

LINC Commission Meeting

November 15, 2021



With winter just around the corner, students and parents in LINC programs at Faxon, James, and Trailwoods in the Kansas City Public Schools could choose a new stocking hat hand knitted by Sharon Innis, a LINC volunteer who has knitted over 150 stocking caps.



LINCSM
Local Investment Commission

Local Investment Commission (LINC) Vision

Our Shared Vision

A caring community that builds on its strengths to provide meaningful opportunities for children, families and individuals to achieve self-sufficiency, attain their highest potential, and contribute to the public good.

Our Mission

To provide leadership and influence to engage the Kansas City Community in creating the best service delivery system to support and strengthen children, families and individuals, holding that system accountable, and changing public attitudes towards the system.

Our Guiding Principles

1. **COMPREHENSIVENESS:** Provide ready access to a full array of effective services.
2. **PREVENTION:** Emphasize “front-end” services that enhance development and prevent problems, rather than “back-end” crisis intervention.
3. **OUTCOMES:** Measure system performance by improved outcomes for children and families, not simply by the number and kind of services delivered.
4. **INTENSITY:** Offering services to the needed degree and in the appropriate time.
5. **PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT:** Use the needs, concerns, and opinions of individuals who use the service delivery system to drive improvements in the operation of the system.
6. **NEIGHBORHOODS:** Decentralize services to the places where people live, wherever appropriate, and utilize services to strengthen neighborhood capacity.
7. **FLEXIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS:** Create a delivery system, including programs and reimbursement mechanisms, that are sufficiently flexible and adaptable to respond to the full spectrum of child, family and individual needs.
8. **COLLABORATION:** Connect public, private and community resources to create an integrated service delivery system.
9. **STRONG FAMILIES:** Work to strengthen families, especially the capacity of parents to support and nurture the development of their children.
10. **RESPECT AND DIGNITY:** Treat families, and the staff who work with them, in a respectful and dignified manner.
11. **INTERDEPENDENCE/MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY:** Balance the need for individuals to be accountable and responsible with the obligation of community to enhance the welfare of all citizens.
12. **CULTURAL COMPETENCY:** Demonstrate the belief that diversity in the historical, cultural, religious and spiritual values of different groups is a source of great strength.
13. **CREATIVITY:** Encourage and allow participants and staff to think and act innovatively, to take risks, and to learn from their experiences and mistakes.
14. **COMPASSION:** Display an unconditional regard and a caring, non-judgmental attitude toward, participants that recognizes their strengths and empowers them to meet their own needs.
15. **HONESTY:** Encourage and allow honesty among all people in the system.



Monday, Nov. 15, 2021 | 4 – 5:30 pm
Online Meeting

Agenda

- I. Welcome and Announcements
- II. Approvals
 - a. **October 2021 minutes (motion)**
- III. LINC Finances
 - a. LINC Audit (2020-21)
 - b. LINC 990
- IV. Superintendent Reports
- V. Caring Communities
 - a. General Update
 - b. Staff Recruitment Update
- VI. Other
 - a. Infant Toddler Specialist Network
 - b. Lights On After School
- VII. Adjournment



THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION – OCT. 18, 2021

The Local Investment Commission met via Zoom. Cochair **David Disney** presided. Commissioners attending were:

Bob Bartman
Bert Berkley
Jack Craft
Tom Davis
Aaron Deacon
SuEllen Fried

Anita Gorman
Tom Lewin
Ken Powell
Marge Randle
David Ross
Marj Williams

Disney welcomed the meeting attendees.

A motion to approve the minutes of the Sept. 20, 2021, LINC Commission meeting was approved unanimously.

Superintendents Reports

- **Christina Medina**, Director of Public Relations (Center School District), reported students are starting real-world learning projects; the initiative in partnership with Hickman Mills and Grandview school districts includes several pathways including engineering and entrepreneurial. The district is focusing on racial equity work with the intention of including all students; benchmarks will be set at a meeting next week. Supt. **Yolanda Cargile** read the book *All Are Welcome* by **Alexandra Penfold** to kindergarten students. **Bryan DeLong** at Center High School was named Kansas City Chiefs coach of the week.
- **Steve Morgan**, Asst. Superintendent (Fort Osage School District), reported the first quarter has ended; winter sports will start soon; and parent-teacher conferences will be held this week. A change in masking guidelines has been helpful in keeping kids in school. The new district coffee shop, Campus Grounds, will open Nov. 1. The district is meeting with architects to discuss construction projects.
- **Yaw Obeng**, Superintendent (Hickman Mills School District), reported on the Creating Opportunities for Ruskin Eagles microschool initiative located at Burke Academy. So far 80% of staff have been vaccinated. Obeng thanked everyone who helped with the district's food supply-chain problem. The district is seeking to fill several positions.
- **Christy Harrison**, Director of Educational Innovation (Kansas City Public Schools), reported the district is implementing a support initiative to provide help, including live instruction, to students who are in quarantine. Seven district students have been selected to serve on the student board of directors of the Kansas City Federal Reserve. The district is focused on the Blueprint 2030 strategic planning process.

