

## **NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS**

**Moderator: Michele Higgs  
December 11, 2007  
3:00 p.m. EST**

Operator: Thank you for standing by and welcome to the Neighborhood Networks conference call.

Today's conference is being recorded.

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

Michele Higgs: Thank you, Karen. Welcome everyone to the Neighborhood Networks December conference call. I'm Michele Higgs and today I'm joined by Laura Thomas, who coordinated the content for this call. We are members of the technical assistance team that works with you to address the needs of the various Neighborhood Networks centers around the country. I thank you for joining us for this month's call entitled, "It Takes a Village; Connecting Centers to Community Resources."

Neighborhood Networks centers give to the community and draw from the community as well. There's a continuous flow of energy and resources between the Neighborhood Networks centers and the communities where they are located. For instance, when volunteers serve at the center, they train young people or adults so that they can improve their grades and skills and perhaps find jobs, whether in full-time or part-time positions. Those people will use skills they gained at a Neighborhood Networks center. They are using what they gained from the community to give back to the community. Do you see the flow?

What we want to do today is help centers understand how they can use marketing strategies to establish a positive image for their center and to help it become a working part of the community. When center staff know and can articulate the center's mission, they help the center advance. They show the community the good things the center is doing. In communities large and small, there are media outlets that can be immensely helpful for displaying the good work of the local Neighborhood Networks center.

It takes no skill in graphic arts for center staff to create flyers and newsletters to advertise the work being done at the center. A couple of hours on the computer and the goodies practically create themselves. Plus, everybody loves a party. Centers can start off with a potluck gathering. Everyone likes to show off their skill with their favorite dish. Let one resident prepare his world-class ribs or ask another to make her award-winning red velvet cake. It could be a grand opening or a holiday celebration or a getting-to-know-you type of gathering. Young folks can show off their skills on the computer or put on a little demonstration for guests. Center staff can invite the local politicians, police officers on the beat, and the small business owners down the street. They can post notices around the property and throughout the neighborhood. The community will be talking about the event for days.

As we speak, technical assistance coordinators are in the process of selecting 50 Neighborhood Networks centers to receive extra attention through onsite technical assistance. One of the optional areas that technical assistance can help centers address is outreach to stakeholders. That includes conducting outreach to residents, management, and members of the community, and involves what you want the community to know about the center and getting that message out.

Today, we hope to arm you with some of the tools that you'll need to get started; tools that will help you maximize community resources for your center.

Laura has arranged for Bonnie Handcock, center coordinator, and Deb Smith, property manager and center director, both from the Butte Legion Oasis Neighborhood Networks Center in Butte, Montana, to speak about the successes that they've had at their center. Also, Linda Daley, communications manager for the Neighborhood Networks Initiative, will lay the groundwork for marketing your Neighborhood Networks centers.

Before we get going, however, let me tell you that we have got three new centers to welcome to the neighborhood. They are the Villa America Learning Center in Texas; Prescott Manor Club House in South Carolina; and the Essex Village Neighborhood Networks in Virginia. Now let me tell you about some of the Neighborhood Networks resources.

First, there's the Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool; also known as the START business plan. START helps you assess the needs of your residents and determine what resources in the community can help you meet those needs. START also helps you examine the capacity of your center and provide the foundation upon which you can organize your activity. It will help you keep track of the partnerships that address your residents' interests and strengthen the center's profile in the community.

Finally, START is the key to developing partnership because it is a true business plan that strengthens the center's profile as a business and makes the center more attractive to potential partners.

If you have questions about START business plans, resident surveys, or general questions about the Neighborhood Networks Initiative, you can call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line at 888-312-2743, or you can also visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org).

Also let me tell you about online networking through the Neighborhood Networks online message board. There you can share information among yourselves; you can post news; you can ask questions. Be aware that this is not yet a real-time resource, but you can post your information and then revisit the board in a day or so to see what kinds of responses you have received. Just go to the Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://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 to learn how things work or select "enter online discussion." Please go visit. Check it out and post a message.

Let me also remind listeners that a transcript of this call will be available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site in about two weeks.

Now, I know you're anxious to hear what we have to share with you today, so I'm going to let our speakers begin. Laura, would you like to introduce our first speaker?

