

# investment summary

## *Making Connections* Louisville

For nearly a decade, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has worked with a broad range of partners in Louisville to demonstrate through the *Making Connections* initiative that when families are strong, outcomes for even the most disadvantaged children will substantially improve.

JUNE 2009

Our work in Louisville and in other sites across the country seeks to help:

- *Families work, earn, and save their way toward self-sufficiency; and*
- *Ensure that their young children are healthy, prepared to succeed in school, and read proficiently by the end of third grade.*

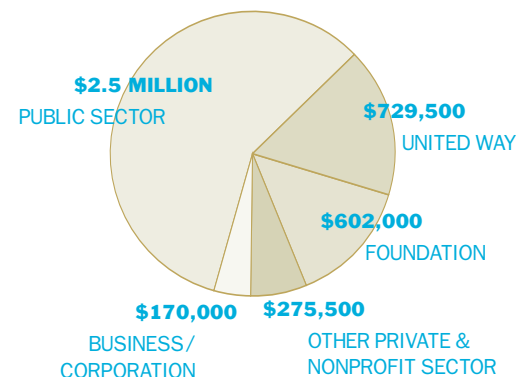
These goals advance a “two-generation” approach—promoting economic success and simultaneously ensuring that children get a good start in life. Casey has worked in Louisville since 1999 to help demonstrate how these results can be achieved by building communities’ capacity to connect families to economic opportunities, strong social networks, and effective services and supports.

*Making Connections* Louisville builds on two decades of Casey investment in Kentucky, beginning with the state’s education reform movement in the 1990s, designation of Kentucky Youth Advocates as a KIDS COUNT grantee, and the state’s work with the Family-to-Family initiative.

Casey also has strong ties to Louisville through the UPS Worldport Hub, which now is one of the largest employers in Kentucky. The Foundation has made an ongoing commitment to *Making Connections* Louisville to maintain these partnerships in the city, region, and state, and assure the initiative’s strategies are sustained.

To that end, *Making Connections* is focusing its work for 2009–11 on embedding results and capacity-building strategies within major child- and family-serving systems through strong partnerships with Jefferson Community and Technical College, Jefferson County Public Schools, Metro Government, the Community Foundation of Louisville, and other local funders. The 3,000-member strong *Making Connections* Network will mobilize members and partners to influence spending of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds and support state policy and practice changes to help families avoid foreclosure and homelessness.

### Co-Investment and Leverage in *Making Connections* Louisville 2008



In 2008, *Making Connections*’ co-investment and leverage for Family Economic Success and assuring Children Are Healthy and Prepared to Succeed in School strategies totaled \$3.3 million. Work to increase civic participation, strengthen informal supports and networks, and improve services leveraged nearly \$1 million.

## A PLATFORM FOR SUCCESS

During the past decade, *Making Connections* Louisville has developed and deployed a nationally recognized network organizing strategy to strengthen families in high-poverty neighborhoods. Thousands of residents and dozens of partner organizations are members of the *Making Connections* Network and have committed to building community capacity to achieve and sustain better results for children and families both in the initiative neighborhoods of Smoketown, Shelby Park, Phoenix Hill, and California, and across the metro area. The Network has helped *Making Connections* Louisville establish itself as an effective partner in local work to increase family access to jobs, assets, quality preschool, and success in early grades, including:

- ***Development of job pipelines from the initiative neighborhoods to Norton Healthcare, UPS, and other major employers in the region.*** With KentuckianaWorks (the region's Workforce Investment Board), resident organizers, business leaders, and other partners, *Making Connections* Louisville established a sequence of supports to recruit and prepare residents from the initiative neighborhoods for jobs that provide benefits and opportunities for career advancement. The pipeline has used the Network as a vehicle for community outreach and pre-employment coaching, and led Norton Healthcare to hire a post-employment retention specialist to assure that new hires are connected to education, child care, EITC, housing, and other work supports. The pipeline is helping Jefferson Community and Technical College—the One Stop Operator for KentuckianaWorks—develop strong neighborhood-focused approaches to job training, education, and placement, including a satellite office in the *Making Connections* office in Smoketown.

