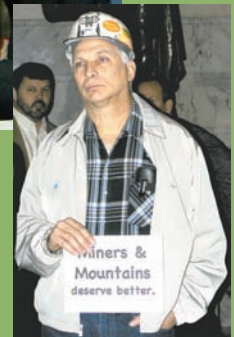


Kentuckians For The Commonwealth



"It's just incredible what we've managed to accomplish this year. It's empowering and exciting to imagine what we can do next year."

Matt Harmin



2007 Annual Report

Dear Friends,

Kentuckians For The Commonwealth thrived in 2007. I'm pleased, with this Annual Report, to share with you a glimpse of what we achieved.

Without a doubt, our biggest accomplishment in 2007 was meeting our Option A goals. Option A is the name we gave to the ambitious three-year plan for growth that we established in 2004. At that time, we committed to increasing our membership to 5,000 (up from 2,200) and tripling our annual grassroots fundraising to \$200,000 by the end of 2007.

I'm excited to report that we blew past these goals. We ended the year with more than 5,100 members and \$214,000 in grassroots fundraising! We owe a huge thanks to each and every member who helped us meet these goals.

Our Option A success came out of and fed into the energy that surrounded our issue campaigns in 2007. Our Canary Project surged in the last year as we focused on laying out economic development and energy alternatives for the coalfields and beyond. We worked with allies to win an increase in the state's minimum wage and mine safety reforms. We expanded our Voter Empowerment program. We had multiple contacts with more than 10,000 voters and distributed nearly 19,000 Voter Guides. We got more former felons involved in the Restoration of Voting Rights Campaign, built a coalition around progressive tax reform, and ran numerous, successful local campaigns.

What does all this mean? It means that we're making a real difference in people's lives. It means we're becoming more visible and are helping to change the political landscape in Kentucky. And it means that KFTC remains a powerful place where folks can find hope and create change.

More than ever, I believe in KFTC. I believe in the work our members are doing every day to make our state — and our world — a better place. It's good to be a part of something so special.

Here's to a great 2008,



Doug Doerrfeld, Chairperson

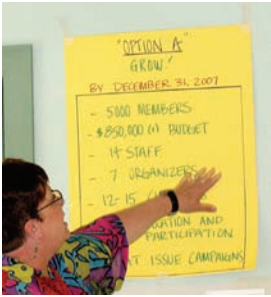


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Organizational Development – Option A

In the summer of 2004, KFTC's Steering Committee and leaders participated in a series of workshops that deepened their analysis of the political landscape of Kentucky and the nation. These workshops led to a series of discussions where members agreed that KFTC needed to increase our membership and grassroots fundraising base in order to build the kind of power necessary to win long-term goals.

The result of these discussions was the creation of "Option A" – a three-year plan to dramatically increase grassroots membership and fundraising. In early 2005, the Steering Committee adopted three-year goals of reaching 5,000 members (from 2,200) and annual grassroots fundraising of \$200,000 by the end of 2007 (for comparison, in 2004 KFTC recruited 175 new members and raised \$67,000). We also anticipated that this would allow us to grow our budget and increase staff size to 14 members.



Incremental goals were set for each year. "We knew when we set the goals it would be a steep hill to climb," said Janet Tucker who was chairperson at the time. "But we also knew it was the right way to go in order to be truly effective."

The results? In each of the three years KFTC members blew past their annual goals. And at the end of 2007, our records showed:

- ✓ 18 staff members and a \$1 million+ budget
- ✓ more than 5,100 members
- ✓ \$214,000 in grassroots fundraising!

The success has been not just internal. The public perception of KFTC also has changed significantly over the past three years. KFTC is much more widely known, has greater visibility and is a sought-after ally. This has come about through:

- ✓ increased work with allies — in Kentucky, in the Appalachian region and nationally
- ✓ a significant internet presence and a revitalized web site
- ✓ outreach into new communities, including one new chapter and another being developed
- ✓ increased staff capacity, especially in the areas of communications and leadership development
- ✓ a renewed emphasis for member-to-member recruitment
- ✓ continued support from musicians, artists and authors at public performances, exhibits and readings.

