

- ◆ 568 adults were screened and assisted with personal barriers to work
- ◆ 82 adults received job skills training
- ◆ 75 adults were placed in jobs
- ◆ 40 retained their jobs after 90 days

Undoing Racism in Child Welfare. In partnership with the state Department for

Community Based Services, protecting children was again a focal point for LexLinc this year as we continued our work as the initial convener of the Fayette County Race, Community and Child Welfare Initiative. In 2009, LexLinc sponsored an Undoing Racism workshop for 37 participants to address the disproportionate number of African American children in our foster care system. Thanks to the workshop, the initiative was able to expand the number of individuals and organizations dedicated to addressing this issue in our community.

Lexington Neighborhood Back-to-School Rallies

On August 9, 2008, LexLinc held its third annual Neighborhood Back-to-School Rallies. Sixteen neighborhoods distributed over 8,000 backpacks with school supplies. In a time of growing financial need, the goal of the rallies is not just to prepare children for the first day of school, but to also build stronger neighborhood networks and relationships around the wellbeing of our children.

Of all the generous sponsors, the most creative and notable are the city Department for Environmental Quality and Kentucky Utilities. For our children to prosper, the Department for Environmental Quality understands the links among our children's education, neighborhood activism and the quality of the environment in which we all must live. If not for the generous donation to the purchase of school supplies by the city Department for Environmental Quality, the rallies would not have taken place. As a result, neighborhoods are taking a stronger look at these linkages and how they can make a difference. Likewise, Kentucky Utilities provided 6,000 backpacks as well as organizational and volunteer support, without which the rallies would not have happened.



While LexLinc provides central coordination and identifies sponsors for the majority of the school supplies and backpacks, neighborhoods find their own grassroots support, plan festivities, entertainment, speakers and door prizes, giving each rally a flavor unique to its sense of community. Neighborhoods also partner with their schools to build stronger school-community networks. In all, over 200 neighborhood and civic organizations, businesses and churches contributed to the rallies and the school supplies.

As a sample of the volunteer commitment, the week prior to the rallies, over 250 volunteers helped assemble the supplies and deliver them to the neighborhoods. Our thanks to Transylvania University for so hospitably offering its student center to serve as the



hub of activity. Kudos to Enterprise Rent-a-Car for using its van fleet to help transport supplies to the neighborhoods.

Other major sponsors included:

- ◆ American Founders Bank
- ◆ Anthony and Eunice Beatty Foundation at the Bluegrass Community Foundation
- ◆ Jackson Curlin for Kids Foundation at the Bluegrass Community Foundation
- ◆ The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation



In 2009, LexLinc is partnering with 19 neighborhoods to hold rallies on August 8 to again serve 8,000 elementary, middle and high school students. Thanks for letting our children know that you've got their backs!

CKEEP Doubles Community Impact in One Year

The Central Kentucky Economic Empowerment Project completed its most successful tax season to date reaching clients in 37 counties. In its sixth year, 15 CKEEP sites prepared a total of 2,123 returns, a 69 percent increase from last year. Federal refunds brought in \$2.4 million, and out of that, \$865,000 was in the Earned Income Tax Credit, a 48 percent increase over last year. Another \$293,000 was brought in from state refunds, making the total refunds brought in by CKEEP \$2.7 million, a 98 percent increase from last year. One hundred volunteers contributed more than 3,200 hours in free tax preparation, saving clients more than \$424,000 in tax preparation fees. United Way's 2-1-1 again served as the information core for the initiative and answered close to 2,000 phone calls for CKEEP, now one of 2-1-1's largest referral organizations. The average household income of CKEEP's clients was \$19,000. Seventy percent of these clients said they are using their refund to catch up on bills and pay their rent or mortgage.

The growth of CKEEP is credited to a strong strategic plan, the dedication of its partners and volunteers, new sites in communities that previously had no such services and a pilot mobile site that reached people who could not otherwise access the service.

LexLinc created CKEEP in partnership with the IRS to raise awareness of the Earned Income Tax Credit, provide free tax assistance and ultimately help families build assets. The growth of CKEEP this past year is largely credited to yet another partner, the Kentucky Domestic Violence Association, which spearheads the Kentucky Asset Building Coalition. Through this coalition CKEEP received critical grants to build capacity and market services. In addition,



The Family Care Center and its volunteers were recognized at CKEEP's annual end of tax season celebration event for preparing the highest volume of returns for the 2009 tax season.

Tax preparation sites included:

- ◆ Central Kentucky Job Center
- ◆ Clark County Community Services
- ◆ CKEEP Mobile Site
- ◆ Family Care Center
- ◆ Foothills Community Action Partnership
- ◆ Gainesway Community Center
- ◆ Kentucky Domestic Violence Association
- ◆ Lexington Downtown Library
- ◆ Opportunity for Work and Learning
- ◆ REACH, Inc.
- ◆ St. Paul AME Church
- ◆ UK Law School
- ◆ Urban League of Lexington
- ◆ Village Branch Library
- ◆ YMCA of Central Kentucky

CKEEP has been working hand-in-hand with the Kentucky Domestic Violence Association to build statewide networks, marketing and advocacy campaigns.

The next phase of CKEEP's plan is to reach out to a broader geographic area and implement a new strategy to help families make good financial decisions and have access to tools to build assets. To this end, LexLinc is strengthening its alliance with Kentucky Domestic Violence Association to build on the resources of both partners for the benefit of the families we commonly serve.

Finally, CKEEP would like to thank all the tax preparation sites, site managers and volunteers for the 2009 tax season. You are the cornerstone of a more prosperous future for our families.

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Making the Connection.

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