

## **NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS**

**Moderator: Michele Higgs  
December 9, 2008  
3 p.m. EST**

Operator: Thank you for standing by and welcome to the Neighborhood Networks Monthly Conference Call. Today's call is being recorded.

At this time, I'd like to turn the call over to Ms. Michele Higgs. Please go ahead, ma'am.

Michele Higgs: Thanks, James. Welcome to the Neighborhood Networks December Conference Call. My question is does anybody know what happened from January until November? All of a sudden, we're in December. Today's call is Harness the Power of Partnerships.

I'm Michele Higgs and I'm joined today by Charima Young and Melissa Trumpower who are experts in the development, maintenance and tracking of the partnerships that are so important to the growth of Neighborhood Networks centers.

Ms. Young is the Neighborhood Networks partnership and consortium development manager.

Ms. Trumpower is vice president for communications and public relations with Gifts in Kind International, one of our valued partners.

With more than 17 years in the field of non-profit communication, Melissa works to articulate Gifts in Kind International's key messaging including its mission, vision, program, and value to the

organization's many stakeholders. She works closely with the leadership team to identify opportunities to illustrate the impact of Gifts in Kind programs on people worldwide.

We'd hoped to have a center director join us as well, one who's been successful in creating partnerships for her center, but unfortunately she had an emergency and couldn't join us today. And with that said, I'd like for you to consider joining in close to the question-and-answer period by discussing the successful partnerships that you've created, and sharing ideas on how you've developed them.

But before we go there, let me welcome our newest center with the reminder of the resources that they get as members of the Neighborhood Networks Initiative. This one is a stand-out. It's the Lincoln Manor Neighborhood Networks Center in Indiana. Welcome to the Neighborhood. Let me tell you about the various resources that are available to help you guide your center to success.

First, there's the toll-free information line, (888) 312-2743, where you can call in and learn all about Neighborhood Networks. Then, there's the strategic tracking and reporting tool known as START.

START is an online resource that helps you consider the needs of your residents, determine what resources in your community can address those needs, and helps you to keep track of the partnerships that can attend to them. It is a key to developing partnerships because when the data is compiled in START, it becomes an organized plan that strengthens a center's profile as a business and makes the center more attractive to potential partners, as well as donors. START also provides institutional memory for your organization and creates the foundation upon which you can organize your activities. You can get access to START by visiting the Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.neighborhoodnetworks.org](http://www.neighborhoodnetworks.org). Also at the Web site, you will find out what's current, learn about funding opportunities, learn about special events, and connect with your peers. Let me also remind listeners that a transcript of this call will be made available on the

Neighborhood Networks Web site in about two weeks. You can find it at the bottom of the page in the Conference Call archive on the home page of the Web site.

Remember, if you have questions about START, resident surveys, success stories, special event ideas, or general questions about the Neighborhood Networks Initiative, you can call the toll-free Neighborhood Network's Information line at (888) 312-2743. Also try online networking through the Neighborhood Networks online message board. You can share information with other centers, post news, or ask questions.

Be aware that this is not a real-time resource, but you can post your information, and then revisit the board in the day or so to see the responses. 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.

Today's call will familiarize you with the process of developing and maintaining partnerships with stakeholders in your community. Partnerships, as you know, are critical to the growth and development of programs and resources for your Neighborhood Networks centers. I would like to open up our comments with an overview from Charima Young, who has been instrumental with developing partnerships for centers in the Neighborhood Networks community and in developing consortia around the country.

Charima, can you get us started?

Charima Young: Sure, Michele, and thank you very much for that introduction. Good afternoon, everyone. We've all heard the phrase that two is better than one, but how often do we find ourselves too busy to take advantage of what others have to offer or what we can offer other people and organizations? Taking the time to build solid partnerships is essential to the

sustainability of any organization. These five easy steps will assist you in your journey to develop successful partnerships.

Step one is knowing the center's or consortium's needs. Understanding the needs of your organization and the people that you serve is the first step. Conducting a needs assessment of your community will guide your search for companies and organizations that can meet the needs of your residents.

