

NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS

Moderator: Michele Higgs
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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 Ms. Michele Higgs; please go ahead.

Michele Higgs: Thank you, Jennifer, and welcome everyone to Neighborhood Networks February conference call. As you know, I'm Michele Higgs, and today, I salute Joyce Mortimer who coordinated the speakers for this call. Joyce and I represent the technical assistance team that works with you to address the needs of the various Neighborhood Network centers around the country.

Again, I thank all of you for joining us for this month's conference call. The title is, "Who's in Your Community: Serving All of Your Residents."

But before we get going with today's call, let me tell you that we are welcoming five new centers to the Neighborhood. Those centers are Beach Grove, Neighborhood Networks Center in Louisiana, Perrywood Gardens Opportunity Center in Maryland, Village at Lakeview Neighborhood Networks Center in Maryland, Noble Senior Village in Oklahoma, and Southwind Senior Village in Oklahoma.

Now, as we welcome these new centers, 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 address the needs of your residents, and determine what resources in your community can help you meet those needs. Plus, it helps you keep track of the partnerships that can address them. START is a key to developing those partnerships, because when the data is compiled, START is a true business plan that strengthens the center's profile, and makes the center more attractive to potential partners. START also helps you examine the capacity of your center, and it helps you provide the foundation for organizing your activities.

Now, for more resources or if you have questions about the START business plan, or resident surveys or general questions about the Neighborhood Networks Initiative, you can call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line at 888-312-2743. You can also visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org. Don't forget online networking through the Neighborhood Networks online message board. You can share information among yourselves, post news, or ask questions. Be aware that this is not a "real time" resource yet, 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 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 dive right in and enter "online discussion." Go visit. Check it out. Post a message.

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.

Now for our topic for today, the diversity that bonds Neighborhood Network work centers. It is no secret that each Neighborhood Network center is unique. But that's what unifies this network of centers. Neighborhood Networks programs around the nation are custom-made to serve the needs of their residents, and each resident population is different.

Now, I don't want to give away all of our speakers' secrets today, but there are options available at Neighborhood Network centers for all users, for residents who are not native English speakers, and software and devices to help residents with disabilities. Youth and children have a variety of activities that are available to them. Seniors get a whole new horizon by learning how to use today's technology.

What I'm trying to say is that diversity means everything in and around a Neighborhood Networks center. So today, we hope to give you some idea of how to work with the various populations you encounter at your centers, the various cultures, the various skill levels, the various age groups. I also encourage listeners to be prepared to bring your own ideas to the table during this discussion.

I want to tell you a little bit about our speakers for today. We have Debbie Landry, Leona Patterson, and David Zermeno. I'll start with David.

David Zermeno is the executive director of Operation P.E.A.C.E. He has a rich background in community building and outreach to diverse communities; creating community art and technology, including multimedia programs; and using visual arts to promote cultural synthesis and community enrichment.

We'll also hear from Debbie Landry, who is the resident services coordinator at the Somerset Apartments in Lansing, Michigan. Working with Preservation Management, Ms. Landry oversees

two different Neighborhood Network sites, one multifamily and one with a senior/disabled property.

Then, we have Leona Patterson, who has more than 20 years of experience in community revitalization and development, resident outreach, and housing. She is the center director for the Community Life Center in Lancaster Village Cooperative, and the Lancaster Computer Learning Center in Pontiac, Michigan.

We have a lot to share with you today, so I'm going to stop talking and let our speakers begin. David, would you like to get us started?

David Zermeno: Sure, I'd be happy to.

Michele Higgs: Thanks.

David Zermeno: My name is David Zermeno. I'm the executive director of Operation P.E.A.C.E. I've been here for a year. I was brought in here to reinvigorate the organization. I've created some new community arts and technology programs for families living in subsidized housing. We have technology programs for senior citizens, and we offer employment training. We have English as a Second Language (ESL) program, and an afterschool program. We are also involved in community enrichment. We're involving the arts in all of these different programs.

But what's more important is prior to coming to Operation P.E.A.C.E.; I was involved in community technology programs with diverse communities. So, I'll tell you about my own experience and hope that you find that useful. I asked myself, what is it that I want to accomplish? Usually the answer breaks down into three different categories.