"It was good planning and a willingness to take big risks that made it happen. Now we're one of the largest grassroots groups in Kentucky and that's got to get some attention."

Beverly May

"I think it's absolutely incredible that we met the goals. We're in a lot stronger place in terms of credibility and influence within the state today than we were when I first started working with KFTC."

Janet Tucker

"Achieving our Option A goals was quite an accomplishment. That tells us we can continue to set higher and higher grassroots fundraising and membership recruitment goals for KFTC and attain them."

Susan Williams

"Reaching our Option A goals has meant achieving what only three or four years ago seemed an improbable dream for KFTC. It means we have added the energy of thousands of Kentuckians eager to see progressive change for Kentucky."

Doug Doerrfeld



Leadership Development

Leadership development always has been important to KFTC's vision. As we get larger, we are recognizing the need to involve more and more KFTC leaders in building the organization. We find many ways to help members find their voices, discover the skills they have, be challenged and learn from others.

Many of our trainings in 2007 focused on our growing Voter Empowerment work. Four staff and one leader participated in a three-part training offered by Progressive Technology Project in technology skills linked to voter empowerment strategies. We sent a group of 25 staff and leaders to the national Pushback Convening in Louisville in July. We organized a three-day training offered by Wellstone Action for about 50 staff and leaders, plus about 45 members of ally organizations, focused on skills for running effective political and non-partisan electoral campaigns.

We held four regional workshops for KFTC leaders interested in helping to plan and carry out KFTC's electoral strategies. During these regional trainings we recruited 26 people to serve as "community captains." This is a new leadership role in KFTC. The idea is that these people would have repeated, direct personal contact with at least 30 other voters in their own communities.

The Canary Project also offered many opportunities for leadership development. We were especially excited about the creation of a new staff/leader hybrid position we call the "KFTC Fellow." This is a two-year paid position that allows an experienced KFTC leader to focus on supporting the growth of other leaders, specifically the Canary Leadership Network.

We also look for opportunities to send members to conferences, actions and trainings around the country where they can learn and interact with others in the struggle. This year, those trips included:

- five members going to New York City as part of an Appalachian Delegation to the UN's Commission on Sustainable Development;
- five members going to Washington, D.C. as part of a national lobbying week on the Clean Water Protection Act; and
- seven members participating in the U.S Social Forum in Atlanta.



Also in 2007 we made a commitment to help educate our membership about immigration issues and the need for humane, comprehensive immigration policies. We had five lengthy articles in balancing the scales, including ones about myths and facts about immigration in the U.S. and another about ways to frame and re-frame the debate about immigration.

At the annual meeting the workshop on overcoming racism and classism was one of the best attended and best reviewed workshops of the gathering.

"I'm very appreciative of KFTC's commitment to Leadership Development and the opportunities I've had. I especially appreciate the commitment to constantly improve in the area of Leadership Development.

"Leadership Development means that as people take advantage of the opportunities it's going to empower the grassroots membership to speak our voices and feel confidence. It means there are more people who will be out there spreading the news about the issues we work on.

"The Pushback Conference really stands out for me. We had people with such diversity; grassroots organizations from different parts of the country working on different issues. To me, it was just fascinating. What I saw was a lot of commonalities."

Toby Wilcher

The Canary Project

The Canary Project — KFTC’s work on coal, water and energy issues — continues as the centerpiece of much of our local, statewide and national work. Anchoring that work is the campaign to stop mountaintop removal mining and valley fills.

Both the campaign and the broader work were expanded in 2007 in ways that brought new energy to the movement and heightened public awareness of the production and use of energy. KFTC responded to dozens of requests from schools, churches, civic groups and others for programs, tours and resources about mountaintop removal.

And our public presence on energy issues was much greater in 2007:

- ✓ We testified for an hour about the consequences of coal mining and Kentucky’s unhealthy dependence on coal before a House committee studying an energy bill. Our testimony was so compelling and eye-opening that legislators requested a mountaintop removal tour.
- ✓ We conducted that tour three months later with more than a dozen legislators and key aides. The experience had a significant impact on the lawmakers. We know because they told us, and because legislators who could not go have asked us when they might have the opportunity.
- ✓ When the chair of the House Natural Resources Committee was quoted in the Lexington Herald-Leader that there was no public outcry over mountaintop removal, the newspaper received more than 60 letters in response within 5 days. It published a whole page of those letters just a week after the remark was made.