Step number two is finding potential partners using asset-mapping. What is asset-mapping? It is identifying organizations in the community's immediate area that fulfill the center's or consortium's needs. It is also important to thoroughly research companies and organizations, so that you can identify their giving focus, whether the dollar amount they have set aside for the fiscal year has increased or decreased, and their expectations of the organizations to which they donate monies. Once you've identified companies and organizations you would like to target, develop your marketing materials, such as business cards, brochures and newsletters, event and program flyers, calendar of events, and an annual report.

These materials should highlight your organization's mission, success stories and accomplishments; the people that you serve, and how that potential partner can assist your effort. The methods for approaching potential partners can include mail, e-mail, and phone calls for in-person meetings. But ultimately, your goal should be to have an in-person meeting to present your organization and propose your ideas on how the potential partner can work with you. Always remember that consistency, positivity, and professionalism will yield greater success for potential partners.

Step number three is holding a partnership meeting and followup. During your meeting, you should provide a background of the center or consortium, explain the center's or consortium's needs, identify what the center or consortium can offer, promote the benefits of the partnership,

establish your organization's credibility, and emphasize accomplishments and successes. These efforts will yield a better partnership.

Step number four is formalizing the partnership. After you and the potential partner decide on the terms of the partnership, you should document these terms in writing. We often use a memorandum of understanding or a letter of agreement. The memorandum of understanding, which is also called an MOU, includes the backgrounds of the center or consortium and the partner, the purpose of the partnership, the roles and responsibilities of the center or consortium and the partner, the period of performance, tracking, evaluation, and the signature section. The letter of agreement is less formal, highlights the potential partner and what they would like to outline in their attempt to work with the organization, the roles and responsibility of each party, and the duration of the agreement.

Step number five is maintaining the partnership. Partnerships are only as successful as the effort put into maintaining them. Maintenance efforts include consistent communication via e-mail or phone, tracking and evaluation of services and donations received, reviewing the goals, objectives, and shared marketing that benefit both the organization and the partner.

Let's talk a little bit about the meat of partnerships today. In today's economy, as many of you know, it is important that organizations seeking assistance through partnerships are very strategic. Approaching potential partners with the win-win idea helps to increase your chances for solidifying valuable partnership. Well, you may ask, "How do I do that?" Here are some tips and ideas for increasing partnerships during these tough economic times.

When you're approaching potential partners, give them an option to donate their time, money, or possibly both. The knowledge and time of volunteers can be invaluable for center staff and consortium members. An example is having IT volunteers from a major corporation, such as IBM, assist the center or consortium with technology projects. This not only helps build the

program, but also establishes your relationship with that company. It can also help to eliminate additional expenses outside the system.

Second, you can offer a service. Rather than asking for monetary donations, you can ask for donations or volunteers to assist you in a service or in fundraising projects for which proceeds go to your organization, such as car washes and auctions. An example is to partner with Wal-Mart asking them to use their old cleaning supplies or employee volunteers for a car wash event where all proceeds benefit your organization.

A third idea is collaborating with other groups to attract partners. There's power in numbers. Companies see value in organizations that collaborate and share resources. It also helps when you collaborate with organizations that compliment your weaknesses and strength. Look for donors and driving industries. That's very important in today's economy. It's important to be abreast of the market and current trends because they directly affect the companies' giving focus. Some recession-proof industries include healthcare, education, and government.

Another important idea for setting yourself apart, since charitable giving has tightened, is to show the need and results of your programming and your marketing. When creating your marketing material, ask yourself, "Does the content convey that my organization is essential for this community to drive?" Having data on your accomplishments and success stories helps. It is important for companies, organizations, and political officials to become aware of your organization and its efforts. Becoming a recognized name in your community will also assist you with developing partners that can provide you with necessary resources.

And finally, become aware of the win-win for companies and organizations. Oftentimes, companies, organizations, and individuals benefit from one of the following: tax write offs, human capital needed to fulfill a grant requirement and/or the use of your facility. Learn how to maximize on these benefits through your marketing efforts. If your center has its 501 (c) (3), learn about the

new IRS tax laws regarding giving to charities, which may also help in your marketing efforts, at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). Additional Web sites to increase awareness of charitable giving include [www.philanthropy.com](http://www.philanthropy.com) and [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org).