The first category is do I want to bring in more of the same people who are already coming to my center programs? The second is do I want to deepen my relationship with the people who are

already here? The third is would I rather diversify? Do I want people to attend center activities who aren't being served? So for example, if you don't have a program for seniors, do you want to create a senior program? If you have a large Haitian Creole community and they're not coming, do you want to conduct outreach to them? If you have a Spanish community or Spanish speaking community or Portuguese community it's the same thing. So that would be diversifying and that's the category that I'm going to speak about today.

What I've found in my experience with diverse communities is to assess the members of the community. If you have a diverse community, determine where they are located geographically in your community. That way, you can learn who already may be in contact with them.

For example, let's suppose you wanted to bring in a Haitian Creole community. The first thing I would do is I'd call the mayor's office, and find out if there is a representative in place for that community. I would call that person and find out if anyone is providing services for that community. I would gather information regarding the names of agencies that serve that community.

Through communication with those contacts, you will find that you have some common goals with other people in your community. That brings up the next point, collaboration. Collaboration is extremely important because it saves a lot of time and money, and it allows you to provide a service that someone else specializes in.

For example, my organization could provide the technology center space. Then if, for example, there was a Spanish community in the neighborhood, I could collaborate with them. They could provide a Spanish instructor who would come to my center and provide a free program. Therefore, it's a win-win because we're enhancing their programming and they're enhancing ours. A key item with collaboration is making sure that the service is beneficial to both parties. It is important to document the expectations from both parties regarding each other's role.

Say you wanted to conduct outreach to the Portuguese community. I would contact the churches that serve the Portuguese community and get them to invite me to come and speak at the church. Then, I would give a presentation to the congregation and meet with them. If you tell them what you're doing, and the significance of your programming and why it's important, you'll find that there's a lot of people there at the church who want to learn technology. Plus, they're really receptive to it now because you've come to a place where they're very comfortable. Also, you'll find other people in the church community who already know computer technology and who want to contribute as teachers.

Then, the second part of that is, I've had a lot of success with the Portuguese, Haitian Creole, and Latino community, by getting invitations from their pastors. I've also been able to strengthen our own programming and organization by having someone from the church that speaks the language and understands its nuances. For example, I worked a lot with seniors, Latinos and Haitian Creoles, and also Portuguese communities, and what I found is that culturally, we're very celebratory and humor is important, as is enjoying each other's company. Plus touch is actually important in our culture. For instance when you touch them gently on the shoulder, it's a form of support. It's really important that whoever conducts the training understands the cultural nuances of the culture and the language. It's extremely important to teach people to greet the community members with a genuine smile. Ask that as people arrive in the center that they interact with them so that each person feels extremely special and welcome. It's important to include in the training manual that you make sure that people are greeted with enthusiasm and a smile. It's important to find out what motivates your residents to come to the center. What in their life really matters to them? If it's family, when you're training them how to sign up for an e-mail account, it's important to teach them how to communicate with somebody back home. I can't describe how excited somebody gets when they start communicating with their family back in Haiti, Tonga or Brazil. So it's important to know the person's motivation for coming to the center.

Finding out why your residents want to learn how to use a computer and their interests are keys to communicating with them. In one case I had a Haitian Creole artist who was not technologically savvy, so I taught him how to scan an image. He never thought he'd learn Photoshop, but once he had his image in Photoshop he forced himself to learn it. He was so excited about what he was learning; how he could digitally create postcards and flyers and also e-mail his image to people and start working on a Web page. So that is the motivation.

If a resident is an adult, they may be in the career phase of their life, so they're going to want to learn about improving job skills, about resume writing or cover letter writing, or applying or searching for jobs online. So it's really important to get to know that person, to treat them with respect, and to find out what it is that matters to them. Then use that knowledge to motivate them in their own learning process.

It's important to let them trust you and know that you're on their side. Everybody in your center should know that you're there to serve the community, and that you are very patient teachers. I have an entire training that I conduct that specifies what is required for the way we teach. It involves things like being very patient, the tone of voice, being supportive, (we only give positive reinforcement); and we never do something for someone, they always must do it for themselves, because people learn by doing.

Now for senior citizens, you may teach them something one day, and the next week they don't remember it. So our teachers need to know that it is not about whether someone remembers it or not. More than anything, we just want them to come and have a sense of community, because that is more important than whether they remember something or not. These things are extremely important, and it keeps the seniors coming back.

