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*"People want to do for themselves. They don't want others to do for them. Our ability to enable people to do for themselves is what LexLinc is about."*  
-Don Ball  
Founding & Current President

Founded in 1998, 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.

LexLinc exists 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 partnerships are also integrated into LexLinc's organizational structure. With only three to four full-time employees, LexLinc always depends on public-private partnerships to accomplish its goals.

With roots in the welfare reform movement, LexLinc found that its network could be used to address additional community issues impacting neighborhoods and families. Currently, LexLinc focuses on the economic empowerment of families, children and youth poised for success, and strong thriving



## Making the Connection for 10 years

**Central Kentucky Economic Empowerment Project.** Since 2004, LexLinc has partnered with the IRS to coordinate a system of free tax preparation sites for low-income families. In five years, the sites have gone from preparing about 400 returns to more than 1,200 returns this year, earning federal refunds of \$1.35 million. In 2008, 13 sites in three counties operated under this system. United Way 2-1-1 stepped up as a major partner, processing over 1,300 appointments and inquiries last year.

**Citizen's Leadership Academy** offers an annual 12-week curriculum to equip emerging leaders with tools to organize, mobilize, and engage citizens at the grassroots level. Created through the University of Kentucky Community Outreach Partnership Center, three neighborhoods have hosted five academies, graduating 94 people to date.

**Ready, Set, Go! Back-to-School Rallies.** In 2006, LexLinc partnered with One Community, One Voice and nine neighborhoods to host simultaneous back-to-school rallies. More than 4,000 elementary school children received backpacks stuffed with school supplies. Neighborhood partners procured supplies for 2,000 more students in middle and high school. In 2008, with LexLinc serving as the central organizer and fundraiser for the second year, 16 neighborhoods and 175 sponsors are geared up to serve more than 8,000 children in the

The purpose of this initiative is greater than preparing low-income children for school. The underlying goal is to use this process to unify our neighborhoods and build bridges and networks for more self advocacy and community planning.

**LexLinc Community Development Federal Credit Union.** Neighborhood partners gathered almost 700 surveys and letters of support and local banks provided almost \$2 million in capital-like deposits to charter this credit union for underserved neighborhoods. As an autonomous organization, LexLinc CDFCU opened its doors in December 2002 and after two years had more than 1,200 members. The Credit Union was very successful in offering basic financial needs to a targeted population and was one of the first credit unions in the region to serve undocumented workers.

In 2005 Members Heritage Credit Union received a community designation and could then accept the same clientele as LexLinc CDFCU with a higher level of services. In June 2005, the LexLinc CDFCU merged into Members Heritage.

**Prevent Child Abuse Month.** Since 2005, LexLinc has coordinated this month-long series of events to raise awareness, culminating in a recognition breakfast now attended by more than 350 people.

**2003 Community Assessment.** In 2003, LexLinc and the University of Kentucky Research Center for Families and Children released results of the Lexington-Fayette County Self-Assessment. More than 1,500 families completed interviews with responses to more than 100 questions. The data is still used widely by community organizations to support grants and provide the foundation for research and more recent community assessments.

**Fatherhood Initiative.** In partnership with the Urban League and the Knight Foundation, MAN-UP provided the initial framework for more comprehensive fatherhood support services. Initially established under LexLinc, this initiative now operates through the Urban League.

**Ultimate Home Visit Immersion Program.** The goal of this project was to develop more effective direct services to meet growing Latino needs in public education, health care and social services. The two-week curriculum took place in and around Morelia, Mexico, and included both classroom and experiential learning. LexLinc embraced and organized this project, which piloted in June 2003.

**Disaster Assistance Center.** LexLinc served a leading role in recognizing the need for and establishing a one-stop assistance center in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The center opened with only a 21-hour notice and service approximately 460 of the 550 evacuees who relocated to Fayette County.

**Community Convener for State and Local Government.** On behalf of our key government partners, LexLinc has established multiple community initiatives and partnerships. For the Kentucky Department for Community Based Services, many of these partnerships target issues related to welfare

adoption. These community initiatives include the Race, Community and Child Welfare Initiative, Friends of Children and Family Safety Task Force, and welfare reform community planning and assessment.

As an arm of Lexington Fayette Urban County Government, LexLinc helped coordinate the Katrina Disaster Assistance Center, renovate the Coleman House in partnership with the Homebuilders Association of Lexington and is assisting with the Department for Social Services community assessment and strategic planning processes. LexLinc maintains ongoing forums such as the Welfare Operations Committee and the Provider Cabinet, in addition to neighborhood-based activities and partnerships.

**Incubator.** As seen in the examples above, LexLinc has grown to serve as an incubator to help community endeavors get on their feet and gain their own support and autonomy. Additional examples include the Central Kentucky Housing and Homeless Initiative which works to mobilize the non-profit, public, faith-based and private sectors in our communities in an effort to end homelessness and ameliorate housing insecurity. Success By Six® was another incubation project, which is now housed at the United Way of the Bluegrass. Its mission is to encourage and facilitate collaborations and partnerships to unite our community's business, government, service providers, advocates, educators and families to ensure that our young children are born healthy, remain healthy, nurtured and ready to successfully enter school by age six.

### LexLinc Received 2008 Unity Award

*On January 21, 2008, LexLinc received the 2008 Martin Luther King Unity Award. This recognition by Alpha Phi Alpha is given to organizations or individuals who have gone beyond the call of duty in unifying our community in the spirit of Dr. King.*

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