Now, Melissa Trumpower will give you some valuable information on what companies are currently looking for in organizations during these economic times and the best methods for setting yourself apart. Thank you.

Michele Higgs: Melissa, are you ready?

Melissa Trumpower: I am. Thanks, Charima. Hi, everyone. Thanks for having me present today. As Michele said earlier, I'm with Gifts in Kind International. We are a national charity and our focus is product-donations. We're focused on the in-kind aspect of corporate-giving. We work with thousands of corporations to distribute product donations to nonprofit organizations that qualify. I'll talk a little bit more about that at the end when I give you an example of one of our programs in which I think you'd be interested in hearing.

It's hard to do a presentation like this without mentioning today's economic climate. I do think, however, that it's a great time for nonprofits to re-assess how they're doing business, to really focus on what they do best, and to find how to be more efficient at what they're doing. When we get through these tough times, I think you'll be in a better situation to grow and to expand.

In terms of the focus on donors, trying to figure out what they're looking for, and how to approach them, I'm going to go through a few trends. Some of these trends touch on what Charima has already said, but I'll try to give some examples as well. We have about 1.5 million nonprofits in the United States today. If you can work with like-minded nonprofit to approach donors and show that you're working together, donors really like to know that you're willing to work with other nonprofits. If you are searching for a non-profit to work with, make sure that there are synergies, that

you compliment one another and then it makes sense, because if it doesn't make sense, that defeats the purpose of approaching the donor. It also shows that you're innovative as well and, if they're cutting back for any reason, it allows them to support nonprofits. So it makes them feel better.

Be able to show your past programs, how you've run them, and how efficient you've been. Be able to demonstrate your impact, not just that you've distributed something to the community, but how it's actually impacted a life, how you've actually changed somebody's life. So, think about the key studies, the success stories, and the sort of data that you can provide to talk about and demonstrate your impact in your community. That's really important. Evaluation and measurement is a really key for all foundations and corporate donors these days; they're really looking for that.

In this economic climate, I would suggest focusing on your core competencies. As I mentioned earlier, protect your best work, look at your best programs, what you know has the most impact in your community, and really focus on those. Those are the programs for which you want support and make sure you can maintain those. This is not a time to try a new business line. If you see funding for a certain kind of program that you haven't done before, I would suggest not trying to go into something new right now. Stick with what you know you do best. I think donors are looking for that as well.

Demonstrate that you have smart and efficient planning. They're looking at your financials and they're looking at how much you're doing with what you get. Show that you do more with less through creative use of in-kind donations. They're really looking to see the biggest impact they can get for their money. And leverage your current relationships. I'm sure that you have current donors. Are there new and creative ways that you can work with them?

For example, if they currently donate products, would they consider providing a small grant to help fund a program that's related to those products? Another thing is to make sure that those relationships are solid. Once you have a regular donor, it's vital to provide solid reporting on your programs. It's a lot easier to keep a satisfied donor than to start looking for a new one. Make sure you're doing everything to nurture those relationships, whether it's providing "Thank you's" from your clients, photos from your programs; inviting them to your events, getting them some media coverage and their name in the newspaper. Make sure they see all of those things so that they realize what you're doing with their money.

And like I said, that's one of the things I do for Gifts in Kind. I mentioned media coverage; the reporters are definitely going to listen to a nonprofit running a program more than a corporate donor, so that's helpful to them.

As Charima mentioned earlier, do your research before you approach a new donor. Make sure that you truly understand their funding priorities and whether your programs match those priorities. It's a waste of their time and yours to approach somebody that isn't a good fit. We work very closely with Men's Warehouse, for example, and they have a very progressive program in place to help men in need. It's a very underserved population. We actually are out looking for people who serve this population because there's not a lot of nonprofits that do. So, they're very focused. If you are focused on women's health and you approach them, then they're not going to want to work with you. Even if for some reason, the donor that you approach doesn't fund you this time, if you've done your research and provided them with a very well thought-out proposal, they'll talk to you about why they can't fund it at this time. They'll keep you in mind and you'll leave a very positive image for the fact that you really did your research and you put some thought in your proposal. So, I urge you to think about that before you approach somebody. Tracking is important, and being able to demonstrate the kind of an impact that you're having.