One of our seniors loves jazz music, so we do pod-casting and listen to jazz music in the morning. That creates a whole sense of enjoyment in our programming, as well.

Don't forget the power of saying "thank you." It's extremely important that when they leave the center that people feel appreciated because they are going to talk to someone else, and those people will in turn talk to somebody else. It will come back to you because that person is going to go to the senior center and they're going to talk there. Then they're going to go to some other event for seniors and eventually, it's going to lead back to you. For instance, we recently applied for a grant. One of our four seniors is actually the mother-in-law of review board member for that grant. Again, never underestimate who comes to your center, regardless of their age. Senior citizens are very important and should be valued.

Michele Higgs: David, I'm going to jump in right now, because I think you have made a number of very, very important points. Being sure to give everyone a positive experience, thank them for being there, and let them know that they're appreciated.

So what I'm going to do is ask you to hold on, and we're going to reserve you for questions. Can you stay on the line?

David Zermeno: Sure, absolutely.

Michele Higgs: OK. Thank you much. Then, I am going to ask Debbie Landry from Somerset Apartments in Lansing to give us an idea of what's going on in her center, with regard to diversity. Debbie?

Debbie Landry: Well, I started working at the Pinebrook Manor Neighborhood Networks Center back in 2006. It actually just opened, so I had to figure out exactly what I was going to do there. One of the first things that I did was go and talk to the library staff to see the kind of programs they could offer at the center. One of the things that they were able to do was to have somebody come in and conduct basic computer training for the seniors. They also have a book mobile that comes to the center every other week. People can reserve books and other media, so they actually don't

even have to travel into town. Pinebrook Manor is located about 45 minutes away from the library. So the book mobile is a good program to have, and it's definitely utilized.

The property is situated across a widespread townhouse complex. There are about 12 buildings. I noticed that there were quite a few people gardening in area in front of their townhouses. So I contacted the garden project, and after getting approval through the management company, we created an area that had 10 plots, and we had almost every one filled last year. So, our residents were able to come in and grow their own vegetables.

The majority of the people that were actually using the garden project were from our Vietnamese population. Because they hadn't participated previously in the center, it was a good way to get them involved.

Another thing we did was create a neighborhood crime watch. We got the Lansing City Police involved. They came to the center once a month. We had different meetings discussing what we could do make the area a little bit safer, and to get people involved. Every year, we have a national night out picnic. Last year, we had about 15 different neighborhood organizations and businesses donate food, money, and prizes. That actually encouraged our residents to participate in the center.

We were able to get people involved by donating food and providing opportunities to win prizes, and by filling out a survey that I created to determine the kinds of center programs they wanted. We also had a partnership with the South Side Community Coalition that provides onsite health programs. They sign up people for the local health insurance and they conduct a smoking cessation program. Unfortunately, I no longer work at Pinebrook Manor. I work now at a senior and disabled property, but I use a lot of the same resources.

One of the really great things we did was have the local zoo bring in animals for our residents. A lot of the seniors and disabled individuals aren't able to leave the building to go to the zoo. So they brought in some of the smaller animals. It was a great experience, especially for the people who are visually impaired, as they were able to touch some of the animals. We also have the garden project that comes here. They bring us free food, apples, and other vegetation at the end of the growing season. Another resource that we use is Food Movers. They provide us with free bread every week; they also contact local restaurants and whenever we have events, we get free food from local restaurants. It really gets our residents together and involved.

Michele Higgs: Debbie, can I ask you a quick question? With your current population, the seniors and the disabled, what kind of outreach do you conduct to get them involved? Do you have folks who seem to be just sort of sitting and looking out of the window?

Debbie Landry: Well, at times, if I know that somebody doesn't really want to get involved, there's nothing you can do. But, I'll knock on their door, see what's going on, if there's anything they'd like to see happen. So, I do some individual one-on-one calls.

We really have a high percentage of people that do get involved. Of our 104 residents, we probably 80 to 90 people that show up for our bigger events.

Michele Higgs: OK.

Debbie Landry: We have high resident participation here. There's one resource that I really feel is important for people named refugeehouse.org. The Web site has a resource for housing orientation as well. For instance, it shows people who are refugees or who speak another language how to tell the maintenance or the leasing office that they need repairs. We used that resource at Pinebrook Manor, because we do have quite a few Vietnamese that don't speak English.

