

NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS

Moderator: Michele Higgs
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3 pm EDT

Operator: Welcome to the Neighborhood Networks conference call. Today's call is being recorded.

At this time, I would like to turn the conference over to Michele Higgs. Please go ahead, Michele.

Michele Higgs: Thanks. Welcome everyone to the August Neighborhood Networks conference call.

The summer is slipping away from us and soon we will be scrambling towards school buses and afterschool programs for the children in our lives. But today, we are going to talk about the centers that often have to scramble to gather programs for their residents. Those are the centers in smaller and rural communities.

Our topic for today is "Centers Serving Smaller Communities: Maximizing Minimal Resources."

To address the challenges and successes for these centers, we have leaders from three centers to speak with you about their experiences.

They have to gather resources for their center users in a different way than the "big city" guys do. We will also hear from an organization that has partnered with a center in a smaller community, and hopefully that will help you understand their solutions as well as their struggles.

I know you listeners will have plenty of questions for these folks, so let me do just a little housekeeping and I will get out of the way.

Today we have 11 centers to welcome to Neighborhood Networks and I would like for you to join me in saluting them. They are Carleton/Carrington Neighborhood Networks Center in Newark, New Jersey; Buford Walker Neighborhood Networks Centers in Lansing, Michigan; Diversey Square Neighborhood Technology Center in Chicago, Illinois; Elmbrook Senior Residence in Elmwood Park, Illinois; Rolling Hills Apartments Computer Learning Center in Pottstown, Pennsylvania; Continental Plaza Technology Network Center in Chicago, Illinois; Tree House Neighborhood Networks Center in Boise, Idaho; The Village of St. Martha's Neighborhood Networks Center in Detroit, Michigan; Shelton Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Bethlehem Townhouse I Neighborhood Networks Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Taking Initiative Center in New Haven, Connecticut.

Thanks and congratulations to all of you.

Let me quickly review the resources available to you through Neighborhood Networks.

First there's the Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool, also known as the START business plan. You know START as your online resource for organizing your center's activity and tracking the achievement of specific goals. You can even create a Web site for your center using the START business plan.

As center staff completes the plan, they can focus on the annual assessment and evaluation and review progress to commence the center's climb through the center classification system.

Completing the assessment and evaluation and having it approved by the HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinator elevates the center to Certified center classification and starts it on the path to Model center classification.

To get to START, visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org and click on the link for the START business plan to the left on the home page.

You can use the Neighborhood Networks' Web site to get details on advancing through the Neighborhood Networks center classification system or you can get information and assistance on the Neighborhood Networks toll-free information line at 888-312-2743.

On our Web site, you can learn what is current with Neighborhood Networks; get information on funding opportunities and details about our networking opportunities like the Regional Technical Assistance Workshop, or RTAW; the Annual Training Conference, or special events like Neighborhood Networks Week.

Don't forget the Interactive Virtual Learning Courses. These courses present residents and center staff alike with an opportunity to participate for free in a unique and meaningful learning experience. If you have not participated in the live presentation, you can still access the archived sessions by downloading the registration form and course catalog from the Neighborhood Networks Web site.

Remember, if you have any questions about Neighborhood Networks topics, you can call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line at 888-312-2743.

You can also try online networking through the Neighborhood Networks online message board. While this is not a real time resource, when you post your information, you can revisit the board in a day or so to see what kinds of responses you have received.

Just go to the Neighborhood Networks home page and click on the Neighborhood Networks online networking link to the right under the green banner labeled Helpful Tools.

Finally, a transcript of this call will be made available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site in about two weeks. Just look for the conference call archives at the bottom of the home page.

What we are going to talk about today are the challenges and barriers that must be overcome by centers in smaller communities. The definitions used to describe a small or rural community come in a dizzying array based on land use, administrative, density of population, geographic isolation or economic characteristics with variations that depend on the socioeconomic characteristics and well-being of the population.

We have centers that have experienced a level of success in offering programs despite being established in somewhat isolated locations. We will hear from Cynthia Harris, who is the program director of Alachua/Sherwood Oaks Neighborhood Networks Center in Alachua, Florida, which is about 20 miles from Gainesville, Florida.