Laura Thomas: Sure Michele. With more than 19 years of marketing and public relations experience, Linda Daley joined the Neighborhood Networks team as the communications manager in May 2005. In this role, Linda oversees the creation of a variety of Neighborhood Networks materials, including the Neighborhood Networks brochure; fact sheet; TARGET, which stands for Technical Assistance Resource Guides and Educational Toolkit; the Neighborhood Networks newsletter, funding opportunities, and success stories.

Linda, you may begin.

Linda Daley: Thanks, Laura. Good afternoon everyone. I've been asked today to share some tactics that you can use to promote your center's programs, services, and successes. Neighborhood Networks centers, and I've talked to quite a few over the past few years, truly are an asset to any community. They deliver the programs and services that enable residents to achieve greater self-

sufficiency and gain access to technology, but if potential partners, community members, and volunteers don't know about your center, they can't support it. They can't help you. I'm sure all of you have come to realize that you need this vital stakeholder support to make the challenge a little easier and provide much-needed resources.

Today I'm going to talk about two ways that you can promote your services, programs, and successes, and highlight the positive impact you're having on your community.

The first method I call the do-it-yourself method. For this method you basically take on the role as the official spokesperson for your center. Most of you are probably already doing this, taking every opportunity possible to promote your center. You promote the programs and services to residents so they'll be informed of what the center has to offer and this not only increases residents' participation but it also provides residents with the information they need to serve as ambassadors for your center. So by enlisting the help of your residents you can better promote your center. Every resident should be seen as a promotional vehicle for your center. If you build a strong relationship with your residents, they'll become your best spokespeople.

Also, as the official spokesperson, you promote the center to existing and potential partners in community businesses, leaders, and members. You can reach them by joining community clubs and organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce. A lot of times, the boards of these organizations are made up of local business leaders. So by getting on those boards or joining those organizations, you can begin setting up your own network of other business leaders so you're more familiar with other business leaders to ask for their support.

As part of the do-it-yourself method, you also have what I call the miscellaneous opportunities. In this category I lumped any opportunity to promote your center. For example, everyday seems to be some sort of a holiday or observance. Some of these holidays are a little strange; such as the Annual Fruitcake Toss Day, which is celebrated January 5, or Squirrel Appreciation Day, which is

the 21<sup>st</sup> of January. But there are other holidays that you can use as an excuse to call a radio station to promote your center or host an event that draws attention to your center.

For example, in January, there is National Speak Up and Succeed Day. February offers Teach Your Daughter to Volunteer Day. Now you can use these observances, as I said, to host an event at your center. Maybe you have a volunteer appreciation award ceremony and you call a radio station and tell them what you're doing. You might get a disc jockey that has a young daughter and he wants to teach her the value of volunteerism and they'll cover your event.

In short, any opportunity that provides you with a reason to brag about your center, take it. If you want some more interesting holidays, there are Web sites on the Internet. If you just do a search of bizarre or silly or unknown holidays you'll pull up some Web sites that might get you thinking about some events you can host or ways you can engage the media.

In addition to talking about your center, the do-it-yourself method also includes distributing information about your center. To help promote your center and the mission of Neighborhood Networks, HUD has created a family of Neighborhood Networks publications like the brochure, fact sheets, and the newsletters. These materials can be packaged into this very attractive general information folder and you can request these folders to keep on hand. All you have to do is call the information center which is 888-312-2743. Also included in these packets are success stories that showcase how centers across the country are changing lives and achieving results. They're nice because they demonstrate that good things are happening at centers. I'd recommend keeping a stash of these packets at your center for residents to read and also to pass out to partners and potential partners or anyone who's interested in the Initiative. It shows that your center is part of a larger nationwide network.

In addition to Neighborhood Networks publications, many of these centers have also created their own publications. I speak with a lot of centers and I know that many of you have your own

newsletters and/or you promote events at your center with flyers or notices. Share all of this information with not only the residents but with partners and potential partners and anyone interested. These publications show the commitment and effort that you've put into your center. They show what is taking place there and these people want to participate.

So those are some of the ways that you can self-promote. That's do-it-yourself.

