

Neighborhood Networks

Moderator: Michele Higgs
April 10, 2007
3:00 p.m. CT

Operator: Good day and welcome to the Neighborhood Networks conference call. Today's call is being recorded. At this time I'll turn the conference over to Ms. Michele Higgs, please go ahead ma'am.

Michele Higgs: Thank you Cherlon. Welcome, everyone, to the Neighborhood Networks March conference call. I'm Michele Higgs and I'm a technical assistance coordinator representing the team who work with you to address the needs of the various Neighborhood Network Centers around the country.

I thank all of you for joining us today. Our call today is entitled "Come One, Come All: Encouraging Resident Participation in Neighborhood Networks Center Activities." Have you heard the echo of an empty room at your center, your computers unused and silent except for the clicks of the dedicated few? Do you have this wonderful resource on your property yet wonder where everyone is? Well, you're not alone, and we hope to help you learn how to turn things around.

One of the most challenging issues that Neighborhood Networks Centers face is attempting to help their residents improve their circumstances by arming them with the skills to address their needs. This means helping residents to help themselves. Many residents are hampered by the lack of basic skills, like reading comprehension and math. Others need specialized skills to help

them keep up with today's technology. Still others just need a little information but centers are often treading on tender ground here and must be strategic when creating services for their residents. What can centers do to encourage residents to participate in activities?

Actually, you may have learned about providing services for youth and the kids on your property in our December call, and parenthetically, may I take this second to remind you that transcripts of past calls are available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site.

We know there are many rich resources available for the young people. However, getting adults to overcome ennui, embarrassment, or overburdened schedules can be a tougher task.

How do centers make services attractive and fresh for everyone to encourage and maintain participation? What we are asking participants to do today is to share their experiences to help their peers learn how to address these challenges at their centers.

Today, we have representatives from two centers speaking with us about the success that they've experienced in encouraging residents to take advantage of the services at their centers. We will welcome La Keisha Jackson, who is executive director of the Pathway to the Future Center, at the Amber Woods Cooperative in Indianapolis, Indiana, and Rosa Loera, services manager of the West Avenue Apartments Community Learning Center in San Antonio, Texas. Rosa is joined today by members of her resident advisory panel, and I'll tell you who they are.

There's Norma McMichael, whose president of the resident advisory panel, Guadalupe Benavides, who is vice president of the panel, Gloria Flores who is treasurer, and Zulema Rodriguez, resident alternate. We're excited to welcome you all.

In addition, Frank Spoerl, representing Ligutti Towers and Elsie Manor, two senior properties in Iowa, couldn't join us today, but contributed some words of wisdom for us to share with the centers out there that serve seniors.

Now, we have two new centers to welcome to the neighborhood today and they are the Joel M. Bamberg Complex in Arizona and the Round House Manor Neighborhood Networks in Wisconsin. We extend a hearty welcome to each of these new centers.

I also want to remind you about the Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool. Also known as the START Business Plan. START contains resource material that helps you look at the capacity of your center and provide the foundation upon which you can organize your activities. It will help you to assess the needs of your residents, and determine what resources in the community can help you meet those needs. If you have questions about the START Business Plan, or engaging your residents through resident surveys or general questions about Neighborhood Networks, please call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks Information Line at 888-312-2743. You can also visit the Neighborhood Network's Web site at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org.

Also, let me tell you about the online networking through the Neighborhood Networks Message Board. There, you can share information among yourselves, post news, ask questions. Now, be aware that this is not a real-time resource. You can post your information, and then revisit the board in a day or so to see what kinds of responses you have received. You just go to the Web site, which is www.neighborhoodnetworks.org, and click on the Neighborhood Networks Online Networking link to the right, under the green banner labeled, "Helpful Tools."

When you get there, follow the instructions and guidelines or select "enter online discussion." Go visit, leave us a message, and check it out. Before we get started, I also want to remind listeners that a transcript of this call will be made available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site in about two weeks.

Now, when I looked over the material from our speakers, I had a mission statement from Pathway, which, in brief says, they provide training and resources to create opportunities that promote resident self-sufficiency, and that's the mission of all Neighborhood Networks.