Caught up in the national frenzy about turning coal into liquid fuel for the military, Kentucky officials sought to jump on the bandwagon by promising hundreds of millions of dollars in subsidies and incentives to attract coal liquefaction plants to the state. KFTC was an important part of exposing the myth of clean coal and the absurdity of taking the state further down this energy path.

✓ We took some of our strongest public demonstrations into the heart of the coalfields — a large rally in Pikeville to counter a coal-to-liquid conference; 32 of 37 speakers at a public hearing in Hazard supporting our position to protect streams from mining wastes; and 150 people at a “friendraiser” in Harlan County, among many others.

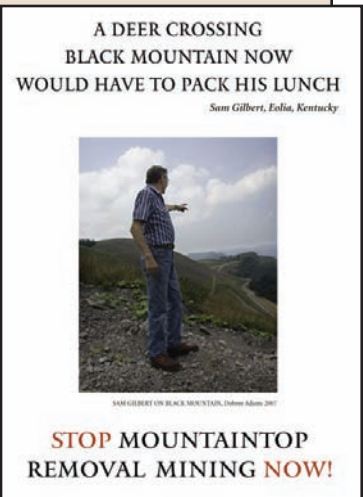
✓ Our questions about mountaintop removal and energy got asked to the candidates for governor — on broadcast debates and published questionnaires, as well during their personal campaign appearances in all corners of the state.

“When people see you can win and improve your quality of life, even small victories, then they see that organizing works and they want to be a part of whatever works.”

Rick Handshoe

“The first hearing I went to in the coalfields was for the mountaintop removal Environmental Impact Study in 2003. At that hearing we were greatly outnumbered. Since then each hearing has gotten a little bit better. And at this last [stream buffer zone] hearing we had the power in the room. It shows that our organizing is making a difference.”

Doug Doerrfeld



Broadside by artist Dobree Adams

In May 2007, KFTC helped conduct a mountaintop removal tour for religious leaders, including several nationally known figures in the evangelical environmental movement. That tour became the centerpiece for a video production, “Crimes Against Creation,” that has become part of a nationally touring Renewal Project. And the leaders issued a interfaith statement calling for “moral action” and a ban on mountaintop removal.



The Appalachian Citizens Law Center provided legal representation, but KFTC had more than 35 members in the room when Daymon Morgan (hat) challenged aspects of a mine expansion permit adjacent to his home. He won important concessions.



Important relationship-building work took place when KFTC members came out in strength to support efforts by the United Mine Workers of America and others to pass important improvements in state mine safety laws.



Renewable Energy Project: Similar to KFTC's High Road Initiative, in 2007 we prioritized offering energy alternatives for Kentucky as part of our post-coal vision for the state. We're working with allies to stop new coal fired power plants proposed for Kentucky through a Nega Watts energy efficiency campaign and we're collaborating on a Renewable Energy Platform for the state. Members in Harlan County are working with professors and students from the Massachusetts Institute for Technology on a wind feasibility study in southeastern Kentucky. Finally, we are talking with allies and members about a possible People's Energy and Employment Cooperative project.

Other Canary Project highlights in 2007

- ✓ The steering committee approved a broad *Position on Coal* that states our perspective and positions on many aspects of the mining and use of coal.
- ✓ Our work in a regional mountaintop removal alliance brought many benefits, including collaboration on ad campaigns and access to wonderful graphics and web resources produced by Appalachian Voices.
- ✓ We had exploratory conversations with a Kentucky member of Congress about federal legislation to address mountaintop removal and valley fills. We look for this to lead to new proposals in 2008.
- ✓ In August we hired the first KFTC Fellow—an advanced KFTC leader who joins in a staff-like capacity to develop our Canary Leadership Network.
- ✓ We were part of the Appalachian Delegation to the United Nations that participated in the Commission on Sustainable Development, and conducted several other public events while in New York City.