We will also hear from Virginia Shamlan, who is the director of social services from the Lifelong Learning Center at Brookside Terrace in Newton, New Jersey which is about 60 miles northwest of New York City.

We will also hear from Cindy Hale, who is the center director with the Trails Helping Hands Neighborhood Networks Center in Glenrock, Wyoming. Glenrock is about 22 miles outside of Casper, Wyoming.

Also we will speak with a leader of an organization that has partnered with one of our centers. Bob Quillin is the director of adult basic education with Angelina College, which has worked in partnership with Pinewood Park in Lufkin, Texas, about 120 miles north of Houston.

May I make note that all of our speakers represent centers that have been featured in success stories on the Neighborhood Networks Web site. When you have a chance, take a look and see the good work of these centers. Trust me, you can definitely ask these folks for the secret.

Now I am going to stop talking and ask our presenters a couple of questions to get things started.

Cynthia I would like to start with you. Given the scarcity of resources in your area, what kinds of programs have you made available for your residents?

Cynthia Harris: Most of the programs for adults I teach myself because I cannot get a high enough participation or anybody to come out here and teach them. The programs that have been successful for getting people to come to the center and are healthcare programs. We had Choices, a Florida-based educational program on health come and speak on high blood pressure, cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes, and other health issues.

Right now we have another healthcare provider called Care Tenders coming twice a month to conduct a wellness clinic on the second and last Tuesday of the month.

The library is really good about coming to the center, also. I explained that my residents do not have transportation to get to the library, even though it is only about 12 blocks away.

I also get a lot of support from the police who will bring in speakers. We tried to start a neighborhood crime watch once before but there was not much interest. But I never give up on my programs. If that wasn't the right time, then there will be another time that will be good to implement it. Right now I have about five people who are interested in starting a new neighborhood crime watch.

Michele Higgs: It sounds like you have got some things going there. Now I am going to take this to Virginia because Virginia you mentioned you do a lot of the instruction at your programs at Brookside as well. Am I correct with that?

Virginia Shamlian: You are correct. I have an education background and I have taught all age groups and I really enjoy it. But, I know that I need to start letting go of that responsibility and become more of a developer and administrator.

My programs are in three basic categories. My computer and technology courses include everything from introduction to technology, the difference between a CD and a DVD, how to program a VCR or a DVD machine, and how to get the most out of your telephone, to establishing an e-mail account and understanding basic computer programs like Microsoft Word and Excel.

Another category is health, wellness, and community resources. This can include everything from a luncheon featuring a guest presenter from an agency to a government body in the community to health screenings and fairs and nutrition and exercise programs. We will talk more later about how to involve and engage the community at large. The final category is education training and enrichment, which incorporates employability skills, basic skills, ESL, GED prep and activities like story hour and writing skills. For the children, we have character development life skills.

So my programs fit in one of those three categories. I have forgotten the question, Michele; I hope I answered it.

Michele Higgs: Nope, you did fine. I was going from what Cynthia said about having to do a lot of the training on her own.

Virginia Shamlian: Yes. Well, you know, we tend to try to do that, but there are people who are experts in our communities. We just need to find them.

Michele Higgs: Good point.

Virginia Shamlian: Some community people really do like to work with small groups so the participation numbers do not have to be as high as we think.

Michele Higgs: Okay. Cindy, out there in Glenrock, Wyoming, what kind of efforts have you had to put together to get partnerships for your centers? Have you been able to get people to help you to offer the kinds of activities you want for your residents?

Cindy Hale: Actually, it has taken a lot of networking with various business associates, friends, both in town and in the county. I have a full-time job so I use a lot of those contacts; they actually give me access to other contacts that will help us. We are going to be partnering with the Converse County Coalition against Violence because it awards grants that are getting them into prevention and working with children to prevent violence, the younger the child the better.

This year, Wyoming's legislature has had to address the issue of violence in schools and bullying. So that is a wide open door for us to be able to partner with the school, the coalition, and the local boys and girls club to host activities at our center surrounding those issues.