The other way you can promote is to enlist the help of the media. Contacting the media, engaging them, and asking them to cover a story can be intimidating. I know I've been hung up on by the best of them, but it's important to remember that the media needs you just as much as you need them. They need information and if you can make their job easier and give them that information, they will reward you by dropping your name in stories or mentioning it. There are several benefits to having the media help you. For one, they have a larger reach. They have a bigger audience than you have. It would take you thousands of meetings to reach all the people that one mention on a radio station would reach. The media is great for getting to a lot of people fast. Also, the media has a way of legitimizing your efforts. Not everything in the media is true, but most people believe it when they hear it or read it. If the media includes your name then it just kind of makes people think, "Well, gee. They must be doing something good. I want to align myself with them."

So once you've decided to work with the media, your first step is to gather all the information that you think the media needs and wants. Like I said, your goal is to make their jobs easier. You can do this by putting together a media kit and sending it to media representatives to familiarize them with your center. The media kit might include Neighborhood Networks publications or a fact sheet about your center, or center success stories, or your newsletters. If you have something newsworthy that you're promoting you want to include a press release announcing that event or news item.

While the media will appreciate the background information, the thing they're really going to be searching for the most is that piece of newsworthy information. You want to try to include something newsworthy in your press kit. What is newsworthy? It could be an upcoming event, an awards ceremony, a success story that the media can turn into a nice feature story on a resident. Any kind of positive result that occurred because of your center, you want to play up because, like I said, they might grab onto that and turn it into a feature story.

So once you have all your information and you know what you want to tell the media and you know what's important, the next step is to submit your information to the media. When you're putting together your information you want to ask yourself, "Can they turn this into a news story? Can they turn it into a feature article?" If they can, go ahead and submit it.

The next step is to reach out to the media. You want to identify all the media outlets that you want to contact; include all the newspapers, the radio stations, and television stations. Once you identify the outlets, you want to identify the individuals at those outlets with whom you want to speak. It's important, also, to become familiar with the media outlet. You want to know what type of music a radio station plays. You want to know what sections make up a newspaper. By knowing that, you'll know who to talk to and who to get your information to because it's important to get your information to the right person so it doesn't sit on someone's desk.

Once you've identified your contacts, you want to create a master list and start calling or e-mailing. Many media representatives prefer e-mail to a phone call. I'd recommend sending an e-mail first and then following up with a phone call because it gives you a reason to call and say, "Did you get my e-mail?" But if you're more comfortable with a phone call first, that's fine. No matter what you do, always follow up until you speak with someone. You've got to be a little persistent and know that you've just got to keep trying them.

If you do get someone and they say they can't use your information, don't be afraid to ask them why; what are they looking for; what type of information would they prefer; how do they want it packaged. Let them know that you're interested in helping them get information and how would they want that information. Remember that even if the media doesn't use your information, keep in contact with them. You don't have to call them every week, but every now and then call them and talk about what's going on at the center. There might be activities going on at your center that you don't even think of as extraordinary but the media might say, "Hey, that's a new angle to this certain issue" or "That information will tie into another story I'm writing." So, keeping in contact keeps your name in front of the media. It builds familiarity and it builds a relationship between you and the media so it's easier to call them in the future. Also, the media doesn't like to feel like they're being used, so building a relationship is good because then you're not calling only when you need something.

I'd also like to talk a little bit about success stories. Every week or so, we feature a success story about a center on HUD's Neighborhood Networks Web site. We'd love to hear any successes. If you have a success story, share them with us. It doesn't have to be a huge success. You don't have to turn someone into the next Donald Trump or any of that, just any time you change lives or help residents. That's a success in my eyes. So, drop me an e-mail and I'll follow up with you. My e-mail address is [Linda.s.daley@lmco.com](mailto:Linda.s.daley@lmco.com). Several centers have turned these stories into wonderful assets. Dee Edwards at Dauphin Gate Network Center in Mobile, Alabama, she uses them in all of her grant submittals, just to show that good things are happening at her center. Renee Rosenberg at Plough Towers Computer Learning Center in Memphis submitted her success story that recently ran on the Web site to a community publication to further promote her center. Both of these centers are Model centers and they most likely achieved this status by using all the resources available to them. So if you have a story, submit it; tell me about it; and when we feature it on the Web site, submit it to every media person you know.