Disney recognized **Pam Ealy** on her retirement after 22 years' service with LINC. A photo slideshow was shown. President **Gayle A. Hobbs** praised Ealy's leadership and willingness to serve in many roles. Executive Vice President **Janet Miles-Bartee** praised Ealy's for exemplifying LINC's role as a provider of "heart work" for children and families. Ealy thanked LINC for the recognition.

Deputy Director **Brent Schondelmeyer** introduced a discussion of LINC finances. Staff **Jeff Hill** reported on \$28 million of revenue agreements for community investments and on purchasing including service agreements. Going forward, much of LINC's funding will come from the new Office of

Childhood out of the Mo. Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education. Hobbs reported LINC expects to receive expanded funding for investment in existing foster care programs. She thanked the Finance Committee for its sound guidance, especially during the transition of funding from Mo. Dept. of Social Services to DESE.

Staff **Bryan Shepard** reported LINC has distributed \$950,000 in utility assistance through the Kansas City, Mo. ERAP program since July, mostly by staff **Kachina Powell** and **Rene Jones** at Morning Star Youth and Family Life Center. LINC now has an additional \$1.5 million in ERAP funds to distribute. A video was shown.

Schondelmeyer reported the following:

- The Kansas City Black History project received an award from the Missouri Library Association last month. The project is a collaboration between LINC, Kansas City Public Library, and Black Archives of Mid-America. This year the partners produced a book compiling over 10 years of profiles of African Americans who contributed to Kansas City history.
- Like other employers, LINC is having difficulty finding people to fill empty staff positions, which affects the ability to serve families due to staffing ratios required by the State of Missouri. Recruitment videos produced by LINC were shown.
- LINC will again participate in the annual Lights On Afterschool celebration to be held later this month. Many events will be held outside due to Covid restrictions. LINC has ordered 1,500 books to share with families for the event.
- **Anita Gorman** received the Alexander Doniphan Leadership Award for her service to Northland Kansas City.

The meeting was adjourned.

LINC Commissioner Gorman honored with Doniphan Community Service Award

Oct. 19, 2021

By Joe Robertson/LINC Writer



Photo by Valerie Anderson

Anita B. Gorman, one of LINC's founding commissioners, was honored this month as the 2021 recipient of the Alexander W. Doniphan Community Service Award at the Mid-Continent Public Library's Woodneath Library Center in Kansas City.

Gorman for more than 50 years has been a champion for beautiful cities, community service and nature conservation, especially in the education of children.

She was the first woman appointed to the Kansas City Board of Parks and Recreation Commission, worked to expand the Kansas City Zoo and served on the Missouri Conservation Commission. The midtown educational conservation center she helped establish is named The Anita B. Gorman Discovery Center.

The award is sponsored by the Alexander W. Doniphan Community Service & Leadership Foundation, Liberty Missouri Stake, Mid-Continent Public Library, and the Clay County Millennium Historical Board.

The award recognizes outstanding individuals who continue the legacy of Doniphan, a 19th-century American attorney, soldier and politician from Missouri who was known for noble service, honorable character, community leadership and a commitment to education.

Early childhood makeovers: LINC helps preschools re-imagine programs that build lives

Nov. 9, 2021

By Joe Robertson/LINC Writer



LINC infant toddler specialist Sarah Ramirez plays with children during a consultation visit to Kids in Christ Academy in Kansas City.

The working imaginations of LINC’s pre-school makeover pros abounded with visions of curious toddlers.

What if we put the reading center there? The blocks over there? The home living center in the corner? Math manipulatives over here?

You can almost see the children who will come, ranging through this playroom that LINC was redesigning inside Kids in Christ Academy in Kansas City.

Yes, this is looking good, said Kenetha Whitmore, the assistant administrator at Kids in Christ, which is one of 18 preschools in the seven-county Kansas City area receiving LINC’s free training and consultation through Missouri’s [Infant and Toddler Specialist Network](#).