Michele Higgs: Great. Bob Quillin I've got a question for you.

Bob Quillin: Okay.

Michele Higgs: What kinds of tips, and I know you are with Angelina College and you work with Pinewood, but what kinds of tips would you offer to centers in small communities that are seeking resources for their residents? How would they approach, say, Angelina College?

Bob Quillin: Okay. Everything I have heard so far reflects that all of us are in the same boat in developing these coalitions. I was thinking, if I were a Neighborhood Networks center, community colleges offer a wealth of services. I'd recommend contacting someone, probably in the college's community services division. Our adult education program is a part of community services. Through community services and adult basic education, we offer everything in adult basic education literacy, in other words, GED preparation and English as a Second Language.

So, there are a lot of programs in community colleges. Some of them are housed in public schools. Some may be housed in regional education service centers.

I think some of the tips are, first of all don't be bashful, knock on doors, make phone calls, network. Look, I have been doing this for about 30 years. And nothing beats networking.

Wherever I go, even to a social function, I am never bashful about telling people about adult education. Also civic clubs; Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary, University Women's Associations are always looking for someone to make a short presentation, maybe 10 or 15 minutes. Usually they are luncheon meetings or in the evenings. These are all good contacts to tell about your programs. I know with our program, it is about Pinewood Park and the things we do there. We also look at available grants like the Barbara Bush Family Grants, Dollar General Literacy Grants from the Dollar General Stores, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

There are local and regional literacy councils that can provide services for centers. They can provide volunteers because many times if someone is working on a very low level of literacy, they may need one-to-one tutoring. So we incorporated a literacy council that allows us to have a

trained volunteer who knows what they are doing, to help people who need one-to-one instruction.

We also belong to ProLiteracy USA, formerly Paul Wallbach Foundation out of Syracuse, New York. They offer professional development and provide materials through New Readers Press. Of course you have to buy the materials, but these folks are really good to work with.

I could just go on and on. I do not want to leave out Wal-Mart and Sam's Club. One of the best partners we have is United Way, which help provide funding for participants to take the GED test. In our area it costs \$65, and United pays the fee.

We are a United Way agency. We help them with the agency's solicitation drives in the fall and we have learned to network with everybody and anybody. Our default answer to any question is "yes" until it is absolutely proven that we cannot do something. We always take the affirmative and work from there.

Michele Higgs: That is a good way of looking at things; be positive. Going on to our next question, which is for our centers; Cynthia, you had mentioned transportation for activities at Alachua/Sherwood Oaks. I want to ask all of you. Is transportation an issue at your location? And if it is, how have you been able to overcome the barrier to provide services? I know Cynthia you said you had been working with the library, and even though it is not that far away folks do not have transportation to get there.

But I'll ask you and for Cindy and for Virginia. Is there anything special that you have done to help with the transportation issues if there are any in your area? Cynthia I will throw that out to you first.

Cynthia Harris: Okay. Yes there is a definite transportation issue. We did have a CATs (Collier Area Transit) bus that ran from Alachua to Gainesville but the company lost its funding and is no longer available. Most of my residents do not have vehicles; if you come to this apartment complex you can find a parking space anytime you want.

What I have done with my college kids is have them network and help each other get to school because some of them do not have vehicles and they rely on other people to get them to school.

This way they have a little car pool that at least gets them to school. But that is about the only thing I have been able to come up with to solve some of the transportation issues.

Michele Higgs: Yes. Yes. Well that sounds like a winner because you want them to get to school.

Cynthia Harris: Yes.

Michele Higgs: Cindy, how about you? What is going out there in Glenrock?

Cindy Hale: Well besides a lot of carpooling among tenants, the local senior center has the rural transportation grant for our area. The center is required to provide transportation to anyone who needs it. There is a charge for anyone who is not a senior or who is not disabled, but they have regular rates to take them into town to Casper and even to Douglas so they can go to doctor's appointments or go shopping.

If we have an event like the financial literacy workshop with Converse County Coalition against Violence, transportation is provided and childcare is also provided.