So those are two ways to promote your center: The do-it-yourself, talk it up, get out there and just, brag away; and then the other one is enlisting the help of the media.

I hope this was helpful information. I know it was a lot and I was trying to keep it within my allotted time. If you'd like additional support or guidance, please feel free to call me or drop me an e-mail. I'll be happy to help and follow up with you. Also TARGET – the TARGET binder – has a lot of the information in it about working with the media and if you don't have a copy of that, feel free to call the information center to request one.

I think that's about it for me. Sorry for trying to throw a lot at you so quickly.

Michele Higgs: OK, Linda, you're not going to get away that easy. Since you offered up your e-mail address, I'd like for you to repeat it since I'm certain people would like to send success stories to you and perhaps ask another question or so. Would you repeat that for us?

Linda Daley: Sure, absolutely. It's Linda.s.daley@lmco.com.

Michele Higgs: Excellent, excellent! Thank you. I also wanted to thank you from my own heart for the mention of Squirrel Appreciation Day. I'll never face January 21<sup>st</sup> again without some love in my heart for squirrels. I think a party is in order.

Linda Daley: Absolutely, with lots of nuts.

Michele Higgs: That's excellent. You're definitely right in that centers can go online and Google odd holidays and come up with something interesting. It might be interesting to the media or definitely fun for the residents and give them a reason to throw a party.

Linda Daley: Yes, any reason. A lot of radio stations this time of year talk about calling in with your heartwarming story. That gives you an opportunity to promote your center and brag. So many centers are doing amazing things. Tell people about it. Don't keep the good news to yourself.

Michele Higgs: Sounds great. I wanted to thank you and I also want to mention a couple of points that you made. I had a question about who you should direct your query to at a media outlet and you answered it already; that you really do have to do your homework in advance and have a sense of where a story would fit so that you'll be contacting the right person and it just won't sit on someone's desk. The other point was that centers must build relationships with the media. It can't be a one-shot thing where you get someone to cover something and then you're never in touch with that particular person again. It makes it difficult to go back to them later on.

Linda Daley: It does. The media is a pretty sensitive group. They like for you to keep in touch and build a good relationship with them.

Michele Higgs: Sounds good. Well, if you'll hang on with us, what I would like to do is go on and speak with the folks from Legion Oasis. They are stars in that they have a success story already.  
Laura, would you like to introduce our speakers?

Laura Thomas: Sure. Deb Smith is the property manager and center director at Legion Oasis Neighborhood Networks Center. Her work history with Legion Oasis began back in 1982 and lasted until 1997. She returned in 2004 as property manager with a mission to make the curb appeal at Legion Oasis as exciting as the living experience. Deb believes it is her purpose to provide decent, safe, and affordable housing on the 160 multifamily property. Her goal is to continuously raise the bar in hopes of motivating her residents to rise to the occasion.

Bonnie Handcock is the coordinator for the Neighborhood Networks center at Legion Oasis. She has been a part of the Legion Oasis community for seven and a half years. She has served as a

volunteer for the Girl and Cub Scouts, Muscular Dystrophy Association, Special Olympics and the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Bonnie and Deb, you may begin.

Bonnie Handcock: OK, Deb's going to give you a rundown on Legion Oasis and then I'll fill in on how we got the center going and how we've conducted outreach to the community.

Deb Smith: Legion Oasis is actually sponsored by the American Legion. We have approximately 418 residents. We have a very active resident council. The city of Butte has about 35,000 people; yesterday we buried Evel Knievel here in Butte. So we were able to promote the city through prominent names like Evel Knievel and Bob London.

I am the one who delegates and Bonnie is the one that does the work. She has done a wonderful job in promoting the center. She is good at organization, communication, and people skills. She has a positive image and is very much respected. So that has definitely helped to make us a team. I'm the one that speaks and she's the one that does and that's how we keep each other in line.

Bonnie Handcock: Yes, we do.