Now, another thing I'm going to mention is employee engagement. This is a real trend for corporate donors right now. Corporate social responsibility is a huge part of corporate giving and corporate philanthropy. Companies are looking to get their employees engaged. The younger generations who are starting to work are much more interested in making sure that they're working for a company that's socially responsible and these companies understand that.

So for that reason, they're very interested in getting their employees involved and making them feel that the company really is contributing to the community. It's very, very important. The reason I bring that up is because if you approach somebody with a proposal, you might want to think about whether there is some component that could get their employees involved. That might be attractive to them.

We work with one of our partner organizations, a group called Cheerful Givers, which donates birthday presents to parents who are parents-in-need, who couldn't afford to buy their children presents. The presents are donated to the parents so they can actually give them to the children. They have a great program where they approach their corporate donors and not only ask for contributions so they can buy the gifts, but where employees put the bags and the gifts together. It's a great program that's gotten a lot of positive feedback. I think they have probably 25 different companies that are regular participants in pulling their employees and then getting them involved. I know that a lot of companies are looking at this now. We do a lot of these projects ourselves.

As Charima mentioned, just keep in mind what the business benefits are if you get into a corporate partnership with an organization. Make sure that you understand fully what they're getting out of this and that you can communicate that effectively. We focus on a few organizations that give product donations. They get a huge tax benefits if the product donation goes to an organization that serves the needy. So if you're receiving products from a partner, it's good to understand that and be able to communicate it.

Beyond that, brand recognition of their product is a benefit for them. If the product is going to an audience they're trying to serve, creating important connections in the community where they're doing business is another benefit. Engaging their employees and raising morale among their staff are things that you can mention in your proposal.

I'm going to give you some samples of how we give in-kind donations. This is a great way to offset your cost and diversify your streams of revenue, so that you're a sustainable organization. It could be real estate, it could be office space for your office, warehouse space so you can store things, or volunteers, or products such as those on which we focus. In-kind donations are a great way to cut cost and show that you are being efficient and responsible, which is important to a lot of donors.

Now, let me just focus a little bit on what Gifts in Kind does for its nonprofit partners. We work with a lot of huge national corporations that donate a lot of products to us. We have a warehouse program with five warehouses across the United States. Our network of nonprofits, 2,000 direct members but we touch about 100,000 nonprofits in the United States that get access, all of these organizations get access to the products that we have in our warehouses. That can run from computers and office equipment, to office supplies, to clothing, to personal care products, to books and toys, and so forth.

We partner with Mattel, the Toy Industry foundation, IBM, HP, and the list goes on and on. But the other thing that we do is we offer a retail donation partner program. I'll talk a little bit more about it because I think you might be interested in this.

What we do for retailers is we match all of their stores, or the stores that they tell us to, with local charity partners in their communities. This is a huge benefit for retailers because they're doing some of the things I mentioned earlier. They're engaging their employees who get to pick out the products and donate them; they are making important connections in the community where they

do business. They're even benefiting their supply chain by not having to return things through it and adding that cost.

There's also disposal cost. Some of the companies have had policies in the past where they've thrown it in the trash. So they're saving on disposal cost, they're being greener, so are more benefits for retailers in this program. One of the programs we have that is new and started earlier this year is our Framing Hope Program with the Home Depot. This is a very successful program.

We've got about 850 stores that have been matched with local charities. A lot of them are housing organizations, providing low income housing and housing for people with disabilities and so forth, and it's been a wonderful program. Basically, the charity partner goes in and picks up products once a week. A lot of times, it's between one and five pallets of product and it's all very high-quality products, such as toilets, bath tubs, or tools, or, in one case, a lawn mower. So there are a lot of very, very high-quality products that can get provided. Now, the challenge for some of these nonprofits is they needed to have sufficient storage space and a working truck.

As an example of how this is working in some communities, we have a tent in Pennsylvania that's a smaller organization. Because of budget cuts the organization is not building a house right now. What the executive director is doing is she's storing all these products. She understands the community's needs, whether it's an older person who just can't afford to put in an air-conditioning unit or a person with disability who doesn't have a ramp installed in their house. So she is using all of the products to upgrade people in need in her community. It has been very successful.