Michele Higgs: Wow. Now that is pretty good. You get folks to take care of transportation and the children and provide a program. Virginia same question for you. Do you have any issues with transportation in your area?

Virginia Shamlian: Transportation is the number one issue in the county. Our winters are harsh. It is a mountainous terrain. We have limited public transportation. We have one bus that makes its way into New York City. We have a senior shuttle that makes its rounds -- there is not too much up here in terms of retail -- our local Wal-Mart, the hospital and the county seat so we have got a lot of services in the county. Our disabled people cannot use the senior shuttle.

There is a transit bus that goes around and makes the same couple of loops in the county. There are no trains. And carpooling is tough. Even if you have a car up here, people do not like to go too far because if you have a car it is something that you want to keep local. Our parking lot is not filled with four-wheel drive SUVs, and it is tough in the winter.

The most difficult thing we have had to deal with, and I am still trying to figure out a way to get around it, is to pick up prescriptions. I do not know if we can develop a program so that people can get their prescriptions when they get out of the hospital.

But being a community, the people who do have cars run errands for others and somehow it gets done. But in terms of the learning center, that might be an area where we can expand.

In the best of weather you can walk to the college. You can walk to the Social Security Office. You can walk to the bank. But in bad weather, and just recently, we have had torrential rains every day, it is tough.

That is where getting things done online is becoming more and more important. And we are getting greater participation in computer use, whether for banking or to get answers to their

questions about services. And most recently we have been using computers to apply online for food stamps and to fill out applications online as well. So I see a greater use of our computers for those purposes.

Michele Higgs: Thank you. Now I am going to go back to Bob. You covered a number of the questions that I had with regard to partnerships and the kinds of organizations that would most likely offer resources in your community.

And you spoke about the Rotary clubs, the civic organizations, the community college, and Wal-Mart.

What challenges, in your community, were addressed in your partnership with Pinewood Park? Was it strictly the literacy issue?

Bob Quillin: Well, yes. Pinewood Park helped with literacy questions and some transportation issues. While we have public transportation in our community, it is not always there when you need it nor is it always convenient.

One of the things we try to do is make the classes that we offer convenient. That was our whole reason for approaching Pinewood Park. We had a lot of services around the community college here in the southern part of Lufkin, but we offered nothing in North Lufkin.

So, our partnership with Pinewood Park has been wonderful because it has a facility with computers, and that brings us back to the need for basic literacy. Literacy is not just an issue of reading and writing and communicating, it is also an issue of computer literacy. For instance, how do you apply the academics that you learn? How do you use a computer? How do you e-mail? What is the proper etiquette? What about security issues that you face on a computer?

When we put our teachers into Pinewood, we addressed a number of issues. One is that we provided instruction that is right in Pinewood Park for the residents there; even those outside of the Pinewood Park facility are able to come for instruction. So that need has been addressed with the technologies and with our teacher there.

If someone is coming from outside, transportation can be an issue. But, it can be accomplished.

A number of years back, we formed an agency coalition that meets once a month. It is made up of service providers. We shared our needs in a specific locality and that has been a big help for us.

Michele Higgs: Terrific. Thank you so much, Bob. Now I am going to go back to our center folks and ask about the type of organizations that have been most receptive to your efforts to acquire services for your center.

We just heard Bob talk about some of the civic organizations and universities that step up. You have spoken about the police departments and so on. Are there other groups you might suggest? This would be for anybody. Just speak up if there is something that jumps to your mind.

Cindy Hale: This is Cindy in Wyoming.

Michele Higgs: Okay, Cindy.

Cindy Hale: Actually we have had a lot of interaction with local churches.

Glenrock is just a little town of about 2,200 people but there are outlying ranchers, so we have several churches. There are a few who are more than happy to come and conduct activities, especially with the children.

Also, like I said before, the Boys and Girls Club, the Converse County Coalition against Violence and the churches have been a good networking source because everybody knows someone else who can get you what you need.

Michele Higgs: Well that is a good way to do the networking. Cynthia is there anything to add on your end?

Cynthia Harris: No, that is what I was also going to mention, the churches. We do have a Santa Fe Association, which encompasses all of the churches in the county. So when I go to them for something, it is not asked of one church, it is for all the churches.