It is not a mission that is easy to fulfill. Our presenters today have been successful in engaging their residents at their properties, and will speak to us about how it works at their centers.

Hopefully, you will come away from this call with some ideas on how to make things grow at your centers. Also, when I first spoke with Frank Spoerl at Ligutti Towers and Elsie Manor in Iowa, he mentioned a number of good points that I thought you folks that manage centers for seniors might consider; I will share those with you a little bit later. So just to get things going I'm going to ask La Keisha Jackson, to tell us a little bit about what goes on at Pathway, La Keisha?

La Keisha Jackson: Thank you Michele. Hello listeners, again, my name is La Keisha Jackson, I am the executive director of the Neighborhood Networks Center, Indianapolis, Indiana, and it's Pathway To The Future Learning Center, Inc.

Our goal here is to foster a safe environment where families can build and maximize their computer, social, life, education, and cultural skills, and successfully implement them to advance them and maneuver through life's daily challenges.

Our center opened on September 20th of 2001, and we're at the property of Amber Woods Cooperative. What's unique about our property and is that it's one of a kind in the state of Indiana. It's all Section 8 so our audience and our residents are a little bit different because we don't have variance in residents who have high to low income.

Most--80 percent--of our residents have no employment. That's what's unique about us. So I'm going to go ahead and start off the conference with the first topic; how we engage and reinvigorate residents here.

Pathway empowers our residents by providing a combination of programs and services that appeal to all levels of the individual and family in the areas of spiritual education, training, employment, youth activities, and family strengthening events.

I say what's very important is setting yourself apart from other community agencies and not-for-profits in the area by identifying something that you do well that appeals to your residents.

For example, here at Pathway, we have a youth employment services program where we train youth ages 18 to 25 in employability skills and how to gain and retain employment. That's something that we do here on the Far East Side that is different from a lot of the community centers here in the area. Our organization also seeks ownership from residents when they participate in programs. For example, number one; we emphasize: "each one, teach one." Once you learn, share it with someone else. Two, be an active participant. Just don't come and show up and be a bump on a log; actually gain knowledge and share it with a family member, friend or someone else in the community. Three, engage the family. Go back and recruit your family members to be a part of a program or service that you were a part of.

Four, offer positive and or constructive feedback. This is done in surveys, evaluations, and roundtables that we provide here at Pathway. And five, we provide visuals and displays for the residents, so they can actually see what we're doing. Highlight your strengths and make sure they're very visible for, not just the residents, but other community agencies in the area. That way you can provide wrap-around services for the residents and their clients as well.

What's most important is to know the audience you're trying to reach and understand that they may change from program to program and activity to activity. So, whatever program you're

having, market to the residents for that particular program or activity and not just the center at large.

Michele Higgs: La Keisha, I'm going to jump in real quick because you've mentioned two things that I wanted to ask about. How often do you survey your residents?

La Keisha Jackson: We survey our residents in a formal survey twice a year. We do it every six months. Informally, we do oral surveys when they enter the center. Sometimes we'll do door-to-door. We also host other community events so we'll survey the community that way as well.

Michele Higgs: One last thing and I hope I haven't cut off your thought; I want to ask about the last thing you mentioned which was marketing to the different audiences. Can you tell me a little bit about that, like if you're dealing with the young folks, if you're dealing with the adults, if you're dealing with seniors, how do you approach each of those groups?

La Keisha Jackson: Sure, we do market for all the different audiences and the different ages and levels. Specifically, if it was a youth employment program, we want buy-in from both the youth and the parents, so what we normally do is address it with a letter, follow it with a flyer.

Flyers work really well because people actually get to see key points. Especially if the literacy rate is not really high, they get to actually see what they can be involved in. We do newsletters as well.

We make announcements as well. So we always keep key announcements for a particular program, but if its youth related, we make it fun, we make it frilly.

If it's adult, we make it professional but we make it show how they can definitely benefit from that program or service. For seniors, we always market; you're not too old to learn. We can learn

from you so we make that a two-way street. So, there are different ways that we market to each group.

Michele Higgs: OK. Thank you. I didn't want you to lose your point. Was there more you had to say?