Another partner in Fredericksburg, Virginia is a housing organization that provides housing for people with disabilities and they've opened this up for the entire community. It's for all the nonprofits in the community. The person who runs this program actually approached the local church, which donated a warehouse for it; he approached a local thrift store and they lent them

the truck free-of-charge. He has set up an entire warehouse where nonprofits in the community who are working on these projects can come in and pick whatever they need. He's not only offsetting his own cost and helping to fulfill the mission of his organization; he has also extended the benefits to the entire nonprofit community. And in the process, he helped even more people in need.

I'd be happy to answer any questions, but those are just some that I had thought might be of interest.

Michele Higgs: Melissa, you've done a fabulous job. This is a lot of good information and I just wanted to pull out a couple of points that I thought were key. One was the point of tracking data and how tracking and evaluation is so important to showing corporations that you've made a difference and what you're doing is important. Second, you need to make sure that the relationship with the partner that you've chosen is solid and that you nurture it, because it's easier to maintain a relationship than to generate a new one. Did I get that correct?

Melissa Trumpower: Yes.

Michele Higgs: OK, good. And I did want to ask one quick question. You had mentioned a program with the Men's Warehouse?

Melissa Trumpower: Yes.

Michele Higgs: The homeless men or the underserved community. Would you go over that again?

Melissa Trumpower: Yes. It's actually a great program. We work very closely with Men's Warehouse. They don't have a retail program with us, meaning that we don't match their stores at this time. That's something they may move into at some point. But they approached us a few years ago

and we started to take in their inventory. They have very strict requirements that have to be met for any nonprofit that gets their product.

But they're one of the leaders in serving men in need in this country. The interesting thing about this relationship is that it has really grown with Gifts in Kind over time. This is why I tell people to nurture those relationships. We find that when we start working with a corporate donor, sometimes they just give us a truckload or even half the truckload for the first time. When we report back on the impact, we show them specifically how this helped people. Then they realize that we already have this network in place so they can distribute it to the people that really need it right now. So from there, we often expand our partnerships with these corporate donors and they start to give more when they see the kind of impact they're having.

With Men's Warehouse, we have affiliate programs in place, and that I mean we have nonprofits in different regions. In other words, it's not just an individual nonprofit that gets products for their clients or products to offset their cost; the nonprofit is working to empower the entire nonprofit community in its region. And we have an affiliate organization, Greensboro, North Carolina, which is actually one of the country's premier welfare-to-work programs. Odel Cleveland, who heads up that organization, has been working with us for several years.

What has happened over the last few years is that Men's Warehouse sends its entire inventory through Odel's program. The people in his welfare-to-work program get referred by local agencies and they learn the retail side of business. Odel has a 97percent placement rate of these folks who go to his program. They not only get their high school degree; they're learning how to run the warehouse, how to manage the people, and all of the kinds of skills that they wouldn't have gotten anywhere else. And for Men's Warehouse, they saw a huge benefit because not only are they distributing the product to key nonprofits through Gifts in Kind, but in the process, all of their products go through this warehouse and they repackage it into the right cartons to go out

to the nonprofits. Gift in Kind helps people in need and a lot of men in need; it's a very innovative program that's working very well.

Michele Higgs: Yes, it is indeed. What I'd like to do at this time is ask James if we have any questions on the line for either Charima or for Melissa.

Operator: Thank you, Ms. Higgs. Today's question-and-answer session will be conducted electronically. If you would like to ask a question, you may do so by pressing the star key followed by the digit 1 on your touch-tone telephone. If you're using a speakerphone, please make sure your mute function is turned off to allow your signal to reach our equipment. Once again, that's star 1 if you have a question or comment. We'll pause for a moment.

And we'll take our first question today from Jerryl Bennett.

Jerryl Bennett: Hi. Maybe you covered this. Gifts in Kind – is there a fee associated with that?

Melissa Trumppower: Yes. There is a membership fee. To keep a network active in using the products the way that we promised our donor, we have to go through a process and get people registered. So for regular nonprofits, it's \$150 a year.

Michele Higgs: That OK?