This year the association is providing all the school supplies for the children that are registered in the homework club, kindergarten through 12th grade. That's about 25 children that will have all of their school supplies. They did this last year also; it was the first time ever that some of my children got all of their school supplies.

So yes, the churches are good organizations. A group that unifies all the churches makes it even easier because then you do not have to go to different churches.

Michele Higgs: Oh I see. So you can centralize your efforts.

Cynthia Harris: Yes. I can put out the appeal and it is usually answered by more than one church.

Michelle Higgs: Excellent. Ladies and gents, what I am going to do right now is ask the operator if we have anybody on the line for questions. Do we have anyone who has dialed in with a question?

Operator: If anyone has a question, please signal by pressing star 1 on your touchtone telephone. If you are on a speakerphone, please make sure your mute function is turned off to allow your signal to reach our equipment. Again for our phone audience, if you have a question, please press star 1 now.

We have our first question from Angelica Manabal.

Angelica Manabal: Hello. Good afternoon everybody. I am here in Louisiana, Monroe, Louisiana to be precise. My biggest hurdle, like the women and the gentleman on your panel today, is I wear all the hats here. My biggest hurdle is getting the community involved.

I conduct my fundraising. I do word of mouth, but I am still not getting the participation that I feel I should be getting. How do I go about doing this?

Michele Higgs: I am going to throw out one idea and then I will ask our speakers. Have you done any kind of activity that has drawn folks' attention to your center like a grand opening or something, a party that makes people know that you are there?

Angelica Manabal: Well, my residents know that I am here, but I am trying to conduct outreach to the surrounding community. I have not done a re-grand opening. I have only been in this position for a little while. So when I came in, I had to get ready for Neighborhood Networks Week which was last week and so, should I do something like that again, have another re-grand opening?

Michele Higgs: Now that you mention that you participated in Neighborhood Networks, was just the kind of thing I was thinking about.

Angelica Manabal: Right.

Michele Higgs: Let me put out to our speakers. Does anyone have suggestions for Angelica?

Cynthia Harris: Does your town have a city function? We have the Christmas parade, the Easter parade, and the Fourth of July fireworks. At those functions, they hand out lists of sponsors. I usually use that list to go approach sponsors to help here because obviously they are interested in participating in the community.

Another thing you might try is attending Chamber of Commerce meetings. Those are also local businesses and usually the ones that are interested in supporting the community.

Angelica Manabal: Okay.

Cynthia Harris: That is where I go.

Virginia Shamlian: This is Virginia. It is going to take time. I have been here, last week it was seven years for me in office. I would say I struggled with getting people to come to *my* events. Then I realized it isn't my party, it is the community's.

Angelica Manabal: Right.

Virginia Shamlian: Once I made the switch, the transition, I let go of that. I understood that it was the community. I did not feel so personally hurt.

Angelica Manabal: Yes. I have experienced that.

Virginia Shamlian: People started taking more interest in their community and people that the residents brought in; their friends and associates. When it started opening up, it really turned the tide.

Angelica Manabal: Okay.

Virginia Shamlian: Yes. That only takes time and I do not know where you are with your mindset right now but it took me a while to realize it wasn't me.

Angelica Manabal: I am glad you mentioned that, Miss Virginia, because I thought I was losing my mind because I take the job home with me every night.

Virginia Shamlian: Yes.

Angelica Manabal: And my feelings do get hurt. I guess I am just a little sensitive in that area. But yes, I take this job home with me every night.

Virginia Shamlian: You take your job home and then you really have to compartmentalize it.

Angelica Manabal: Okay.

Virginia Shamlian: Then you should not take it home with you. It is not a reflection of what you are doing right or wrong. There is no right and wrong as long as you do your best and know it is just going to take time, it really is.

It is a community responsibility; the community at large, the residents, the children, the seniors. I have an intergenerational community here and we do not exclude people.

Angelica Manabal: Right.

Virginia Shamlian: We include. You know, you want to bring your friend or you want to bring your aide.

We have a lot of home health aides and we include them.