But hold on, said LINC’s Claire Harbison. She’s eyeing a mini corridor that would be created with one possible arrangement of book shelves.

“This,” she said, “says, ‘Let’s run!’”

Don’t want that, the makeover team agrees. Kid runways aren’t good indoors.

The remaking of classroom spaces is one part of the state-funded program. Participants in the specialist network also get free training courses and hands-on consultation when LINC specialists visit classrooms and work directly with teach-

ers.

“It’s very helpful to get that second eye . . . to point out things you haven’t noticed,” Whitmore said. “When somebody fresh comes in, they see things we didn’t think of and it really does help.”

Among the 18 centers that have signed up for the program since early 2020, a total of 182 early childcare providers and teachers have enrolled in the training courses.

The support and training aims “to level the playing field” in preparing all children for kindergarten, said Lauren Walls, the director of LINC’s team.

The program is open to early childhood providers who accept families that receive government subsidies for childcare.

“I think it’s amazing there is something like this for centers that might not have as many resources,” Walls said. “We want to make sure all children are receiving the education they deserve.”

Kids in Christ Academy owner and director Christina Puckett has run her program since 2007 and is serving the same neighborhood where she grew up as a graduate of Paseo Academy.

“My mother used to care for children,” Puckett said. “And kids I saw grow up, I now have their children. I knew their moms. I knew their families.”

This is her life’s work, Puckett said, and she is grateful for the Infant Toddler Specialist Network’s insight in making her center stronger.

The training teaches the power and magic of relationship-based care. Sessions that Puckett’s staff have taken include tips on recognizing anxiety in children, as well as stress childcare workers may feel. They’ve learned approaches to help comfort and ease children into the classroom. They’re working on better communication with families, including understanding cultural impacts and language barriers.

They’re learning how to strengthen the respect between the families and the teachers as allies in growing healthy, imaginative children who are ready for school and childhood.

“I’m all in,” Puckett said.

Standing at a tipping point

The training sessions are particularly needed now, Walls said, because stress on the labor market has many centers bringing in new staff with less experience in childcare.

The early childhood industry has long struggled for government and community support, needing help to provide competitive salaries and ease the high turnover of childcare workers.

The Rev. Al and Paula Smith, owners of Young Professors Daycare in Raymore, see LINC’s program and the state’s funding as overdue recognition of the importance of quality preschool programs.

These toddler years are crucial to the social and emotional foundations children take to public school, Paula Smith said.



LINC Infant and Toddler Specialist Network Director Lauren Walls and Kids in Christ Academy Assistant Administrator Kenetha Whitmore discuss redesign ideas.



LINC infant toddler specialists Elice Redfern, Sarah Ramirez and Claire Harbison debate redesign ideas in a classroom at Kids in Christ Academy.

It's the time a child can develop a positive sense of self.

"This is a tipping point," she said. "We can engage children in learning and have positive impact."

LINC's specialists collaborated with the Smiths and their staff in Raymore like "co-teachers," Al Smith said. They were encouraging and non-judgmental in their classroom coaching that complemented the training sessions.

"You can say how to do it all day long," he said. "But they really show you how to do it. They literally get involved."

After some redesigning discussions at Young Professors, the preschool took out some of the playroom's dividers and opened the space to spread out a variety of learning centers. It gave children freedom to roam to different learning stations and still be well supervised by their teacher.



A new reading corner at Kids in Christ Academy.

They helped the Smiths bring in new and engaging toys. They added stimulating rugs.

New things are coming to Kids in Christ Academy in Kansas City as well.

Some were on hand the day of the redesign, including new posters and pictures for the walls, and a trio of large stuffed animal toys that Walls arranged on the carpet beside the book shelf in the reading corner.

Other things are on order, like a new kid couch, some sock animals and puppets.

Just imagine, Puckett and Whitmore said as they surveyed the new room with the LINC team. Imagine the faces of the children when they see it all come Monday morning.



Kids in Christ Academy owner and manager Christina Puckett, in the pink hat, looks at the redesigned classroom with the LINC team.

'New moments. New memories.' Lights On Afterschool helps turn the page

Nov. 3, 2021

By Joe Robertson/LINC Writer



LINC Caring Communities Coordinator Yolanda Robinson leads a group dance at Kansas City's Faxon Elementary School — one of many scenes in our video tour of Lights On Afterschool events at LINC program sites.

During the long months that passed between a Covid-canceled talent show and Faxon Elementary's Lights On Afterschool dance party, three siblings in LINC's Caring Communities program lost their mother to gun violence.