Deb Smith: So I'm going to let her go ahead because she is actually the one who is in the center dealing with the people on a day-to-day basis. I'm just the one who does the curb appeal and keeps the people in here for her to teach. So, I'll let Bonnie go ahead.

Bonnie Handcock: Thanks, Deb. Both of those things are important. We need the curb appeal and we need the people in the center.

Some of the things that Linda reviewed led us to our success story here. You have to know your media; you have to know who to contact for your newspaper and your radio. In my past experience with the Muscular Dystrophy Association, I learned who the key people were in town. That helped me when Laura made suggestions for center partners. Then I could speak with people at the radio station and the newspaper and enlist their help in promoting the center. Another thing to remember when promoting your center is that when you identify partners, make sure that they are really, really interested in what you're doing. That will give you a good, solid foundation because without a solid foundation, you crumble and none of us want to crumble. We want to be here for years to come providing opportunities for as many people as possible. Your One-stop Career Center, which is your job service; your school district, local law enforcement, media, senior centers; blind and low-vision services, are all great options for partners that can help you network your services.

When we were planning our grand opening, we had partner meetings once a month. It seemed like at every meeting I would have a question about who to talk with, how to find something, or how to line up computers when a previous partnership fell through. After every meeting, we came away with answered questions. Being able to get the answers to questions that previously weren't available was energizing. So, network with your partners. Tell them your problems. Tell them what you don't understand. Somebody there will be able to answer that for you. An additional plus is that they go out and talk about the Neighborhood Networks center and what you're doing and what you're trying to get done. Then, one person tells another person and that person tells 10 more and that's all very helpful with your networking.

When you're setting up your board of directors, it's important to have people from different walks of life; from education, law enforcement, and residents that live in your complex or in your neighborhood. Accountants, lawyers, and members of the media can help you spread the word.

That's how we've built our success here, by reaching out and asking these people to be on our board or to be our partner. We've got a wonderful afterschool tutoring program. We've got 24 children that come in daily in need of assistance. We have computer classes. When I set up the sign-up sheet for computer classes, we had 26 people that wanted to learn beginning computer skills.

Keep in contact with the media. Let them know what's going on. Tomorrow I have an appointment with one of our radio station talk show hosts because we're having a raffle to help raise some money. I'll speak on the radio and tell everybody about the center; about our successes and our progress, and hopefully, get some more raffle tickets sold.

I have one little girl who came into the center for tutoring as she was having trouble with her spelling. We said, "Well, let's see what we can do to help you with your spelling." She had taken her test that Friday; she had missed 14 out of the 15 and the bonus word. So we worked with her and that next Friday when she took her test she spelled 14 out of the 15 correctly plus the bonus word. She was just ecstatic. When she walked in with that smile on her face her radiance went through the whole center. That's the appreciation that we volunteers get for putting in our time; seeing that little girl's success.

We have another little boy who's got several problems. He's dyslexic and he's got Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). He's been having a real struggle at school and he feels that he's different. But he brought in his progress report last week and he showed it to me and he said, "Look what I did, Bonnie. Look what I did." He brought every single one of his grades up one grade point level. One level! Just seeing him realize that he can progress with just a little bit of help from us was so wonderful.

That's what we're all about; helping people do the very best that they can. These are the successes I'll discuss tomorrow on the radio because it's so wonderful when these children come in and sit with a tutor for a few hours and are able to accomplish something different that they

hadn't learned at school. We try to find that little niche for each one of them and it just makes all the difference in their world. They go from being so sad and so down to just so happy, excited and bubbling all over. So you, in turn, are happy and excited. When other people find out how well the kids are doing, then they want their kids to come. It all contributes to a successful center.

Our whole success is based on, as Linda said, contacting the media to talk about the center and knowing who to talk to. It's making sure that people know about you, your partners, your board of directors, and basically that makes the center successful.

Michele Higgs: Thank you so much. You are now nominated Queen of Neighborhood Networks. You are definitely an ambassador for the Initiative in terms of looking at those intangibles that keep people going. Just as much as a smile on a kid's face or learning that they can succeed.

Bonnie Handcock: Yes.

Michele Higgs: That's a very important thing. If we can be a part of that, that's fantastic.