- ***Establishment of strong partnerships to help families build and protect assets.*** *Making Connections* was a founding partner of the Louisville Asset Building Coalition, and its EITC campaign—supported by city government, Metro United Way, and numerous local banks—has returned \$32 million in tax credits to more than 25,000 residents since 2001.

- ***Use of data to inform and influence public policy.***

*Making Connections* has used timely data to help local and state policymakers respond to the increasingly precarious financial conditions of low-income families. For example, sharp increases in home foreclosures were illuminated through data collection and a Metropolitan Housing Coalition study funded by the initiative in 2006, which led Metro Government and state lawmakers to provide homeowner relief well before the national collapse of the mortgage and credit markets. *Making Connections* also partnered with Metro Government and local banks to support Social Compact's study of Louisville's low-income neighborhoods, which revealed Census undercounts and the fact that many residents lack access to mainstream financial services and products.

- ***Sustained engagement in city and statewide agendas to strengthen families and communities.*** *Making Connections* Louisville joined with the city's philanthropic leadership to advance the Greater Louisville Project, a broad-based initiative to accelerate the region's revitalization through "deep drivers" of change: educational attainment, increasing family work and earnings, and strong urban core neighborhoods. The Community Foundation of Louisville's Change Makers Partnership with the UPS Foundation and *Making Connections* helped focus local philanthropies on strategies to achieve the "deep drivers" in the initiative neighborhoods with nearly \$2 million in grants over three years. With Kentucky Youth Advocates and Metro United Way, *Making Connections* also supports the Blueprint for Kentucky's Children—a statewide agenda to promote strong families through improvements in the state's education, workforce training, health care, and other systems. The Blueprint has resulted in legislation to improve health screenings statewide and access to Kentucky's children's health insurance program.

## A TRACK RECORD OF RESULTS

*Making Connections* Louisville's strong partnerships with civic leaders, coupled with a robust membership network of dedicated residents and community groups, have linked families to jobs, better ways to save and build

assets, positive social networks that offer more opportunities for civic engagement and leadership, and better services.

### More Families Have Increased Earnings and Assets

*Making Connections* Louisville’s partnerships with Norton Healthcare, UPS, KentuckianaWorks, Jefferson Community and Technical College, the Louisville Asset Building Coalition, and others, backed by strong outreach and recruitment via the *Making Connections* Network, have helped assure that:

*More residents from the initiative neighborhoods are getting connected to jobs.* Since 2005, more than 520 residents have been placed in jobs, with 80 percent now offering health care benefits. Many jobs also offer post-employment support, educational opportunities, and career advancement at Norton Healthcare, the UPS Worldport Hub, and other employers.

RESULT	2005	2006	2007	2008
Residents from the initiative neighborhoods placed in jobs	40	120	188	178
Percent placed in jobs that offer health benefits	100%	86%	74%	76%

*More eligible residents are receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit.* In the four *Making Connections* neighborhoods, the 2008 EITC campaign returned \$2.5 million in federal child and income tax credits to nearly 2,000 low-income taxpayers at VITA sites.

*More residents are saving for the future.* Since 2007, more than 170 families in the initiative neighborhoods have opened savings accounts. In addition, the *Making Connections* Network hosted 24 financial education meetings for its Network Savers program in 2008.