Angelica Manabal: Okay.

Virginia Shamlian: And it is amazing how many people know people.

Angelica Manabal: Exactly.

Virginia Shamlian: One thing I wanted to interject and I hope I am not monopolizing all the time, but there are different ways you can build partnerships. You can build them from the organization from the top down to come to your place, or you can build them from the residents out. And when you think of it, organizations are groups of people.

Angelica Manabal: Right.

Virginia Shamlian: And your residents know people, and they go to churches, they go to school. Your community surrounding your center, they are all people. They live and work and they can bring in other people. So when you work from the bottom up, I just think that it shifts the responsibility off of you and it makes our job so much easier.

Angelica Manabal: Yes.

Virginia Shamlian: I say everybody who is associated with the Lifelong Learning Center at Brookside Terrace is an advocate, is an ambassador.

Angelica Manabal: Right.

Michele Higgs: That is a good way of looking at it. I am going to ask that we move on to see if we have another question unless you want to make another point. Virginia or Angelica?

Angelica Manabal: Thank you, ladies.

Michele Higgs: Erica do we have anyone else on the line?

Operator: Not at this time but again for our phone audience, please press star 1 now if you have a question. And we will pause for a moment. And just one final reminder, please press star 1 on your touchtone phone at this time if you have a question.

Cynthia Harris: I have one other suggestion. This is Cynthia. I am sorry I keep forgetting to introduce myself.

Michele Higgs: Okay sure.

Cynthia Harris: But in my area, it was started by an accounting firm. It is called SNAP, which is a Strategic Non-Profit Alliance Partnership. Every two months they have a meeting and bring in speakers to discuss issues that non-profits face like participation, community involvement, tax status; just a wide variety of different topics.

So, I do not know if anybody else has that resource available to them, but because this accounting firm was getting so many questions from non-profits, the owner decided to start this. It is in Tallahassee, Gainesville, and Orlando.

Michele Higgs: I hope folks are making note of that. It would be interesting to find out if it were a national organization by now. You said it is Strategic Non-Profit Alliance Partnership?

Cynthia Harris: Yes. SNAP for short.

Michele Higgs: It sounds like we could have gone a bit further with the response from Virginia, my apologies. However, I think that one of the points you were making was really good in that you can build partnerships from your resident base as well as from the folks in corporations and Chambers of Commerce because people reach out, people reach up, and we can always find a connection one way or another.

Let me check with Erica to see if we have got anybody on the line.

Operator: We do have a couple more questions. The next one comes from Romaine Chricton.

Romaine Chricton: Yes. Hi. This is a little bit changing of the topic. But I just did my first logic model report for HUD on the first report where we had our Neighborhood Networks centers up and running. One of the things I am running into is getting the information needed for the logic model.

For example, I'm trying to find the grades of the children who participate. Fifty-six individual unduplicated children participated in study buddies, but only 12 parents provided the grades to track the knowledge or the achievements of the children, to determine whether their participation resulted in increases in their grades or whatever.

I am especially concerned with the elderly and disabled or anybody looking for health insurance online or health services online and how to document that.

Since we are just starting our center now, if anybody has any ideas about how to gather this information for the HUD logic models, I would greatly appreciate hearing about this. Thank you.
That is all I wanted.

Michele Higgs: Where are you located and what is your center?

Romaine Chricton: We are located in Ravenna, Ohio, which is Portage County.

Michele Higgs: What is that near?

Romaine Chricton: It is about 35 minutes outside of Cleveland, 45 minutes outside of Akron and about an hour from Youngstown.

Michele Higgs: Oh okay. I am just trying to get a sense of where you are.

Romaine Chricton: Yes. It is in the northeastern part of the state.

Michele Higgs: One of the things that I was going to suggest to you if is if you are aware of the Neighborhood Network Web site, you'll find the link for the online message board on the right hand side of the Web site. It is under a green banner. If you were to click onto that and put that question there it might offer an opportunity for other sites to address your query.

Romaine Chricton: Oh okay. I will do that.