Bonnie Handcock: That's our reward.

Michele Higgs: Laura, did you have any questions for Bonnie or Deb?

Laura Thomas: I don't have any questions right now. I think you both did a fabulous job as well as Linda. Bonnie and Deb definitely know how to utilize their media outlets and partners in Butte, Montana and I'm glad that you were able to share that information with everyone today.

Michele Higgs: Karen, do we have anyone on the line with questions for Linda, Deb or Bonnie?

Operator: We'll take our first question from Karen Jones from Salem, Massachusetts.

Female: Hi, Karen.

Karen Jones: Hi, thanks for speaking today. Are your centers nonprofit?

Michele Higgs: Are we talking to Bonnie and Deb?

Karen Jones: Yes.

Laura Thomas: They are nonprofit.

Karen Jones: That's our problem here. We're not nonprofit so there are not a lot of grants, etcetera that are available to us.

Michele Higgs: Oh, I see. Yes, you need to get your 501(c3) status.

Karen Jones: Right.

Deb Smith: Even though we are nonprofit, most of what has happened so far has been through a grant from the city of Butte stepping forward and giving. I would like to put a plug in here for Laura. She is a wonderful person who sparked our fire. She was truly our beginning.

Laura Thomas: Thank you.

Bonnie Handcock: She was. She gave us our beginning ideas and that's what we started with. So I agree with Deb totally. Kudos to Laura.

Michele Higgs: Applause. Thank you much.

Operator: Thank you. We'll now take a question from Mary Frances Byrd from Houston, Texas.

Michele Higgs: Hi, Mary Frances.

Mary Frances Byrd: Well, I hear the centers need volunteers, or more volunteers, and advice on getting volunteers to help their centers move forward.

Michele Higgs: Yes.

Mary Frances Byrd: How do you get your volunteers?

Bonnie Handcock: Basically we just keep beating the bushes and we keep calling and eventually they get tired of us calling, I think. No, actually we've got a really good group of people here. We've had people come in and tell us that if we need help in the center, they're more than happy to help us. So we keep a list of those people. For instance, yesterday we needed some extra help so we called a few of them and they came in and helped us. Additionally they passed the word to other people. "

So it's word of mouth and, again, it's talking to your people and telling them, "All I need you to do is just listen to little Sally read a story or whatever." It only takes 15 or 20 minutes to do that. It doesn't take a lot of time and if you explain to them that it's not a big time commitment and it may not be everyday that helps, too. Once they volunteer, they spread the word of how much they enjoyed it and that helps build your volunteer list.

Mary Frances Byrd: You're talking about concentrating on the residents. Who do you call?

Bonnie Handcock: What we did is we got involved with AmeriCorps. It's through our college here.

Mary Frances Byrd: Yes.

Bonnie Handcock: What they do is they actually get credit and monetary compensation via the school.

We also have, which is what Linda Daley discussed, organizations that need you to ask them for help so that they can maintain their organization.

Mary Frances Byrd: Right.

Bonnie Handcock: Like your Senior Corps, for people 55 years and older who come in and teach our kids how to knit. It helps us, too, because they've enlisted some of our people to volunteer in other places throughout the city. So it gets our people busy in addition to having volunteers coming here and helping us.

Our tutors are through AmeriCorps. We also have people that live here who help with the reading as well as our Retired Seniors Volunteers Program and the Belmont Center. They are also for people 55 years and older.

So it's just a matter of finding out what your city has to offer or if there are organizations that can help you on a volunteer basis. I guess that's, again, going back to our partners, which is how we found out a lot of this information. Then you can develop your volunteer list of those people as well as your people that live here in the neighborhood or on the property.

Mary Frances Byrd: Yes. Well, as they always say, "Go to the Web and you can find out everything" or something.

Michele Higgs: May I throw in something here, ladies?

I've had a conversation this week about the need for volunteers and how to find them. Two things came to mind while Bonnie was speaking when she mentioned the Senior Corps. While it may be called Senior Corps where she is, in other parts of the country there's SCORE – S-C-O-R-E – the Service Corps of Retired Executives. SCORE's made up of folks who've retired and are interested in doing volunteer work in a variety of different areas. So they're bringing a different level of skill to what they're doing.