“History will show that destroying the water of eastern Kentucky was the biggest mistake we’ve ever made. We need to be doing everything we can to protect our water.”

John Roark



Economic and Tax Justice

The year began on a high with KFTC participating in a broad coalition of groups that won an increase in the state's minimum wage. KFTC offered many presentations about the minimum wage, helped train spokespeople and had a steady member presence in the state capitol during deliberations.

We also were excited when we were invited to testify about our goals for comprehensive tax reform before the House Appropriations and Revenue Committee. Our message hit home with many legislators and several, including the committee chair, committed to working with KFTC and our legislative allies on a progressive tax bill in 2008.

Much of our economic justice work is done as a partner in the Kentucky Economic Justice Alliance (KEJA). With KEJA we worked to improve our messages in 2007. A representative from Demos — a national group that has done substantial work in the area of framing and government — was the keynote and workshop leader at one of our conferences. We also began work on a KEJA Communications Strategy that will provide guidance on our framing.

KEJA produced an Economic Justice Policy Framework that spells out goals and principles for the next five years in the areas of Fair Wages/Good Jobs, Health Care, Education, Economic Development, Economic Security, and Fair and Adequate Taxes. More than 25 policy options for achieving these goals are offered.

Some other economic justice highlights from the year include:

- ✓ expanding our coalition work with the addition of Kentucky Jobs with Justice, the Catholic Conference of Kentucky and the Kentucky Domestic Violence Association as members of KEJA; networking with a broader coalition of 12-15 groups focused on passing progressive tax reform in 2008; and becoming part of an interim steering committee for the Tax Fairness Organizing Collaborative with United for a Fair Economy.
- ✓ bringing immigration issues into the conversation.
- ✓ supporting the efforts of Toyota workers to address some workplace grievances.

"By the end of the year, we were looking at some real potential for progressive tax reform in the 2008 General Assembly. We had laid the groundwork — and people were realizing how badly the state needs to spend money on some important services. Universities were facing an 11-12% cut, a real disaster. Mental health had been short of funds forever, public defenders were short of funds, and there was a good dozen other areas of serious need.

"People were realizing that the state was balancing the budget by playing various shell games, not by taking the revenue shortfall seriously. We were responding effectively, identifying sources of potential new revenue and putting together a reasonable proposal that also included an Earned Income Tax Credit."

Erik Lewis

The Kentucky gubernatorial race gave us another opportunity to talk about economic justice. The Democratic candidate pushed for legalized casinos as a revenue-generating measure, giving us another platform to bring up broader questions about the adequacy of Kentucky's tax structure and its fairness for low-income Kentuckians.



"Growing up in poverty was grueling. I feel much older than my age from the stress of wondering if we would survive another day. I'd like you to see another face of someone who can say that a fairer tax structure would have made life much more bearable."

Dana Beasley Brown (right), in testimony before the House Appropriations & Revenue Committee

KFTC's outreach to voters — and potential voters — offers great opportunities to talk deeper about issues that matter most to people. That's how it worked in Springfield. KFTC members wanted to encourage voting in the upcoming election, and they also wanted to help people understand how the economic disempowerment they experience relates to voter turnout trends in their community.

A community fish fry turned out to be a perfect setting for doing both. The voter-empowerment theme event attracted people and the informal setting of a shared meal lent itself to deeper discussion on economic justice issues as they play out in people's lives and in the community.



Early in the year, Kentucky's governor (in a re-election campaign) began touring the state touting a \$279 million budget "surplus" and asking voters how they would like to "spend" it (he was promoting tax cuts and tax rebates). But KFTC members used the town hall meetings instead to talk about the need for fair and adequate tax reform that would be a sustainable solution to Kentucky's budget crisis. And KFTC told the governor that it is deceptive to call the unanticipated revenue a "surplus" when the state budget has a structural deficit and lacks more than \$1 billion in needed revenue.

"I just don't know that I'd call this a surplus, when Kentucky doesn't even have the funds to provide education, shelter and adequate health care for its people." — Sally Evans

At the Morehead meeting, tax rebates and tax cuts did not get any votes when people were asked to choose between tax cuts and investing in health care and education.

