

# it's all about the **e's**

ANOTHER IN A SERIES OF PROFILES OF LEXINGTON'S OUTSTANDING ENTREPRENEURS

IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD, Debbie Dyer is a highly successful ENTREPRENEUR, and although she's most worthy of being featured in this article, there are other "E's" that also define this CEO and co-founder of Central Kentucky Research Associates, Inc. (CKRA).

First, there's her ENERGY. This woman is a dynamo. She's in perpetual motion on the job and elsewhere. She exudes energy: while guiding a 15-minute tour of CKRA's offices on Richmond Road, she called by name 14 staff members 9 clients, took 2 phone calls, checked on the progress of 3 on-going studies, conversed with a visiting drug rep, 'cuddled' the young child of a client in the lobby, and described in detail at least 8 of the special pieces of original art that adorn the walls of the office, all the while walking backwards, swiftly, through the CKRA corridors.

Then there's her ENTHUSIASM. Deborah Lynn Dyer, R.N., absolutely loves her chosen career, and she captains the CKRA enterprise with an evident optimistic attitude. She's also significantly involved in a variety of community activities, as well as being married to her junior high school sweetheart Don Dyer, and being the proud mom to 2 teenaged children. To spend an hour or so with her, however, is more than an experience; it's more of an immersive, fast-paced journey through a remarkable story of business survival in the face of several enormous obstacles. Briefly: Debbie and her business partner

Jacque Smith both graduated from nursing school at Eastern Kentucky University and found themselves working side by side in drug research at U.K. in the late 80s. Debbie says, "The camaraderie and respect between us was mutual and instant." Debbie, blonde and Caucasian, Jacque, an African-



American. They worked on numerous research projects together, and in 1991 they co-founded the area's first independent clinical drug research facility, CKRA, with each 'putting up' a lot of hope and \$50 to incorporate the fledgling entity. Debbie recalls, "That was the only easy part of this whole venture," as she goes on to mention how virtually every local bank turned the duo down for a start-up loan, despite the fact that both were female and Jacque was 'a woman of color.' Finally, they secured a very small loan for working capital but then found they couldn't easily rent medical research office space because neither of them was a physician. Finally, they did sign a 1-year lease and opened their Lexington office in 1992. That first year netted them a \$3000 loss. In 2005, however, with a



Debbie Dyer, CEO and co-founder of Central Kentucky Research Associates, Inc.

large home-base office in Lexington and satellite locations in Mt. Sterling and Richmond, ultra-modern facilities, physicians on staff, and a stellar reputation within the clinical research arena nationwide, the firm's gross revenues were nearly \$3 million.

For 13 years the two women worked side by side—best friends, building a business and a future together...but on November 9, 2005, tragedy struck: Jacque passed away unexpectedly. Working through their grief, the entire CKRA organization vowed to keep going forward, both to keep Jacque's legacy of caring alive and to continue to carry out CKRA's mission—to maintain its status as one of the most competent and well respected clinical drug research facilities in the country. And, not coincidentally, they are perpetuating Jacque's memory by

helping to establish a clinical research chair in her honor at the University of Kentucky Medical Center.

To date, CKRA has conducted over 450 Phase I, II, III, and IV clinical trials in a variety of areas, including allergy, cardiology, gastroenterology, infectious diseases, pain management, smoking cessation, pediatrics, and women's health. Currently, they're working on an RLS (restless leg syndrome) drug trial—once again, at the forefront of national research studies. Debbie notes that participants in the studies are actually being compensated for "doing a real service to humanity because, through these trials, amazing new medicines are being approved for usage world-wide." Study participants receive compensation for their time and out-of-pocket expenses, as well as free trial medications and professional medical monitoring.

Want to catch a glimpse of one of Lexington's most exceptional entrepreneurs in action? Consider participating in a CKRA clinical trial. While on site, if you notice an attractive, smiling, blond woman scurrying through the office, that's Debbie Dyer—the epitome of being 'all about the E's!'



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> If you know of other entrepreneurial, e-type ventures in the Lexington area that deserve to be featured in this series, please e-mail Gina Greathouse at [ggreathouse@commercelexington.com](mailto:ggreathouse@commercelexington.com).