In the District of Columbia there's a mandate for students that before they graduate they have to work a certain number of hours in community service. I believe that same mandate exists in many communities around the country. So I'm just thinking of these two programs that just popped into my mind, SCORE and the high schools.

Bonnie Handcock: Check with your local Chamber of Commerce, too. They may know organizations that can help you find volunteers, for instance at your community college or your high school.

Mary Frances Byrd: OK. Well, thank you.

Michele Higgs: OK, great. Well, I have another question for Linda.

Linda, are you still with us?

Linda Daley: Yes, I am.

Michele Higgs: I looked at the Technical Assistance Resource Guide and Educational Toolkit (TARGET).

It is a great guide for putting together the kind of media kit that you want. It goes back to a number of the things that you were talking about. But is there a particular form folks need to use? Are they going to be dismissed if their press release doesn't look like everybody's press release or if their letter or their phone call doesn't come in a certain way?

Linda Daley: Well, in the TARGET binder we do include samples of press releases; of how to set one up, how to format it. They won't be dismissed, per se, because their release doesn't look the same, but following a format will certainly make the media realize that they took some time to get to know the media; how the media prefers to see things. So, it's good to follow a format when possible. If you don't, you won't be tossed out, but we do provide the format that a press release typically takes and I would highly recommend following that format.

Michele Higgs: Great, great. So that just refers everyone to their TARGET book.

Michele Higgs: Laura, did you have a question?

Laura Thomas: Well, I did want to hear from to Bonnie and Deb. I was wondering if you could share how you used the media in the past. I know you touched on it a little bit but if you could just pinpoint examples of how you used the media and what stories or what information you shared with them.

Bonnie Handcock: First of all, we had our grand opening and that was pretty fast and intense. What we did was put a flyer in our Chamber of Commerce newsletter that was donated by the Chamber of Commerce. That went out to every business. I think about 600 went out in the Chamber of Commerce newsletter, sparking donations of supplies and equipment. We can't wait for you to come back again to see the donations, Laura. We've had to move into another room. So we've definitely expanded. We went on local TV. Our TV station is very good. We had public service

announcements on the radio. Faith Ballenger, our HUD Coordinator, made sure that on the state and national level, we were in the paper, the radio, flyers, TV, and posters.

Michele Higgs: Oh, wow. It sounds like you were busy out there.

Deb Smith: Bonnie was busy.

Laura Thomas: Well, that's great. Thank you for sharing that with everyone.

Michele Higgs: OK. I have another question for Linda. Linda, you know that no two Neighborhood Networks center are alike. They're all different. You're going to have some that are in smaller towns and others that are in the big communities that are served by major newspapers.

Now this may be a subjective question but would you suggest that the centers in the largest cities approach the major newspapers or the local papers? For instance, should centers in large cities go to the community paper?

Linda Daley: I would. It doesn't hurt, and if you're e-mailing your press releases it doesn't cost anything to send it. You never know what will appeal to an editor or a reporter that day. They might need a short story. It might fit into a story. It might be part of a bigger story. It doesn't hurt to send it and follow up. You just don't know what the media's going to do on any given day. Some of the best stories have been bumped for bigger stories and some of the most obscure stories seem to stay in the front pages for weeks because there's nothing else to report on. So, go ahead and send it to the Washington Post and everyone else because it doesn't hurt; it doesn't cost you anything. I certainly wouldn't inundate them and keep sending them all kinds of stuff but if you have something newsworthy, go ahead. It doesn't hurt.

Michele Higgs: OK. So that's good. I wanted to get that out there for folks. Don't let things get in the way and don't feel like you're too small. Just go for it.

Linda Daley: Absolutely.

Michele Higgs: Linda, I hate to keep putting you on the hot seat here. But this is something that I get a lot of questions about and that is, if you are a neophyte at creating newsletters, would you know or be able to suggest any programs for putting together brochures? I mean off-hand I think of Publisher.

Linda Daley: Right.

Michele Higgs: But anything else that centers might use?

Linda Daley: Well, you know, I haven't really checked out Word in a bazillion years because I'm spoiled by having a designer who's very talented. I wish I could say I design the publications.

