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For Immediate Release:

2,500 GATHER IN SEATTLE FOR THE LINKS, INCORPORATED
BIENNIAL MEETING

Extensive service programs, including Komen for the Cure, mentoring, the arts, youth services and women’s empowerment, reported among local chapters

SEATTLE (July 14, 2008). More than 2,500 of the 12,000 plus members of The Links, Incorporated attended the 36th National Assembly of The Links, Incorporated and re-committed themselves to further their legacy of service to the underserved through friendship. The five days of workshops, seminars and key-note speakers were held in Seattle, WA at the Washington State Convention and Trade Center.

“Community service is at the heart of all Links,” was the call to action of **Dr. Gwendolyn B. Lee**, 14th national president, as she presided over plenary sessions and events. “Our deliberations at this assembly reassure us that our connection between friendship and service for the common good places us in the right place at the right time. The Links, Inc. is like a phoenix rising; Links will provide world class leadership through friendship and service,” Dr. Lee added.

A major portion of The Links assembly was designed to assist chapters with carrying out the organization’s service mission. “Two hundred thirty-eight (238) chapters submitted a record-breaking 725 program reports this year, said **Alma Dodd**, national program director for The Links, Inc. Twenty Links local chapters received the distinguished and coveted “Programming Awards.” More than 147 additional chapters were congratulated for “Best Practices” in their service programs. Chapters capturing first place awards for their programs included Shelby County (Memphis, TN) for a program in *National Trends & Services*; Inglewood Pacific (CA) for a program in *International Trends and Services*; Morris County (Morristown, NJ) for a program in *The Arts*; Pontchartrain (New Orleans, LA) for a program in *Services to Youth*; and the Greater New York Chapter for its *Umbrella Project* in *Obesity & Diabetes/Women at Heart*. First place award-winning chapters received a \$5,000 grant for future programs; second place winners received \$2,500; 3rd place winners received \$1,500 and Legacy award chapters received a grant of \$1,000. The President’s Award was given to Ms. Dodd for her outstanding leadership and service as Coordinator of Programs for The Links, Inc.

The Links, Incorporated, founded in 1946, is one of the oldest and largest volunteer service organizations of women committed to enriching, sustaining and ensuring the culture and economic survival of African Americans and persons of African ancestry. With a membership of over 12,000 professional women of color, 272 chapters in 42 states, the District of Columbia and Nassau, Bahamas, the organization has contributed more than 24 million dollars to charitable causes. During this biennium, Link contributed 1.2 million documented service hours assisting communities throughout the United States, Africa and other developing countries.

One of the highlights of the assembly was the appearance of “*Big Pink*,” also known as KOMEN ON THE GO. “*Big Pink*” is a giant mobile cancer information facility which was parked in the exhibition hall at The Links assembly for delegate viewing and to support the Seattle Chapter’s community service project. The Links, Inc. and Susan G. Komen For The Cure participate in an unprecedented ongoing initiative which is appropriately called *A Circle of Promise*. This effort encourages women of African ancestry to get annual breast cancer screenings.

Members honored **Xernona Clayton**, founder, president and CEO of the Trumpet Awards Foundation, Inc. and creator/ executive producer of the prestigious Trumpet Awards, with the *Lifetime Achievement Award*. The Sarah Strickland Scott/Margaret Roselle Hawkins Co-Founder Awards were established to recognize persons who have rendered outstanding service in the areas represented by the four facets of The Links, Inc. The *International Trends & Services Award* was presented to **Dr. Asa G. Hilliard** (posthumously) and was accepted by his daughter, **Dr. Patricia Hilliard-Nunn**. **Shirley Verrett** was the recipient of the *Arts Award*. The *National Trends & Services Award* was presented to **Sheryl Lee Ralph**; and the *Services to Youth Award* was presented to **Victoria Rowell**.

The assembly closed with the re-election and installation of officers for the next biennium. **Dr. Gwendolyn Byrd Lee**, from the South Suburban Chicago (IL) Chapter, was re-elected national president of The Links, Incorporated. **Margot James Copeland**, from the Cleveland (OH) Chapter is the returning national vice president; **Lula Lang-Jeter**, from the Arlington (VA) Chapter is the national treasurer; and **Dr. Josephine Davis** from the Fort Valley (GA) Chapter is the national secretary.

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