### PROMOTING FAMILY ECONOMIC SUCCESS: PRIORITY STRATEGIES FOR 2009–11

- *Strengthen the jobs pipeline in partnership with Jefferson Community and Technical College (JCTC).* *Making Connections* Louisville will seek to place more than 450 residents in jobs in 2009–10 through an expanded partnership with JCTC. The college, a strong supporter of the pipeline and Center for Working Families strategies, is working with the *Making Connections* Network and the Change Makers program to revamp outreach to low-income students and increase student retention. Metro Government, with support and technical assistance from *Making Connections*, also will pursue funding to expand its current \$1 million implementation of the Seedco online EarnBenefits program and help more community organizations connect low-income workers to the EITC, child care, housing, food stamps, and other work supports.
- *Continue work with Metro Government and nonprofit organizations to assure American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds are aligned with long-term family and neighborhood strengthening priorities.* *Making Connections* is helping advise Metro Government’s strategic use of ARRA funds, including expansion of weatherization funds to rental and multi-family housing and use of homeless prevention/rapid re-housing programs to provide comprehensive support to vulnerable families.
- *Accelerate strategies to help families avoid foreclosure.* *Making Connections* is working with the Jefferson County Circuit Court and the Legal Aid Society of Louisville to help owners of foreclosed property access legal aid, including court-ordered conciliation conferences with lenders and HUD counseling. Network organizers and volunteers are making in-person visits to homeowners facing foreclosure to ensure they take advantage of the court-ordered conciliation.

## More Children Are Healthy and Prepared to Succeed in School

*Making Connections* Louisville has worked steadily with the Jefferson County Public Schools and Phillis Wheatley Elementary—the focus school for Children Are Healthy and Prepared to Succeed in School (CHAPSS) strategies—to assure that:

- *More parents are engaged as their children's first teachers and best advocates.* The *Making Connections* Network has opened a satellite office at Wheatley Elementary to help parents of children in grades K–3 access school readiness information and literacy resources, to promote parent engagement for academic support and education advocacy, and to connect families to jobs pipeline, asset building, civic engagement, and other Network opportunities.
- *More children have been connected to health insurance and developmental screenings.* *Making Connections* has partnered with Passport Health Plan to house a Passport Navigator at Wheatley Elementary to increase enrollments in Kentucky's Child Health Insurance Program (K-CHIP), with the goal of 100 percent of children having health insurance. In addition, 76 percent of students in kindergarten through the third grade at the school received developmental screenings last spring, and will be connected to follow-up services where needed.

### SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD FOR THE FUTURE

*Making Connections* Louisville is well positioned to help the city's civic leadership continue work to strengthen vulnerable children and families through better connections to jobs, assets, quality early childhood education, and success in the critical early grades of school. In tough economic times, the initiative is working side-by-side with local leaders to strategically use stimulus dollars, seize opportunities for policy and practice change, and benefit from strong community mobilization efforts advanced by the *Making Connections* Network.

### PROMOTING SUCCESS IN EARLY GRADES: PRIORITY STRATEGIES FOR 2009–11

- *Increase the number of third- and fourth-grade students at Wheatley Elementary School scoring at the Proficient level or above on state reading tests.* In partnership with school administrators, teachers, and parents at Wheatley Elementary, *Making Connections* will strengthen instruction for striving readers in grades K–3. This will include literacy-enriched after-school and summer school programs, reading plans for individual students, teacher training, and strong parent engagement through the *Making Connections* Network. Using the No Child Left Behind Act goals as the initial working target, *Making Connections* and school district officials aim to increase reading proficiency for third graders from 49 percent currently to 74 percent in 2010. All targets will be regularly reviewed with the intent of continuing to have high aspirations for children at Wheatley Elementary. Longer-term strategies include strengthening preschools and child care providers that serve parents sending their children to Wheatley and other initiative schools, and comprehensive health strategies to assure children have health insurance, medical homes, developmental screenings, and follow-up services.
- *Take effective strategies to promote literacy, health, and parent engagement to scale through the Focus School Partnership with Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS).* Wheatley Elementary is one of three schools involved in a JCPS initiative to redesign elementary education through smaller class sizes, strengthened professional development, tailored curriculum, and health promotion. The partnership between *Making Connections* and JCPS provides an ideal vehicle for replicating successful strategies at other schools that serve families in the *Making Connections* neighborhoods and potentially district-wide.