Cynthia Harris: Romaine, this is Cynthia. If you want to track the children's report cards, you are going to have to get the children to bring them to you. For instance, with our afterschool homework program, we have an afterschool homework store that opens about every three months and is run

by the children. They receive points for the homework store if they bring me a copy of their report card.

Romaine Chricton: Okay good.

Cynthia Harris: If you give the children some kind of incentive to bring it to you, they will.

Romaine Chricton: How about the elderly, any tips for them on that health information that I have to report to HUD?

Cynthia Harris: No. I still cannot pry them out of the apartments.

Romaine Chricton: Oh okay. I appreciate it and I will add it to the message board. I am sure people will have been where I am so somebody will let me have some ideas.

Virginia Shamlian: Can I interject here? This is Virginia.

Michele Higgs: By all means.

Virginia Shamlian: Okay. That is also going to take a matter of time and trust because it is private information. And I think particularly with our HIPAA laws; HIPAA may not be as well understood. You can give information it is just that we cannot.

Romaine Chricton: I know.

Virginia Shamlian: I could not share information with somebody else. If you clarify what those HIPAA laws are for the elderly that might help. That it is difficult because certainly they are able to provide information. And if you want to keep it anonymous, maybe there is a way that they can convey the information so that their name isn't attached to it.

Romaine Chricton: Like maybe a survey. Maybe every three months conduct a survey and then I will have enough to report on a semi-annual basis.

Virginia Shamlian: But, that privacy issue is huge.

Romaine Chricton: It is. I have that in reporting other programs too. Yes. Yes.

Virginia Shamlian: Okay.

Romaine Chricton: I appreciate it. Thank you.

Michele Higgs: All right. Thanks so much for your question. Now, you said we had another call on the line?

Operator: We do from Leisa Hagan.

Michele Higgs: All right, Leisa.

Leisa Hagan: Yes. Hello everyone. That's a great topic today. I am from Greenville, North Carolina, a very small rural area. My Neighborhood Networks center here is actually in a cultural recreation building. I just wanted to make more of a comment than a question to all of the small centers out there, particularly with regard to participation. I have only been here about a year and a half. At first, I found it very difficult getting the participation, as I am hearing from others today.

What worked for me, and maybe this will help some others, is to conduct your survey and find out the areas of interest your residents really want to participate in. Also, do not give them too much to choose from.

In small areas, you need to keep the thinking small and then focus on those areas. For instance, for us here in my program, the GED and computer lab is widely used and very much wanted and both programs stay full.

I know the gentleman was speaking about technology with computers and one of the other ladies was speaking about transportation and how using the computers really helped the residents who do not have transportation. That also is an issue for us.

So, I offer free classes. I am in touch with the community colleges here and they offer free classes. We host two in the spring, two in the fall. Now we are advancing those classes.

My computer lab stays full all the time now. Part of that is because of online applications. The residents have learned how to use the computer and use the technology. When they cannot get out and get to these places, they come here and use the computer lab.

So I feel very successful that I have brought the residents into the computer lab. It is still an everyday effort and mostly I just want to say "don't give up."

Michele Higgs: Okay.

Leisa Hagan: Just keep plugging at it every day.

Michele Higgs: Excellent. Thanks so much. Let me see if I can put that in a capsule. Basically, give them activities in small bites and give lots of wiggle room

Leisa Hagan: Yes. Yes. And then focus on those particular areas and they will come.

Michele Higgs: Thanks.

Leisa Hagan: We have really done very well here and I am very proud of myself and the residents, too, for coming out and participating. A year ago, I may not have had one or two people come to the computer lab. Now I have it full almost every day, all day long.

Michele Higgs: Okay. Excellent. Thank you so much.

Leisa Hagan: Right. Thank you so much everyone.

Bob Quillin: Leisa this is Bob in Lufkin, Texas. You are so right and you do not want to limit choices to people but sometimes people become overwhelmed if you offer a vast menu to choose from. Once they make choices, you can start opening up to different opportunities.

One thing we face a lot of times is that our residents do not know how to define their goals. And so we spend a lot of time on short-term and long-term goal setting and explaining the reasoning behind that and the steps of problem solving.