Michele Higgs: It sounds like you have had experience with two separate situations and you've been able to see what works with both, would you say?

Debbie Landry: Yes. Sometimes, I find that winter is the more difficult time to get people involved. They don't want to leave their houses. We get most of our resident participation at Pinebrook Manor during the spring and summer.

Michele Higgs: All right. Thank you. Now don't go away, because I'd like you to sit in for questions as well. Leona, are you there?

Leona Patterson: Yes.

Michele Higgs: Thank you. Would you tell us about what's going on in your community?

Leona Patterson: OK. Lancaster is a 287-unit multifamily complex. We don't have very many seniors. Most of our population is under the age of 36, so we have a lot of children. We consider our computer center as a training program for the overall program at the community life center, where we conduct a variety of involvement activities.

We are immediately adjacent to an elementary school that services our community. Because we don't have space for training parents to support their children academically, we use the elementary school space. Also every time we have a parent teacher conference, we bring in agencies that will give the parents additional information about self-sufficiency and child development. We are tied in to the local community colleges. There are some colleges in our immediate vicinity. So after the initial training, we give financial aid to individuals so they are able to enter our educational or vocational training.

Health is a big issue for our residents, because we have a lot of people that are unemployed or under employed and do not have healthcare. We have partnered with a federally qualified health center to make sure that our individuals get the type of preventative healthcare and maintenance healthcare they need. We are also able to underwrite this service, in case the residents don't have the money. To underwrite the program, we partner with the hospital and the federally qualified health center.

The school district has supplied us with all of our software for Nova Net, Glory School, and Study Island. These programs are used at the school so the children have an opportunity to study with the software when they come back to the community. Then, we teach the parents how to use that software just in case they have a computer at home.

We partner with Job Links, which is our manpower development arm in the city of Pontiac. Job Links provides transportation for our residents to travel to their facility and sign up for unemployment or look for work. They also send someone here onsite to help with workforce services.

We have a flower project that's sponsored by the city of Pontiac. The center wins the project every year. For the seniors who like flowers but cannot plant, we train the children to plant and take care of the flowers for the seniors. That's also beneficial for the children, because a lot of the times they are not in contact with their older relatives. So this gives the children an understanding about age differences, and how to relate to someone that is older.

Our main concern is self-sufficiency; that's increasing the number of dollars earned, as opposed to the dollars you receive from federal programs. We work really hard on that. Last week we learned that we were going to be one of the participants in a multidollar construction project this coming year. Individuals will either be trained in the areas of construction for which they have an

interest, or if they already have some background in those areas, but do not have the education they need, they'll be funded by the "No Worker Left Behind" state of Michigan grant.

We've had a night out for the last 10 years. We bring in a lot of entertainment and we also have a talent show from people within the community. Our partners set up tables, give out information, and sell their programs to our residents.

We work immediately with the surrounding community, not just the school that's next to us, but also the two immediate subdivisions. We share programming that will benefit our community, such as a crime watch, online voter registration, and online filing of "my child" applications. We have volunteers from the community who travel onsite every year to make sure that the residents apply for the home heating credit. We also have a transportation system that runs during income tax time, so that residents can get to the accounting aid society free services.

Michele Higgs: It sounds like you have a lot of programs for your group. Did you say you had a lot of children?

Leona Patterson: Yes. Also, because of the supplemental tutoring and the "No Child Left Behind" act, all of our high school kids are eligible for \$1,500 a year for private tutoring. So we bring vendors, such as Sylvan Learning Center, and then the parents get to pick the vendor they want. We provide a space, and the vendor pays us for using our space. Then they hire a resident who oversees the project.

Through Job Link, we maintain a year round core group of students that volunteer as workers.

Michele Higgs: How do you identify those students?

Leona Patterson: You can't get a job until you're 14, that's the state law. A 14-year-old can only work in the summer for 20 hours per week. So normally, a student starts in the ninth or tenth grade at 20 hours per week if their grades and their school attendance are good. If they have the right number of community service hours, I can transition them into an all-year student slot. If they have an interest in working outside a community setting, I can have them placed somewhere else so they will maintain their employment.