La Keisha Jackson: No, not in that area.

Michele Higgs: OK. Go on.

La Keisha Jackson: OK. Raise the awareness of the center. Do this in a few different ways. We make announcements at the community meetings. Amber Woods is required by its by-laws to have an annual meeting for elections of its board members. So at that time, we always take the opportunity to expose the center to new residents that have joined the property during the year and remind those who are on the property if they haven't visited the center about the upcoming events and programs.

We also distribute flyers. We place current events and breaking news in a community newsletter. We have a community newsletter that's professionally done and we put top or headliner stories in those newsletters as well as information on programs and upcoming events. Sometimes, we do door-to-door campaigns with those newsletters depending on if we have reached our target recruitment. We also attend events that the community is having. Maybe a not-for-profit is having their community day or a community forum. Especially if they offer an opportunity to display or have a booth, we'll display Pathway at that booth.

What's also important about raising awareness about the center is using your newsletter or your flyers as a marketing tool. We mail ours to the Mayor of Indianapolis. That's Mayor Bart Peterson. Also to our councilmen, we have a list, and to our management company.

In addition, we mail to our board of directors and some of our community partners, so that way they'll see the progress and the events that we have and maybe forward that long or maybe even come out and support us. Our Mayor attends several of our events but he knows about them before he even gets the formal invitation because we send him a monthly newsletter.

Also, maybe do a monthly report. If you don't have this or you don't currently do it, I strongly recommend you do a monthly report. One, it shows accountability to your board of directors if you're at a property that has a board or even the management company. It gives you an overview of what's been done that month. Also, you're able to reflect and say, wow, we did this, because that's what's in our Pathways monthly report; we include statistics and data as well.

It gives you an opportunity to reflect and to see participants in each area. For example, for our computer lab, I know exactly how many repeats and new people have used the computer lab and what they used it for. Is it homework, is it business related? Is it just to e-mail? That data is pulled and put in a monthly report, so I know that information.

Michele Higgs: Well, that gives me an opportunity to say that it's so important to track the activities at Neighborhood Networks Centers. We encourage centers to capture that kind of information for this very reason so that they will be able to assemble the reports they need for their centers. Is there any more that you wanted to say?

La Keisha Jackson: Yes, one more tag line, you just said it; it's important. Also, if you're trying to seek funding for your programs, that piece is important, because you can give a picture of who's using your center, what they're using it for, what types of programs and services you have provided and what benefit users received; and the only way you'll know that is if you're tracking that information.

Michele Higgs: Perfect. Thank you so very much. I hope you folks have your pencils, because we're getting some good information here. Thanks La Keisha, did you want to say anything else?

La Keisha Jackson: Not in that area.

Michele Higgs: OK. OK. In that case, I'm going to ask Rosa, are you there?

Rosa Loera: Yes.

Michele Higgs: With your panel. ..Would you like to offer up what's going on at West Avenue?

Rosa Loera: Sure, first of all, let me thank you for selecting West Avenue to be guest speakers. I've been a services manager for a little over a year and a half. My position is basically a facilitator who guides the residents with their ideas and their goals. I also assist in continuing established programs and bringing in new programs and events. With me today are the property resident advisory panel members, as you heard earlier, (Norma McMichael).

(Norma McMichael): Hi.

Rosa Loera: She is the current president. (Gloria Flores)

(Gloria Flores): Hello, everyone.

Rosa Loera: She's the current treasurer. And (Zulema Rodriguez)

(Zulema Rodriguez): Hi.

Rosa Loera: Current resident alternate and (Guadalupe Beneviedes).

(Guadalupe Beneviedes): Hello.

Michele Higgs: Hola. Let me ask you one quick thing. Rosa, can I ask you all to get very cozy around the speakerphone because there's an echo.

Rosa Loera: Oh, I'm sorry, is that better?

Michele Higgs: That's good. That's good.

Rosa Loera: All right. The West Avenue Apartments Community Center was established back in about '95, '96. Working here, I have learned and believe that the community center is actually different from your typical apartments.

Because people here are pretty much seen as residents and tenants, and that's a big difference there.