Michele Higgs: OK, got you.

Linda Daley: But I do believe like Word has some templates of newsletters and templates that only need to be populated with your content. My biggest piece of advice is while it's important to be attractive, because people will pick up something that's attractive over something that's not, I think it's also equally critical to run spell check and proofread, because one error will compromise your credibility. So, take the time to proofread your story. Enlist the help of a couple people. Ask them to read your stuff. Make sure it sounds good, it sounds professional, and there are no glaring errors that will make people question your know-how. So, use the templates. Know you don't have to be a designer. Use spell check.

Michele Higgs: OK. OK.

Bonnie Handcock: May I interject something there?

Michele Higgs: Go right ahead.

Bonnie Handcock: I totally agree with what Linda said. We use our Print Shop software for creating most of our publications. Definitely, use your spell check but Print Shop can give you some of the templates, too. Deb is my proofreader; so I create it, then she proofreads it, I change it, then she proofreads it, and we get it all put together. But Print Shop has helped us some, too, as well as Word.

Laura Thomas: I also wanted to add something regarding Legion Oasis and marketing and being able to market in Butte, Montana. While visiting out there, I discovered that the media will support community efforts by allowing them to make posters. I'll ask Deb and Bonnie to elaborate on this, but one thing I learned from being out there was that each community organization, if they have an event, can go to their local radio station, let them know what they're doing and the station will sponsor the creation of about 50 posters for the organization to distribute throughout the community to advertise their event. I know that Legion Oasis took advantage of several of these marketing opportunities. Could you elaborate on that, Bonnie and Deb?

Bonnie Handcock: What they've done here is our local radio stations teamed up with some of our local print shops, so through one radio station you can go to this print shop and they'll produce 50 free posters for you and then the other printer will collaborate with the other radio station. You just give them the who, what, when, where and why of the event and anything special they need to know, and they'll print up the posters for you. The radio station will do a public service announcement that they will run periodically throughout the day depending on the nature of the

function. That has helped a lot because we have three printers out here, so that gives us 150 free posters, where in other towns you may have to buy your posters.

But check to find out if you've got an organization that would help you pay for your posters, if you have to pay for them. Some places probably aren't as lucky as we are and don't have a setup like this, but see if you can get somebody to help pay for your posters because people see them going into the grocery stores, the drug stores, and the convenient stores, which helps a lot as far as getting out the word. Thanks for bringing that up, Laura. That was something I forgot to mention earlier.

Laura Thomas: OK.

Michele Higgs: All right. Thanks, Laura. Thanks, Bonnie. Thanks, Deb.

Well, according to the clock on the wall, I think the old radio announcer used to say, it looks like we're coming to the end of our conference call for today. I want to thank Deb and Bonnie and Linda for sharing with us, and Laura, thank you for pulling this together.

Let me remind you about the resources available to you through the Neighborhood Networks Initiative. Because of limitations in time we don't always get to hear all of your questions. So if you have a question and you didn't get to air it during the call, you still have an outlet. You can go to the Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org) and post your question on the Neighborhood Networks online message board. The staff or your peers will see to it that your question gets attention.

You will also find resources plus current information on the Neighborhood Networks Web site. Again, that's at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org). Of course you can always call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line with questions at 888-312-2743.

Now, upcoming calls will continue to focus on helping you build the capacity of your center. We will start the New Year on January 8<sup>th</sup> with our call "Workforce Development: Programs that Work." For that call we've invited two centers that have successful workforce development programs and they'll tell you how it's done. We'll also have someone from the local workforce development organization to offer their comments as well.

The call on February 12<sup>th</sup> will be entitled, "Who's in Your Community, Serving All Your Residents," which focuses on serving the diverse populations that are found at Neighborhood Networks centers. March's call is about creatively seeking financial resources for your center. So be sure to mark your calendars and save the hour. That's 3:00 p.m. Eastern time.

Thanks again to all of you callers for joining us today. Thank you again to Linda, Deb, Bonnie and Laura. Have a wonderful holiday and we'll talk to you next time.

Operator: That does conclude our conference for today. Thank you for your participation and have a wonderful day.

END