Jerryl Bennett: Yes. For some reason I heard someone mentioned a number ten times greater than that to participate. I thought they said that for each store, there was a cost to be associated with different stores.

Melissa Trumpower: There is another cost also. I wasn't thinking about RDP. The Retail Donation Program is a fee to get matched with a store and that covers the cost of conducting the research to find the right partners and those tend to be fairly low as well, depending on the partnership.

Now for Home Depot, I think that right now, that's a \$500 fee. However, you get between \$35,000 and \$50,000 worth of products a year and sometimes even more than that through the program. So that's what determines the cost.

Jerryl Bennett: OK. Thank you.

Melissa Trumpower: Yes.

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

Operator: Yes, we do. We'll now hear from Joyce Mortimer.

Joyce Mortimer: Well, Jerryl asked one of the questions that I wanted to have answered. But I would like to know how consortia might be able to benefit. How groupings – regional groupings – of Neighborhood Network centers might be able to participate? Would they pay \$150 a year for the organization or would each member also have to pay?

Melissa Trumpower: We have really encouraged smaller nonprofits to come together not just because of the cost of getting into the program, but because of the amount of products they receive. That has been a real challenge for some groups because they get so much.

Joyce Mortimer: So much, yes.

Melissa Trumpower: Yes. Being able to come up with the storage capacity to store all the products and keep them until they are used and being able to come up with the truck every week to go pick up can be a huge – I don't want to say burden – but there are things that should be considered. I think if you're in a region and you want to come together, pull your money together, and figure out how to store and distribute the products, we have encouraged that. One group picks up one week, while another group picks up another week so its not overwhelming. One of the benefits of this program is you get a lot of great products.

But like I said, with it comes the responsibility of having to be there every week to pick up and figure out how to store, distribute, and report on the products. So we have a training, we have a Web site that gives full details on the program. There's a training video that I put together earlier this year that goes through everything that you need to know before you start the program.

Joyce Mortimer: And I have one final question. Do you have a report on best practices, what you have learned at Gifts in Kind international over the past decade or so?

Melissa Trumpower: That's a great question. That is actually something that I'm putting together right now. I should have mentioned when I started. I am the communications director, but I'm starting to take over the membership for the nonprofit network now. We have a lot of experience. We have a corporate conference in the fall. It's our 25th anniversary this year and what we did is we took the best practices from the corporate side of what we do. For this year, we are looking to having a virtual nonprofit event, because of the cost to travel. We are looking at having a virtual nonprofit for all of our nonprofit partners, to report best practices in running an in-kind gifts program.

So, I'd be happy to pass that on to Charima once that's available.

Michele Higgs: Terrific. Thanks so much. Joyce, are you done?

Joyce Mortimer: Yes, thank you.

Michele Higgs: OK, thanks. James, do we have anyone else on the line?

Operator: Yes, we do. We have a follow-up question from Jerryl Bennett.

Jerryl Bennett: As I was listening to Joyce I was asking the exact same question about best practices.

Other than the Greensboro Regional Distribution Center, are there any others in the country that you take pride in talking about?

Melissa Trumpower: Oh yes. Actually, I am in the process of starting a charity advisory board with some of our more active nonprofits that are doing some great things. Unfortunately because I'm so new to the nonprofit network, I can't tell you too much; however, there is a group in Cincinnati. I can't think of the name off the top of my head. I just talked to her about an hour ago. But there are some great programs and a lot of them are doing the same kinds of thing where they're using our program to train people and those are just affiliates. In terms of just our regular members, I have great stories.

The Cheerful Givers, a group I had in Arizona for example, started a program to give baby showers to low-income women who are pregnant, who had never even heard of a baby shower. They started giving those twice a year. They used our products, got other donations, and created all these gifts for these women and brought them in. In the process, they had an event where they could educate them about services that they could access and provide them with information about prenatal care and other kinds of things for which low-income women may not have access.

That's just one of a million different examples I can give you. Because I am the communications person, I speak to our nonprofits a lot and try to write stories on some of the things they're doing in their communities. I have to say that I'm consistently impressed by some of the things that I'm hearing and the creative ways that they're developing programs and using in-kind products.

Jerryl Bennett: Thank you.