The programs that were established and that we have here are broken down by categories. We've got resident events, adult programs, and youth programs. Now our resident events are family oriented to bring neighbors together to share experiences. During most of these events, we like to invite our partners to come by and we ask them to bring goodie-bags or information to share with our residents.

Sometimes, we link health fairs with our events like our Spring Festival, our Mothers Day Out, and our National Night Out which is one of our biggest ones, our Fall Festival, and our Garage Sale.

Our adult programs, they are grouped into two different categories; we've got the partnership led, which means that these classes are actually done by our partners. Our ESL classes, partnership with Venetia Family center.

We've got the monthly support group, partnership through Alamo Area on Aging Agency, ESLOP, which is a new one, it's the English as a Second Language for Oral Persons, and that's with the Independent School District.

We also have Community First Health, which is a children's health program, and Angel Food Ministries, where almost anyone can purchase a discount food box. It helps out a lot of low-income families.

Then we have our resident-led programs. Those programs are led by mostly our resident advisory panel, but sometimes other resident volunteers. For example, we've got the bingo games and arts and crafts.

Now that's led by one of our resident advisory panel members Zulema Rodriguez. I'm going to turn that over to her so she can give you a brief description of that activity.

Michele Higgs: OK. Thank you.

Zulema Rodriguez: OK. Hi. I have bingo on Tuesday evening because it benefits the residents. I have handicapped and disabled residents and I also have seniors that come to have fun and get out of their homes. I also lead the arts and crafts class where projects are themed to the upcoming holidays. Residents can learn new hobbies and share with their families. Thank you.

Rosa Loera: Thank you, Zulelma. Now with the arts and crafts, also, sometimes we do make little goodie bags for upcoming events. Residents bring in their ideas themed by every holiday, so for now, we have our spring event coming up: Fiesta here in San Antonio, late in April.

We're going to be doing some little hats and pins for the residents in hopes of making some money for the resident advisory panel. Now, we also have Norma here who has her group, and I'm going to pass it over to her, she'll tell you a little bit more about her Bible study group.

Norma McMichael: Hello out there. I'm Norma McMichael and I'm very happy to be invited to participate and lead a Bible study group, which is a first here. Our group includes worshiping with music, praying for persons that request prayer, and these days, we have a lot of people requesting opening the Word. Last year, we made a trip to San Juan de Valle for which our residents raised funds to make that trip and didn't have to pay anything out of their pockets. That was a great trip, it was a successful trip and that's why we're very grateful to these apartments. They allow us to worship and spend some time with our Lord, and we thank them very much. Thank you.

Rosa Loera: With the Bible study group also, I'd like to mention it's not just for our residents who live here. We also have it open to the surrounding communities and residents invite their families as well. So it's not just our residents. Now we have Gloria, who facilitates the cooking classes and I'll turn that over to her.

Gloria Flores: Hi, I'm Gloria. Our cooking classes are fun and educational. Residents share their cultural dishes so we learn, eat and have fun doing so.

Michele Higgs: OK. Rosa, let me jump in really quick. I have a question.

Rosa Loera: All right.

Michele Higgs: I just heard a pause there with Gloria, so I thought perhaps she was finished. Who is the audience for those cooking classes? Is that newly married ladies who don't know how to cook, or seniors?

Rosa Loera: Its residents, married, single moms, but it's basically learning dishes. It's a melting pot here at West Avenue. We have people from Mexico, we have people from Somalia, we have people from everywhere; yes, Puerto Rico, everywhere. So we learn the dishes from each culture.

Michele Higgs: I see. Oh, OK, OK. So it's sort of a cultural education as well.

Gloria Flores: It's not professional, but they enjoy it. They get to share maybe some of their family recipes, and that's the real sum of all that.

Michele Higgs: OK. OK and how do you get people to get involved?

Rosa Loera: To get involved, first of all, we introduced it with flyers.

Michele Higgs: Yes.

Rosa Loera: Now, the flyers are very, very important. We put a lot of pictures out there and also, its word of mouth. Now, because we have the resident advisory panel, the residents that live here are aware of the panel so residents are approached even in the evenings when they go to the laundry room, when they go pick up their mail, they're our target, they know that they are available.