The governor lost his re-election campaign. And what did the new governor discover? A budget deficit in the current fiscal year and a \$900 million revenue shortfall for the 2008-10 biennium budget!



KFTC and the Kentucky Economic Justice Alliance (KEJA) hosted a one-day conference in January on "Putting Economic Justice on Kentucky's Political Landscape." The conference included workshops on a variety of topics from tax reform to health care to organizing with directly impacted folks.

KFTC did nearly two dozen tax reform and minimum wage workshops and "voter empowerment through the lens of economic justice" presentations during the year, including ones to the Kentucky Education Association and an educational coalition that included the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce.

The High Road Initiative

In late 2006, when we launched the High Road Initiative with the Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (MACED), we didn't necessarily think that the principles of sustainable development would become such an in-your-face reality for our members so quickly. But they did in 2007.

In the summer, the Kentucky General Assembly was called into special session for the single purpose of approving hundreds of millions of dollars in tax incentives and subsidies for large energy companies to build coal-to-liquid and coal gasification plants. Our members knew that this would mean substantially more coal production, more mountaintop removal mining, more big money corruption, and more production of deadly carbon dioxide — all historic KFTC issues addressed through the Canary Project. It also was clear that this was an exorbitant cost for a relatively small number of jobs, was not sustainable development and would take Kentucky further down the wrong energy path.

It was an unfortunate policy proposal, yet a challenge and an opportunity, a merging of KFTC issues around coal and economic development and energy. It provided a concrete example for our membership as to why we needed to go deeper fast in knowledge about economic development and concrete alternatives. The goals and issues of the High Road Initiative became real for a lot of people as they saw how the old system was impacting lives and communities.

The understanding of these connections and the response of our members was a quick though natural progression from the groundwork laid by the High Road Initiative in the first seven months of the year. It reflected the rapid development for the High Road Initiative in 2007.

Early in the year we went through a visioning process, asking members what kind of economy and communities they would like to live in. A strategy team used this input, plus deeper followup interviews with a number of members, to help craft several foundational documents: a vision statement, mission and High Road principles, plus initial and long-term goals. By the end of the year we had specific policy proposals as first steps to helping bring that about.



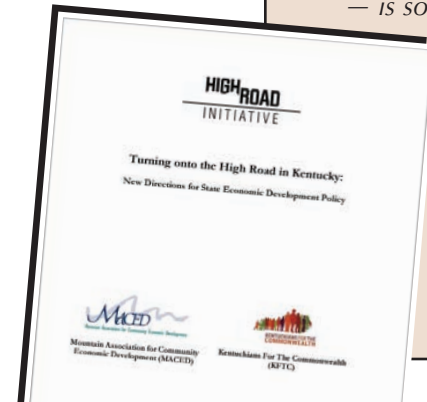
"We made immense progress toward our High Road goals, priorities and strategies in 2007. We've created a vision to get economic development going in a new direction, to be sustainable, support more entrepreneurship and move away from the historic approach of getting jobs for jobs sake, which is not a long-term solution for the commonwealth."

The High Road has given us a lot of recognition, with MACED and KFTC doing this combined project. We are educating elected officials and the public as well, letting them know that this is an issue that is definitely out there.

The proposals MACED and KFTC have come up with — transparency and openness, this sustainable approach to economic development — is something people are

becoming more attuned to. It's something legislators are picking up on. The High Road has made tremendous strides."

Susan Williams



Turning onto the High Road in Kentucky: New Directions for State Economic Development Policy, brought together the research, vision, purpose and theory in one document that helped in the discernment of short and long-term policy goals.



If it is going to take us 154 years to get there, maybe we should try another road.

Year in and year out, administrators roll out economic development schemes that cost millions of dollars to state business. You would think they would ask:

- “Hey, is it working?”
- “Could there be a better way we promote state business to improve and sustain businesses?”
- “If per capita income should rise, how should we do it?”
- “Do we have a fiscal incentive to attract investment?”