Michele Higgs: Thanks so much, Jerryl. James, do we have anyone else on the line?

Operator: There are no further questions, Ms. Higgs.

Michele Higgs: OK. Charima?

Charima Young: Yes. Melissa, I had a question. I know that you've met with some of the companies and corporations with whom you've worked to discuss different trends going on right now. What are some of the trends you're seeing in those different industries in terms of donations and what they're donating, how much, and are any cutbacks in certain areas?

Melissa Trumpower: Yes. We're definitely seeing cutbacks. We get grants to run some of our programs, we're seeing those cut back. That's why I think demonstrating efficiency is really key. The one key, where we haven't seen drastic cuts, is partly because we have 27 employees, and we distribute a lot of profit to hundreds of millions of dollars worth of products. We are noted for our efficiency and we do a lot with little. And so, I think that that's really been key for Gifts in Kind and its ability to maintain some of its corporate donors, especially in terms of the grants that they're providing.

In terms of the products they're providing, so far we have not seen a huge cut yet. I don't know if that will change later in the year or next year. I'm not really sure but they're definitely looking at

cutting or giving. We did hear that in October when we had our conference. But because of the whole corporate social responsibility trend, they're definitely going to continue to give and give strategically, and that's really the key thing that we're seeing.

Companies want to think strategically, they want to make an impact, they want to make sure that when they give money, that there is an impact and they want to make sure that they're hearing back from those they give it to, that those folks are tracking it appropriately and getting back to them.

They also want to be strategic about how they give their money and as that decreases, they want to be even more strategic. So, they want to make sure that they support the programs that they know are successful. I went to a workshop last week and there was a foundation person there, who said that right now, they're maintaining the current donors. That's what they're really trying to do. Bringing on new donors and getting grant recipients is not a priority for them in the current economic climate. So basically, if you have current donors and you have a relationship, it is really important to nurture those relationships and make the most of them. Meet with them face to face and come up with strategic plans for them on how they can make that impact with the little money they have.

Charima Young: What are the specific industries that you work with and target?

Melissa Trumpower: Gosh, there's really not much of a limit. We obviously deal with manufacturing and product companies. So we work with anyone who creates a product. We don't really work with the healthcare companies. We don't distribute medicine or drugs; we don't get involved with that. We also don't distribute food or perishable items. So we really focus on our key donors; IBM, a long-time donor; HP, a long time donor; Mattel. The entire toy industry has been very involved. We have programs with them.

Another example of a strategic program is we worked with the toy industry to set up last year's partnership with the Ronald McDonald house charities. They donate free toys throughout the year to any Ronald McDonald house that requests them and we managed that whole program. That was another example of a partnership that we put together to be more innovative and thinking strategically about how they could have an impact on kids in need. We have relationships with Gap and Levis Strauss and a lot of folks who make clothes. We have strong relationships, obviously, I mentioned Men's Warehouse. I can't even begin to touch on all of the donors with whom we have relationships. If you go to our Web site, which is [Giftsinkind.org](http://Giftsinkind.org), you can see a list of a lot of the donors that we work with, and there are thousands of them.

Charima Young: Correct me if I'm wrong. Each quarter there's a different catalog that comes out?

Melissa Trumpower: Yes, and we're in the process of getting an online catalog, hopefully early in the year as well so that you can go in and actually place an online order. We don't have it in place at this time, but we do have a catalog that comes out every quarter that gives you an idea of what's available.

Another retail program we have is Bed Bath & Beyond and a lot of our housing group sits on that panel. Its gotten to be a great program because when you're trying to get somebody in a new home, being able to provide bedding or curtains, or blankets, or anything like that can be a great benefit as well. We just recognized Bed Bath & Beyond in October because they're one of our largest donors. They give that much in terms of in-kind products.

Michele Higgs: Beautiful. This is fantastic. I'm going to put another question out there and see if James has a new question on the line. While we're doing that, I want to encourage those centers that have successful partnerships that you like to talk about, now is the time. James?

Operator: We have a follow-up question from Joyce Mortimer.

Joyce Mortimer: My question was answered, regarding the catalog.

Michele Higgs: OK, great.

Joyce Mortimer: But you could tell me one thing, please, Melissa.