The panel is available to them. So at any time, panel members can be approached and asked, what's going on, or say "I have an idea," so panel brings it up to us and we try to implement that idea. Like the Christmas Pageant.

Michele Higgs: I see. OK. I'm just trying to be sure we get the word out there on how these things are done. And I'm going to go back to Ms. Rodriguez who spoke first about the bingo and arts and crafts classes. Who is that gauged towards? Who actually comes and participates and how do you reach out to get people for those events?

Zulema Rodriguez: We also have flyers, and they already know the dates and times.

Zulema Rodriguez: It's for the seniors.

Michele Higgs: OK. I was just wondering if it was something that was established and people just knew that on this day of the week, these activities would be happening.

Zulema Rodriguez: Yes. Bingo, they enjoy it. When we have our resident birthdays, we used the bingo as a game for the birthday parties, and found that it was fun and so we turned it into a bingo night. Bingo night is every other Tuesday, and then the other Tuesday would be arts and crafts.

Michele Higgs: I see. I got it. Established events, OK, Gloria, I didn't mean to cut you off. Had you said all you needed to about the cooking classes?

Gloria Flores: I am done, and thank you for your question.

Michele Higgs: OK, certainly. Rosa, go on.

Rosa Loera: We also have the youth programs. We have an afterschool program led by myself and parent volunteers. It's available to children ages 4 to 17, and our main focus is homework and tutoring.

We also have a computer lab that's used for homework, but mainly for the games that they like to enjoy. We also try and do a small typing class within the afterschool program. It's through the Mavis Beacon system, or software. They are learning how to type and we also offer snacks and we do reading. We read a book to them every day, and sometimes we have field trips. So that's our afterschool program.

For summer, we have a summer program. It operates around the summer food program. The summer food program is from the City of San Antonio Park and Recreation, and we actually sign up for that and they deliver hot lunches to our residents here or anybody who is in the surrounding area.

It's for ages 0 to 18. Because it's scheduled at a time for lunch, we've included a summer program to keep them here and entertained between the lunch and the snack that comes in about two hours later.

Between those times, we try bingo, and arts and crafts catered to their ages. We still open up the computer labs. We have outdoor activities; go to the park, go on field trips I to the zoo, swimming or children's museum, and all of that. It's what the kids ask for and when they do ask for things we do fund raisers, we recycle, we try and do car washes and things of that sort.

Michele Higgs: Well, good. And, I'm going to ask one quick question, and that is, how often, and this is for both of you, how often do you have special events, aside from Neighborhood Networks Week, which we'll talk about later.

Rosa Loera: OK. Special events, well, it seems like we have an event every month. For instance, every other month, we have our resident birthdays, and we send a personal invitation to the residents that have a birthday within those two months.

There's also a flyer sent out to the whole property inviting everybody to come in and celebrate with them. That's to let residents know that we do care, we want their input.

They're appreciated, and also at that point, like I said before, and La Keisha said, we do informal surveys. We ask what they want to see at that time. Then events such as the Spring Festival, the National Night Out, it's almost every month.

Michele Higgs: Yes. I see. I see. La Keisha, have you any special events?

La Keisha Jackson: Yes, we do monthly special events as well. Most of those are workshops that encompass life skills training or life skill such as financial literacy, education, or getting them recruited for post secondary college and things like that.

Michele Higgs: OK.

La Keisha Jackson: We also, on a quarterly basis, do a major event. For example, our annual Community Day is huge. We have over 500 residents that participate in that. It's announced throughout the city of Indianapolis and we get a big response.

Then we have a talent show that gets youth and adults involved. And it's where we -- a couple things, we teach them about true talent and not just coming up doing dancing or singing, but they get a benefit from it, a recording session, or a dance lesson from a professional place in the community that has donated a service.

So yes, and then our holiday program, we usually encompass a holiday as well. What's been very different this year, is we implemented our first winter formal, and that was to offer an opportunity for those who had never participated in a winter or a special event or after five event, to get dressed up, get their hair done, and come out and mingle with others that want to have a

good time and make it a little bit more dressier and classier affair, as well, and that was Fire and Ice Winter Formal, and it was in February.