But you do need to limit some of the choices because it can be overwhelming.

Michele Higgs: Thanks so much Bob; let me see if we have any other calls on the line.

Operator: We have no further questions in the queue at this time.

Michele Higgs: Okay. In that case, we are coming close to the end so I have one little question for you all. What suggestions would you have for planning growth in centers in similar locations? For the smaller center, for the rural center, are there any suggestions you have for helping them plan to

reach beyond their boundaries and offer more services or go to different areas to make more services available?

I will start that one out with Cindy out there in Wyoming.

Cindy Hale: Actually, joining our local Human Resource Council has been a big boon for us. It put us in contact with a lot of other organizations. I do a lot of networking on the Internet. I belong to a couple of groups. We got to talking and I have had donations of computers and computer parts from Houston, California, and as far away as Scotland and Australia.

Michele Higgs: Wow. Great. This takes me to another question. I am still going to ask everyone this one, but I wanted to figure out how far beyond your boundaries, your immediate community, have you reached to get services for your centers? So, Cindy, you have already gone quite a ways, to Australia. That is terrific.

Virginia, let's go back to the other question. For planning growth, what suggestions might you have for other centers?

Virginia Shamlian: A plan for growth? I never planned for growth. Growth just comes; it mushrooms. I just want to add, don't forget to have fun. There is a tremendous value in every type of product or service with understanding that people like to have fun.

In fact one of our facilitators, our instructor, periodically sends us the Cyndi Lauper song in a card that I think I am going to play. <Girls just want to have fun.>

Yes. There is a huge factor in just having fun and not taking everything so seriously and growth will come.

Michele Higgs: You've got to enjoy what you are doing.

Virginia Shamlan: Yes.

Michele Higgs: And then you can make it happen, right?

Bob Quillin: I will jump in on that one. I really appreciate that answer because when you're offering services like we all are, sometimes you can really get beat up, spiritually drag the ground, and get your feelings hurt.

We have to have fun. Sometimes I will think, well I am not doing any good and I really get down on myself. And then the next day things will work out fine.

I just have to remember that we are all in it together and many times it is something we all share. I think because we are service providers for people and we really do care that maybe we are more sensitive.

We have to realize we've got to have fun and we've got to turn it loose sometimes because we are in it for the long haul. We cannot burn out.

Michele Higgs: It looks like we are right at the end of this call and I think it has been an excellent call.

I want to thank all of our speakers; Cynthia Harris, Virginia Shamlan, Bob Quillin and Cindy Hale. This has been a very lively and useful call for our participants. Thanks very much.

Did either of you want to make one last point before we close up?

Cindy Hale: This is Cindy in Wyoming. The reason I mentioned the Human Resource Council and our area development organization, they keep us on track with growth trends for our community and I also think it is good for networking because they work with businesses.

It keeps us in touch with the schools, the health department; and even though our center is a small one, it gives us alternatives if we want to have a large function. If we want to bring in more classes, they keep us up on job trends. So they have been a big, big help to us as far as trying to plan for the future.

Michele Higgs: Great. Well I hope folks are making note of that and will be able to use that type of resource in their communities. Thanks a lot.

Okay. We are going to close up. Let me extend our heartiest thanks to those centers that participated in Neighborhood Networks Week and to those that hosted national events. You helped to make this a successful event this year.

Please let us see how you celebrated at your centers. You can share your pictures in our online scrapbook. Send your photographs to www.neighborhoodnetworks@hud.gov.

If you still have a question after the call, you can post it on the Neighborhood Networks online message board or call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line with questions. That number that is 888-312-2743.

And of course you will find more details and current information on the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org.

On September 15th, we will talk about "Non-profit Status. This is One Status Symbol You Will Want." This call will address a hot topic: The attainment and maintenance of non-profit status for your organization.

Thanks again to all of you for joining us today and thanks again to Cynthia Harris, Virginia Shamlian, Bob Quillin and Cindy Hale for sharing tips on achieving success in small communities.

Thanks to all of our callers. Take good care everyone. We will talk to you next time.

Operator: That concludes today's conference. We appreciate your participation.

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