Melissa Trumpower: Yes.

Joyce Mortimer: Many centers are interested in providing toys for children. How far in advance do they need to register to be ready for, say, November?

Melissa Trumpower: I would plan a month out. We do have a deadline for Mattel. Mattel is a great donor of ours as well and we try to accommodate anyone who request toys especially for the holidays. That deadline has passed, unfortunately, to get it in with Mattel. But if you're looking at next year, it doesn't take that long to develop the setup to make a request. At times, it may take a little while for the shipping, maybe a week or so to get it shipped. I would say a month out if you're thinking about registering and establishing an account for getting toys shipped out to you.

Joyce Mortimer: Thank you.

Michele Higgs: OK. That was another great question. James, do we have anyone else on the line?

Operator: There are no further questions.

Michele Higgs: In that case I have one. Melissa, I'm going to give this one to you as well. You had mentioned earlier if a nonprofit or a center, in our case, wanted to conduct outreach to the media

for an event or whatever with which there was a corporate donor that they would have more of a chance of getting media attention than the donor would.

Melissa Trumpower: Yes, I say this from the perspective of person who has worked for the media before. Especially if this is a something in your community, a local program, and you got this great donation. It's great if you have an event, for example, you're passing toys out to kids or something, and you can send a media release out in advance and get media there to cover it. That's really the best situation for getting coverage because, number one, it's a local angle and a local reporter is going to want to cover that. If the release comes from a headquarter of a corporation, first, it seems self-serving, and second, the media may not think about the local angle or it may not be as clear that this is benefiting the local community. So that's what I mean by you have that local angle for a reporter and if you're close then you have a much better chance of getting that reporter out to cover your event.

Michele Higgs: I'm glad you said that. I just put that question out there so that the centers that are on the line would understand that if they make that effort and extend their outreach to the media that someone will come out and cover the story.

Melissa Trumpower: Yes, the other side of that is we find it a lot of our donors are not proactive with the media but they don't have a problem if you want to pat them on the back. It's a different thing. They don't want to issue the release themselves but if you want to say how great they are and mention them, then they're thrilled.

Michele Higgs: Sounds good. Let me see if anyone else is on the line. James is there anyone out there?

Operator: There are no further questions.

Michele Higgs: OK. I think that we got a few minutes left. I'm going to just go through these points one more time. We discussed getting in touch with potential partners, looking for potential partners, tracking the data, tracking the comings and goings of the folks who are using the programs and how important that is for showing that you're making a difference to your partners.

You've mentioned a couple of times, and we talked about it earlier too, that nurturing those relationships with those partners is making sure that they get a report, a phone call, or a report of things going on using the materials that they provided for us as a center.

With that, I'm going to ask James one more time if there's anybody else on the line. James, have we anyone else?

Operator: There are no further questions. However, I want to remind everyone that it's star one if you have any question or comment.

Michele Higgs: OK. We have a number of centers that has been very good in creating partnerships in their communities either locally or on the national-level. It's a good idea for them to participate in calls like this and hear even more information about how they can polish up their partnership work and learn how the partners look at the partnerships themselves, which I think we've been able to do today.

So with that in mind, I'm going to give you my final comments. I want to thank Charima and Melissa, for your comments today because I think this call has really rich information.

I want to remind everyone of the resources that are available to you through the Neighborhood Networks Initiative. If you still have a question after the call, you can go to the Neighborhood Networks Web site and post it on the Neighborhood Networks online message board. Either staff or your peers will see to it that the question gets attention. You can always call the toll-free

Neighborhood Networks Information line with questions at (888) 312-2743, and of course, you'll find resources and current information on the Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.neighborhoodnetworks.org](http://www.neighborhoodnetworks.org).

On January 13th we'll talk about consortia. The call entitled, "Consortia; Proving That There Are Strength in Numbers" will help you to learn how consortia provide a way to get things done, uniting the voices of many into one.

Thanks to all of you for joining us today. Thank you again to Charima Young and Melissa Trumpower for sharing with us the many sides of partnership development. Thanks to all of our callers today. Take good care everyone. We'll talk to you next time.

Operator: Thank you. That does conclude today's conference call. We thank you for your participation and have a nice day.

END