Michele Higgs: That sounds like it was very nice.

La Keisha Jackson: It was. Actually, they gave me a – I was recognized and I got a proclamation from the city of Indianapolis and a letter from my mayor. I also received some gifts and some other things there. So, it was very nice.

Michele Higgs: Worth getting dressed up for, right?

La Keisha Jackson: Yes.

Michele Higgs: OK. I am going to stop now and see if we have any questions and Cherlon.

Operator: The question and answer session will be conducted electronically. To ask a question please press the star key followed by the digit one on your touch-tone telephone. If you are using a speakerphone please make sure your mute function is turned off to allow your signal to reach our equipment.

Again, that's star one to pose your question, and we'll pause for a moment to assemble our roster. Again, that's star one for questions. We'll go first to Stacey Wiggins.

Michele Higgs: Hi, Stacey.

Stacey Wiggins: Hi guys. My question is that one of you mentioned that you opened it up to people in the community, and I'm just curious, because this is our first Neighborhood Networks grant through HUD and, I'm curious about how you do that as far as the grants go.

If yours is through a grant, I assumed that ours was specifically just for our residents. So I was just wondering, how you handle that? Also, another quick question, the Bible study sounds great, would love to do that. Also again, wanting to know if that would be kind of a fuzzy area with HUD?

La Keisha Jackson: This is La Keisha, I can answer the first question.

Stacey Wiggins: Great.

La Keisha Jackson: It depends on how you wrote your proposal for HUD to open your Neighborhood Networks Center. When Pathway opened ours, we opened it up to the community. There's a place on the application, when you open your center, is it just for the residents at your property or for the surrounding community, as well.
If it is for the surrounding community sometimes they ask for boundaries or which specific areas that you want to service as well.

Stacey Wiggins: OK. Thank you.

La Keisha Jackson: You are welcome.

Michele Higgs: I think that was West Avenue that had the Bible study. Rosa, is that one that you can address?

Rosa Loera: Yes, I might send that over to Norma, but before I do that I'll give a little input on the surrounding communities. I'm not sure about HUD but we do also visit the properties around my area and I talk with the managers. I leave flyers with them, the elementary school down the street. I fax things over to them and I ask them to advertise for me as well.

Michele Higgs: OK. OK. Great.

Rosa Loera: For the Bible study group I'm going to turn it over to Norma.

Norma McMichael: OK. Well, basically what I can tell you is I was invited to do this and, getting permission, I believe, Rosa you have that information ...

Rosa Loera: What exactly was the question on that?

Male: On how they started a ...

Rosa Loera: How can you go about to start a Bible class?

Norma McMichael: How to go about starting a Bible study class? Now, really it's what the residents are asking for now. Is it touchy with HUD? Yes it is. As long as you keep it open to anyone else on a religion level.

Now, that's a real sticky word, right there, but if people come in together and say that they want to gather and worship and praise under a certain religion, they need to be made aware that if someone else comes in and says, OK, well I don't go based on Christian or Catholic or Baptist, or what have you They can also start their own as long as we make it open to them as well.

Stacey Wiggins: OK. I got you.

Michele Higgs: Great. Thank you, Stacey. Cherlon, is there anyone else on the line?

Operator: We have four additional questions in the queue. We'll go next to Yermain Penister.

Michele Higgs: OK. Yermain.

Yermain Penister: Yes, how you doing? My first question will be in reference to computer training. At any the two Neighborhood Networks Centers, what computer trainings are offered and what resources did they use in identifying a trainer? Was it strictly voluntary? Did they partner with a local community college? How did they go about that process?

La Keisha Jackson: I can start. This is La Keisha. Hi Yermain.

Yermain Penister: How're you doing?

La Keisha Jackson: We do a couple different things. We, actually train the trainers. We pay a one-time fee and have them go get computer training and then we also have a partnership with a couple universities in the area where they come out and do it for free or a much reduced cost. Because some students need to do it for accreditation for their program, or if they need money, they'll do it at a reduced rate, per hour or one-time fee or something like that.

Then, as far as what's offered here at Pathway, we have Windows XP. We also have a Window Web building class that teaches you how to build your own Web site, if you want to be an entrepreneur or if you are an entrepreneur and you want to have a Web site, we teach that as well.