One of those children, a boy only 8 years old, had wanted to sing in 2020.

He kept asking when LINC was going to get the talent show back, said LINC's Faxon Caring Communities Coordinator Yolanda Robinson.

But now, after such pain, could he sing again?

At Faxon — and at all of LINC's sites — the annual Lights On Afterschool celebrations of the power of community schools stepped into their resilient communities with grace and hard-won joy.

LINC's teams [had worked in their communities](#) through the pandemic, holding together the battered bridges that kept families connected to comforts and services. As schools returned in full, their Caring Communities after-school programs [opened their doors as well](#).

From North Kansas City to Grandview there were trunk-or-treats, carnivals, food festivals, games, dancing — all of this reflecting what Robinson wanted so badly for her Faxon community: "Let's make new moments. Let's make new memories."

The little boy was nervous when Robinson urged him to the front of the gym. The raucous games and dancing that accompanied a hip-hop sound system hushed. Children sat on the gym floor. Adults looked on. The child took up the microphone with

his older brother at his side, his younger sister nearby. His favorite song was queued up.

And he sang.

“Looking at this trauma” that so many people endured, Robinson said, “this was symbolic to me. I said, ‘Give me a song,’ and finally he had the nerve to do it. He *did* it.”

A year ago, with the pandemic in force and vaccines still months away, many LINC sites could not have Lights On events, and those that could put on outdoor, drive-through events.

This year, it was good to be back, said Sean Akridge, Caring Communities Administrator.

“After experiencing a major shift or in some cases an absence to the annual celebration, sites were excited to participate on a broader, though still somewhat modified scale,” he said. “Students enjoyed the day’s special activities conducted by LINC staff and its partners.”

Those partners included KC Community Gardens, Kansas City Young Audiences, Mad Science, NickiFit and Fitness4Ever.

“Several sites passed out free books to students as well,” Akridge said.

Fun with Mad Science, a green dinosaur costume, cotton candy making and hot dogs drew students and parents to the playground at Dobbs Elementary in Hickman Mills — another of the many Lights On events — with widespread joy, said LINC’s Dobbs Caring Communities Coordinator Joyce Kynard.

“The verbal responses, laughter and smiles were evidence,” she said. “Individually and collectively, we are looking forward to next year’s Lights On event.”

According to the [Afterschool Alliance](#), which initiated Lights On Afterschool, the number of events nationwide has grown from 1,200 in the beginning in 2000 to more than 8,000 events today.

The annual rallies attract more than 1 million Americans in the celebration to call attention to the importance of after-school programs for America’s children, families and communities.

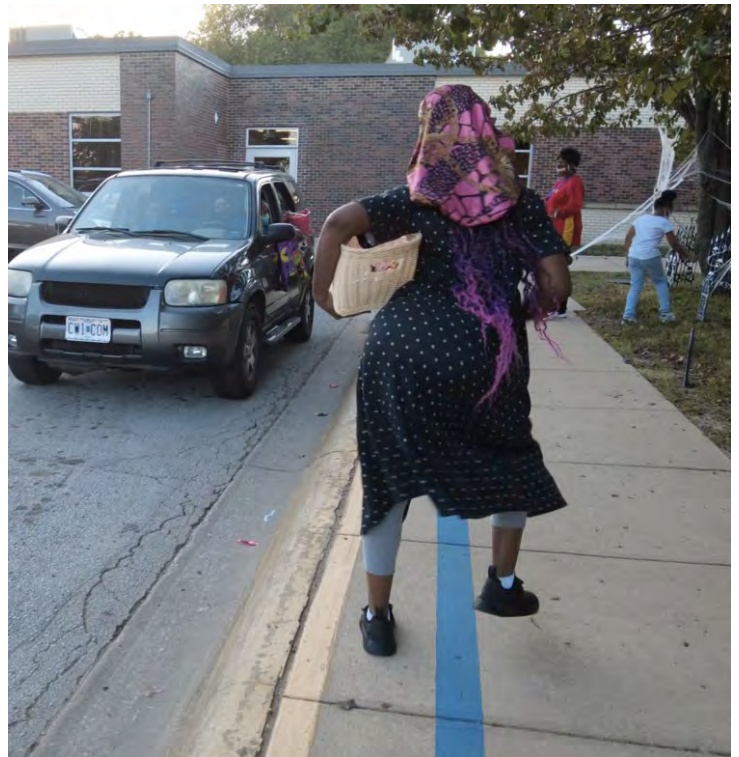
LINC has been there from the beginning.