But asking those questions over the years we learn that got \$300 million to Walmart, a company that competes directly with our Main Street businesses. The question is not whether Kentucky will be friendly to out-of-state companies that want to set up shop here. We welcome new people and new opportunity. The question is: How can ordinary citizens make our own state government accountable? Are we going to ask hard questions? Or are we going to give every new administration a free hand to pass out millions in subsidies without checking the results? Isn't it time to take a new approach? One that promotes innovation, good jobs, and a better quality of life. If you think accountability makes for better government, you can add your voice to the list. Go to www.highroadinitiative.org and tell Kentucky's leaders it is time to take the high road.

Effective Economic Development

We Can Get There If We Take The High Road

We can have good jobs in Kentucky and a better economy. But not without government accountability.

Year after year, administration after administration, Kentucky governors roll out economic development schemes that spend hundreds of millions of dollars to entice out-of-state businesses.

You would think by now someone would want to ask:

- “Hey, how did that work out?”
- “Did the companies that got the incentives bring in the jobs they promised?”
- “Do the jobs they promise pay enough to feed a family and keep them healthy?”
- “Are we giving a fair shake to home-grown businesses that pay their full share of taxes and support the local community?”

But asking those questions and measuring the results are not part of the policy. Over and over we learn about questionable subsidies when it is too late. Like the timber company that got \$300 million in tax credits to create 300 jobs. Or the \$43 million that went to Walmart, a company that competes directly with our Main Street businesses.

The question is not whether Kentucky will be friendly to out-of-state companies that want to set up shop here. We welcome new people and new opportunity.

The question is: How can ordinary citizens make our own state government accountable? Are we going to ask hard questions? Or are we going to give every new administration a free hand to pass out millions in subsidies without checking the results? Isn't it time to take a new approach? One that promotes innovation, good jobs, and a better quality of life.

If you think accountability makes for better government, you can add your voice to the list. Go to www.highroadinitiative.org and tell Kentucky's leaders it is time to take the high road.



Tell Kentucky's leaders to take the High Road to effective economic development. Visit www.highroadinitiative.org.

HIGH ROAD
INITIATIVE

High Road Initiative • 433 Chestnut Street • Berea, KY 40403
www.highroadinitiative.org

The High Road Initiative's external outreach included placing two ads on the editorial pages of the **Lexington Herald-Leader**. Besides letting the public know about the project, the message of the ads helped serve notice to officials and candidates that the principles of good economic development were a matter for public discussion.

Other efforts to bring this discussion into the public arena included:

- early in the year, the secretary of the Cabinet for Economic Development resigned after a long tenure. Although the process for replacing him was a closed-door one, the vacancy gave us a prompt for offering ideas on the development and community values that a new secretary should embody.
- the gubernatorial race also offered opportunities for highlighting both the values of sustainable development and specific ideas for achieving that. We helped shape questions that were asked in several public forums and broadcast debates between the candidates.
- the launch of the [highroadinitiative.org](http://www.highroadinitiative.org) web site furthered our public presence.
- beginning in May we started several series of articles in **balancing the scales**, KFTC's newspaper. The most popular featured profiles of people, organizations and businesses that exemplify what High Road is trying to build — concrete examples that showed a different path is possible. Other articles helped define common economic development practices and how they compared to High Road principles, and a look at what policies are working in other states.
- an occasional electronic newsletter provided a resources to broaden and deepen understanding of economics and sustainability.

Voter Empowerment

Throughout the year, KFTC's non-partisan Voter Empowerment Campaign had a significant presence and impact all across the commonwealth.

KFTC's fingerprint was everywhere – from northern Kentucky to western Kentucky, central Kentucky, Louisville, and many chapters in eastern Kentucky. This campaign may have seen more quality ground work in communities spread all across the state than anything KFTC has taken on since the successful Broad Form Deed Campaign in 1988.

Everywhere members went they registered voters, talked to people about issues that are important to them, and provided non-partisan information about where candidates stood on certain issues. This helped get KFTC's name and issues before the public, made candidates take notice and be more accountable, and created a lot of energy within the organization.

The campaign also allowed for many collaborative efforts — including work with a labor group and other civic organizations, high school and college classes, and allies. It extended our web presence with pertinent information — candidates' answers to our questions.