Yermain Penister: OK. Thank you.

Michele Higgs: Thank you. OK. Cherlon . . .

Operator: We'll go next to Betty Temple.

Michele Higgs: Hi, Betty. Betty, you there?

Operator: Ms. Temple your line is open. Please, go ahead.

Betty Temple: Can you hear me now?

Michele Higgs: There you go.

Betty Temple: OK. All right. My question is going to La Keisha, and it's in regards to the surveys that you spoke about for your center.

La Keisha Jackson: Yes.

Betty Temple: If you don't mind, would you share with me some information that's in that survey and how you go about gathering the data.

La Keisha Jackson: Sure. I don't have a survey in front of me, so I will try to go off the top of my head. Well, we know our demographics, as far as, income. When we're specific to the property, but we ask things, such as, what programs are you interested in.

Then we break them down to, are you more interested in participating in youth activities or adult and we'll list one, two three or A, B, C,; i.e. computer training, financial literacy, home ownership, or education. Those are some areas.

Then, we do one for youth, too. We do a community one in general. If we're trying to implement a new program, we want to see if it's going to fly. We already, kind of, know what the pilot's going to be but we put the survey out there, and tailor it to that specific program.

To see if the response is really going to be what we hope it's going to be and the participation's going to be where we want it to be. Because, the worst thing to do, as far as energy and time, is to put effort into a program or service and have it set up and that's not what your residents want. So, that's what we do here at Pathway.

Michele Higgs: That's the key to everything, La Keisha. You can't have a program just sitting out there and nobody's participating. So, it's best to find out what residents want. I also want to jump in and mention that if you are working with the START business plan, within that plan there's very basic information for a survey, from which you can construct a survey.

That'll just give you some ideas of the kinds of questions you can ask, and that can be found on the Web site, the START business plan. You can download a copy of it just to take a look at it and within that plan you will find this document that is, again, a basic survey that you can use as a jump-off point.

La Keisha Jackson: And, Betty real quick, two key points will be for your survey. Always give a deadline to return the survey and two; also raffle an item if you can. A small boom box or a CD player, DVD player or something, and then, you don't have to buy multiples for everybody that's turning one in, because you couldn't afford that.

You can give them an opportunity to win that item by returning their survey.

Betty Temple: OK. Do you mail them out or they can just pick one up within a certain time frame?

La Keisha Jackson: We do both. We leave them at our front desk at the main office, we mail them and sometimes we do door-to-door, because our maintenance or our grounds people will distribute them in the door bag that go on the door handles .

Betty Temple: OK. I was asking because we have seven communities that we serve. They're all over the city of Norfolk. So, I was just wondering how you handled that survey.

La Keisha Jackson: The best way, probably economics-wise is to have your grounds people, if they could, or even some resident volunteer. Get those doorknob bags; they're inexpensive, like \$15 for 4,000 and have them go on the doorknob.

Betty Temple: OK. Thank you. Thank you. Could I ask one other question?

Michele Higgs: Thank you. Cherlon, have we any more questions?

Operator: I'm sorry, Ms. Temple, did you want to ask another question?

Betty Temple: I did.

Michele Higgs: Another question? Sorry.

Betty Temple: That's quite all right. That's quite all right. You mentioned also, La Keisha, about the visuals and the displays, because visibility is so important. Now, what things do you use? Do you use marquee poster boards or any avenue possible?

La Keisha Jackson: Any avenue possible. We've done everything from signage, to purchased banners; we have a couple display boards where people can see an overview of different things with pictures on them. Pictures are very important. Take pictures of your events.

We also put together a marketing tool for a DVD player and put a lot of different events together with dialogue in between them to show to potential funders and partners and even some of the

residents. During open house, we did it as a reel on a computer and all the computers flashed this DVD with this story on it. And it tells a story of the center.

Betty Temple: Oh, very good. Thank you. Good ideas, I'll use those.

La Keisha Jackson: You're welcome.

Michele Higgs: All set?

Rosa Loera: I'm listening and she pretty much does what we do here. We just, like I said, we get more involved with our residents. We try and help maintain participation. Maintaining good resident participation.