This year the events were held at sites that included LINC programs in the Kansas City, Hickman Mills, Grandview, Center and North Kansas City school districts and Lee A. Tolbert Community Academy charter school.

Videos and a photo gallery from many of LINC’s events this year can be seen [here](#), and another set of videos and photos can be seen [here](#).



Mad Science entertains students at Dobbs Elementary School in Hickman Mills.



“Dancing Grandma” at Ervin Elementary in Hickman Mills.



Cookie decorating at Conn-West Elementary in Grandview.

Feeling special: LINC gives books to kids for Lights On Afterschool

Oct. 27, 2021

By Joe Robertson/LINC Writer

LINC Caring Communities Coordinator Edina von Hofman — a librarian by academic degree — gushed with enthusiasm as she drew the shiny books out of their packing boxes.

This one in her hand was a red-rimmed children’s book colored with plant leaves and flowers around a smiling boy with a trowel — *Jayden’s Impossible Garden* by Mélina Mangal — one of dozens of books she’ll be giving away to her Gladstone Elementary kids in the Kansas City Public Schools during Gladstone’s [Lights On Afterschool celebration](#) this week.

“I love new books,” she said. “I love smelling them, feeling them. They’re very bright and colorful . . . They give you a sense of feeling special.”

LINC purchased some 1,500 children’s titles from the nonprofit [First Book](#) — a partnership that has [distributed more than 100,000 books over the years](#) to LINC families and schools. This particular order coincides with the annual national Lights On Afterschool week during which LINC’s school sites celebrate the powerful role of after-school programs in their communities.

“We at LINC believe in getting books into the hands of students several times throughout the year,” said LINC Caring Communities Administrator Sean Akridge.

“One of the important programs in after-school is focusing on reading literacy,” he said, “and how better to do that than having books? Not just books at school, but more importantly, books at home.”

First Book is a national, nonprofit social enterprise that believes in educational equity as a path out of poverty.

LINC looks to First Book to provide high-quality children’s books that reflect the cultural and racial diversity of the schools and communities LINC serves.

Books also bring that extra joy to the relationships LINC’s teams build with their families.

“This is special because it gives us a way to connect with the community and with parents,” said Ne’Kye Sheppard, LINC’s Caring Communities Coordinator at Indian Creek Elementary School in the Center School District.

“My kiddos . . . do love reading,” she said. “And we’re making it a fun way to enjoy books and reading and heightening their reading skills. It’s going to be awesome.”



LINC Caring Communities Coordinator Edina von Hofman looks through one of LINC’s books from First Book.



LINC Caring Communities Coordinator Ne’Kye Sheppard gathers up books to give to children in her program.

LINC's Girls on the Run, Let Me Run boys and their fans celebrate 5K triumphs

Nov. 9, 2021

By Joe Robertson/LINC Writer



Talk about your perfect days . . .

A crisp, clear morning. The orange and red leaves against a bright blue sky.

Girls on the Run teams from several LINC programs joined with their trainers, teachers, parents and family members at the fall 5K run at Swope Park Nov. 7.

And boys and their support teams ran a 5K at Longview Lake in the Let Me Run program.

"I'm so proud of my girls," said LINC Caring Communities Coordinator Connie Parker at Buckner Elementary in Fort Osage.

Buckner was one of several LINC programs with GOTR teams in action. Others included Elm Grove and Cler-Mont in Fort Osage; Border Star Montessori, Holiday Montessori, Carver Dual Language, Foreign Language Academy and Faxon with the Kansas City Public Schools; and Topping in North Kansas City Schools.

"It went really well," said Elm Grove LINC Caring Communities Coordinator Raul Lopez Gomez.

Many girls joined the pre-run dance party, painted their faces and sprayed their hair in purple, pink and blue, said LINC Border Star Caring Communities Coordinator Shelley Taylor-Doran.

"The girls were high energy," she said.

Carver had a girls team at Swope and a boys team at Longview. Everyone completed the 5Ks — 3.2 miles, some faster than others, despite whatever obstacles came up, like the hills in the Longview course that weren't experienced in training around the school.

"We always teach that it's not how fast you do something but rather if you finish it," said Carver LINC Caring Communities Coordinator Deanna Snider. Everyone "had a great time and we can't wait to do it in the spring."

[Girls on the Run](#), says its founders, is a health and confidence-building program underscoring the connection between physical and emotional health. "Our program addresses the whole girl when she needs it the most."

[Let Me Run](#), says its founders, "inspires boys through the power of running to be courageous enough to be themselves, to build healthy relationships, and to live an active lifestyle."





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