Here are some highlights:

- work around the primary and general elections (Kentucky elected a governor and other statewide officials in 2007) was intense. We registered 1,333 new voters, had at least three contacts with more than 10,000 voters and two contacts with 3,500 more, had dozens of events where information about issues was distributed, became a resource for precinct location information and helping voters get rides to the polls, and had strong voter turnout pushes in numerous communities;
- our three-day Camp Wellstone training was fabulous; nearly 100 people got a better idea of what it takes to be politically successful and gained confidence in their ability to organize around issues in their communities;
- our primary election Voter Guide featured questions to each of the governor/lieutenant governor slates; we printed 8,000 copies that were circulated widely and was accessible on our web site;
- our general election Voter Guide featured questions to each of the 12 candidates running for a statewide office; we printed 10,600 copies that were circulated widely and was accessible on our web site;
- outreach through our Facebook site got 2,075 people to pledge to vote in the November election;



- we hired a dozen temporary electoral workers in the fall to work with members and staff to facilitate voter outreach efforts;
- we worked with Kentucky Jobs with Justice on a day-long program that included training and a door-to-door walk in a Louisville neighborhood followed by the Youth Speak out.



"Voter empowerment is important because some people don't know that they can make a difference or they don't know where to start. As a community, we will educate others, as well as ourselves, on what we can do to make our community a better place, how to step up and make our government stand for what their constituents actually want and need. We're going to show democracy for the people and by the people."

Civic Literacy student

"When KFTC works to register voters, we then try to speak with each person several additional times. We find out what really matters to them. We inform voters about how the candidates stand on those issues. People truly care about health care, environmental protection and help for small businesses and family farms. Our democracy is stronger when voters make choices based on those kinds of issues, not party-lines or personalities."

Lindsey Lewis

One of the most exciting voter empowerment efforts was the Civic Literacy Project spearheaded by classes at Jefferson Community and Technical College along with St. Francis High School and KFTC. More than 50 students and local KFTC members collaborated on a series of actions to educate themselves and the community about participatory democracy such as voting, campaign development, letter-writing and lobbying.

Additionally, the students engaged in a series of community dialogues and education efforts around some of the most pressing issues facing Kentucky citizens in the upcoming election, such as the restoration of voting rights for former felons and funding for higher education and support services.

Their efforts tied to a variety of classroom lessons. But mostly students said they learned how the work strengthened their individual voices and showed them the potential for creating positive social change in their communities. One student wrote:

We're illustrating how the community as a whole can get together and learn more, not just about voting but about what comes before and after that. I'm a convicted felon, so I can't actually vote, but what we're doing in my English class is about all the other ways that people can participate in democracy. Just by helping to register other voters and educating the community about mountaintop removal, we're making a difference, even if we can't go to the polls in November. Once you start talking to people – sharing education – you realize how much one person really can do, and then you just want to do more!



Restoration of Voting Rights

The Restoration of Voting Rights for Former Felons is one of our top statewide campaigns. Working with a large coalition of groups, KFTC has been at the forefront of the effort to educate the public about this issue and build support for a constitutional change while also assisting former felons in the restrictive process of requesting a pardon from the governor.

The campaign picked up steam in early 2007 when the Kentucky House passed legislation to place the question of automatic restoration on the ballot. The vote was 70-28, and the efforts of KFTC members can account

for many of those Yes votes. Unfortunately, the legislation died in the Senate. But the momentum and attention for this issue clearly increased its possibility for passage in 2008.

We continued to build the campaign in 2007 through the following activities:

- more active recruitment of former felons in the campaign, followed up with spokesperson trainings for former felons and other advocates;
- a strategy session that included a power analysis to help guide outreach efforts;
- testimony at an interim legislative committee hearing in December.



“My grandmother and people who got beat up by dogs to win our right to vote — that’s what this is about. Martin Luther King Jr. had a tough fight, but he marched on. This is a tough fight, but we’ll carry on. Come back and bring someone with you!”