Guadalupe Rodriguez: Maintaining good resident participation by starting with recognizing our volunteers. Our volunteers are the backbone of our community center. Without them, we really, really can't do much, so we try to acknowledge them by giving them a certificate of appreciation, a luncheon or a dinner. We also ask our residents for feedback on their needs and issues they have with the resident advisory panel or the property managers here.

La Keisha Jackson: Oh, one quick piggyback on that. We do the same. We actually host a volunteer awards dinner every year to acknowledge our volunteers, and they get the opportunity to bring somebody, a guest, with them, and that guest can see the wonderful things, that not only, that the person that's volunteering is doing, but also they get to learn more about our organization.

So, it's a two-fold event. But the whole purpose is to recognize and honor volunteers.

Michele Higgs: Those are both fantastic points. You know, the backbone of the organization is the folks that work there and recognizing them makes them feel validated. Very, very helpful. Sherlon, have we any other questions?

Operator: We'll go next to Marcelo Barron.

Michele Higgs: Hi Marcelo.

Chad Chadwick: Hi, actually it wasn't from Marcelo Barron. This is Chad Chadwick. I'm with Marcelo Barron today.

Michele Higgs: OK.

Chad Chadwick: I just wanted to give some kudos to Rosa and her team. West Avenue is one of the properties that I'm with.

Michele Higgs: I see.

Chad Chadwick: So, Miss Rosa ...

Rosa Loera: Yes.

Chad Chadwick: my hat's off to you young lady. Thank you very much.

Female: We agree too. All the residents love her.

Rosa Loera: Thank you.

Chad Chadwick: You're doing a jam-up job, lady. Keep it up.

Rosa Loera: Thank you.

Michele Higgs: Terrific. It's nice to have someone excited behind you, to cheer you on. Cherlon, who else do we have on the line?

Operator: We'll go next to John Furman.

Michele Higgs: Hello.

John Furman: Hi, this is John Furman from Utica, New York. And first we'd like to compliment HUD for holding this conference call. I think it's a great opportunity for our grantees to exchange information. And, two questions. One of our computer Neighborhood Networks Centers is located on a project with a large refugee and immigrant population.

We also have a large senior population there. Our Neighborhood Networks Center is doing a terrific job attracting children and youth to participate but, we're facing greater challenges in trying to get participation from seniors and from the immigrant population.

Would anyone on the panel provide any suggestions for this?

Rosa Loera: I do have a suggestion. This is Rosa Loera. I do have a suggestion because we have that problem here. Well, not a problem but, we have that here. We recently got about 10 families from Somalia and that is a barrier right there. So, we got to talking with the refugee program or the agency that helped bring them here which is Catholic Charities.

That's how we're getting started with the ESLOP which is the English is the second language for (oral) persons. And, getting in contact with the school district, they can also help you bring in tutoring or instructors to help get an ESL class.

La Keisha Jackson: I'd like to comment on that too, as well. The other thing we don't think about is evoking trust and confidentiality. So, once again, it's going back to knowing your audience, it could be a trust issue or getting them to see you are able to meet their goals and they're able to – you're able to benefit them with that trust factor in place.

That's one thing we experienced early on. But, I can tell you once we started advertising and marketing confidentiality, and you can trust us and this information is safe here, it's not reported to HUD. Because, they think because it's a HUD center that we're going back and we're giving specific details about what's going on their particular household, and that's not true.

Rosa Loera: That's true. What we did too was we also held an orientation for residents to meet the managers and ask any questions about what's on the contract. This is an opportunity to learn about what's available to them, as well, so that we can help them, if they need any assistance in getting their citizenship and so on and so forth.

We can maybe refer them to different agencies, bring in agencies for them. The orientation made them feel more comfortable in coming up to us, services managers, management and the resident advisory panel, as a whole.

Michele Higgs: The other thing I was going to mention is that, you know, you're definitely dealing with a cultural issue in learning more about the culture and how best to approach them. Because, in some countries, walking up to someone and extending your hand might be seen as an act of aggression. Whereas, here it's what you do. Once you learn about who you're dealing with it