Tayna Fogle,
a former felon



Chapters and Local Organizing

Local KFTC chapters remain the core of KFTC's knowledge and energy. It is where members experience the issues that most likely brought them to the organization. And it is where they most likely start creating alternatives and solutions, and experience victories. It is where members find information and support, get challenged and discover the skills to grow. Unsuspecting people find themselves becoming leaders, allowing KFTC to be more effective.

A lot of hard work both on local and statewide issues takes place on the chapter level, but a lot of fun, too. Ice cream socials, hikes, concerts and pot luck dinners happen just as often as candidate forums, fundraising events and phone banks.

Local campaigns help keep members engaged, and there were some important ones that took place in 2007. Here a sampling.

LESLIE COUNTY: Daymon Morgan's little bit of heaven — 100 acres in Leslie County where he grows his own food and nature provides many of his medicines — is surrounded by mountaintop removal mining. When the coal company wanted



to add 900 acres to its operation, including a hillside within a few hundred yards of the Morgan's home and garden, they fought back. Thirty-five KFTC members showed up with Daymon at his permit conference. "I had enough people there from KFTC come speak on my behalf the company didn't know what to do." The company backed down and removed the hillside from its permit application.

HARLAN COUNTY: A coal company wanted to mine underneath the water source for the towns of Benham and Lynch — and even got a permit from the state to do so. Local Harlan County members joined with the towns' city council members to oppose this plan, including showing a mining map to officials at an Environmental Quality Commission meeting. Despite having to fight the coal company and the state, citizens eventually won protection for their water supply.



"A group like KFTC really brings people together in a grassroots way to make a difference in their lives. It's really easy to feel like you don't have a chance to change the direction of Kentucky and the way we're going, but when you're able to get together people that are just like you, you can make change just by raising your voice."

Dana Beasley Brown

"That's the beauty of KFTC, that they're interested in restoring a new balance of power which is about democracy and giving the voiceless more voice. What it comes down to is empowering those individuals at the grassroots who do not have power and listening to what their issues are."

Steve Pavey

"[KFTC] places a premium on the needs and the voice of the people, and understands that it's through their empowerment that change occurs. It's not just ... people with power getting together and advocating for other folks, it's empowering those who have the issues."

Paul Markham

ROWAN COUNTY: Even on the hottest days of summer, the coal-fired heating plant at Morehead State University was running, spewing out smoke and ash. Rowan County members started a dialogue with the university president about shutting down this pollution source and at least finding alternative fuels in the interim. Initial resistance turned into productive conversations that expanded to talk about making the campus more resource conscious and energy efficient.

BOWLING GREEN: Some long-time and some new members in the Bowling Green area wanted to do voter outreach. Their one-on-one conversations brought to light an issue that many expressed concerns about — the lack of tenant rights. As it turned out, the city is one that has not adopted the residential Landlord-Tenant Act. That is now the focus for Bowling Green members going into the new year — to build alliances with local grassroots groups and churches, and begin meeting with town council members to build support to get the tenant’s rights act adopted locally.

MADISON COUNTY: Years ago, the Berea City Council passed a local net-metering ordinance. As that local program was set to expire, Madison County members realized that they needed to educate current council members — many who had not been on the council when the ordinance originally passed — about the program and its benefits. The effort paid off, and now Berea has a net metering law for other towns to model.

“We’re being seen as a group. They don’t see it as individuals, they see it as Kentuckians For The Commonwealth.”

Rick Handshoe



FLOYD COUNTY: Floyd County was home to one of KFTC’s first chapters, but activity tapered off when KFTC lost its organizer there a few years ago. In 2007 members picked up on the need to have better coordinated local effort as more and more communities faced problems from mining. They met their goal of doubling local membership and revitalizing their chapter.



JEFFERSON COUNTY: After success on the state level, housing advocates in the Louisville metro area pushed for more support for affordable housing programs from city officials, including a permanent source of funding rather than year-to-year appropriations. The effort offered a great experience for working collaboratively with ally groups.

CENTRAL KENTUCKY: The Central Kentucky Chapter is one of the most visible groups in the greater Lexington area. Whether it’s the Roots and Heritage Festival, the Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade or any of many other community events, the chapter is usually there with an information table, membership envelopes, voter registration cards and petitions to sign.