Michele Higgs: How many children participated in that program last summer?

Leona Patterson: Last summer we had 17. Remember that the minimum wage went up to \$7.15 so that was good money. We also brought in representatives from a credit union and a bank that let the residents see the difference, as it relates to savings and how to use money. Then they had to get a bank account. What we're trying to do now is if they agree to save this money, some of it will be used to take a summer college course at Oakland Community College. Then we'll see that they're reimbursed. They are encouraged to save a certain amount of money because we take them on a trip and teach them how to shop and how to use their money.

Michele Higgs: So that's their financial literacy class right there.

Leona Patterson: This is for high school students. The adult financial literacy class is done by an agency that visits our complex.

Michele Higgs: Well, I tell you what, I'm going to stop you right here. I think all of you have covered a lot of good points. What I'd like to do is ask one question for David. I had indicated that there was something special about the name Operation P.E.A.C.E., could you explain for everybody what that means?

David Zermeno: Sure. Operation P.E.A.C.E. was started out of Atlanta. It was created as an antiviolence organization to make sure that we're providing a safe, caring environment for the community. It started out as an afterschool program, in a building that was in a safe area to keep the children from being exposed to drugs and violence.

So Operation P.E.A.C.E. was created as safe haven for kids to go after school. Eventually, it just caught on and Magic Johnson found out about it and threw a lot of money at it, and it also got really big sponsors.

So basically, we provide free education programs for families living in subsidized housing. I also have an arts background, so I've been using a lot of the arts to attract diverse communities. So for example, the kids have been learning composition, art, and the history of the art, and Leonardo Da Vinci.

I got a mammoth reproduction on oil and canvass of the Mona Lisa in a museum frame. The kids did all of their own art work and painted their own versions of the Mona Lisa. They also asked, "OK, well what Mona Lisa would look like if she lived in our subsidized housing?" So they all debated, and they all had different ideas. Eventually, they negotiated that her skin was going to be darker, and talked about what color her eyes would be. They decided that the background would have the buildings that appear in subsidized housing. And then, they wanted a little animal on her shoulder, a cat. So they painted it together, and the result was a very successful composition. I got a huge museum frame to frame it just like the Mona Lisa.

Michele Higgs: I'm sure that was really special for the kids.

David Zermeno: And that really attracted the community as well. Why? Because they all wanted to come in and see this Mona Lisa.

Michele Higgs: Great. David, I'm sorry, I know you're enjoying telling us about the Mona Lisa, but I'm going to have to go further and actually open up for questions.

David Zermeno: Absolutely.

Michele Higgs: Jennifer? Jennifer, are you there?

Operator: Yes.

Michele Higgs: I want to find out if we have anyone online for questions for our speakers.

Operator: Thank you. To signal for a question, please press star one on your telephone keypad. Again, star one to signal for a question. As a reminder, if you are using a speakerphone, please make sure your mute function is turned off to allow your signal to reach our equipment.

Operator: We'll take our first question from Nakea Fuller, Philadelphia Housing.

Nakea Fuller: I am Nakea Fuller. I am the supervisor for our community partners program. One of the questions that I have, I believe it was Leona that was speaking, is about having the parents of the school children come and use the center.

Leona Patterson: Yes.

Nakea Fuller: OK. What marketing message did you use to encourage the parents to come? Obviously, in Philadelphia Housing we have a large public housing community and sometimes it can be difficult to engage the parents. What type of marketing message did you find was successful in encouraging parents to utilize the center?

Leona Patterson: Well, first of all, I believe every parent wants their child to be successful in school. We have something called a report card party. You bring your report card and that's how you get an invitation to the party. But let's say that you come and your report card is not really there, where it should be, we tell you, "Here's what we'll do. We'll make an agreement with you, if you want to improve your grades, your mother also has to sign the contract with you."

When we find out that the child is below grade level, let's say in math, we send a note home or call the parent. We let them know that we're running a Glory School training program for parents to learn to use this computer-based program. They come in with the student, and it has worked very well for us. Because of our relationship with the principal in our school at Harrington, and in our middle school at Northern, we have a solid contact. I know when a kid is behind. I know when they get kicked out of school, the school calls, or now we're so sophisticated we receive an e-mail. I get e-mail reports from the schools. Lots of times they are unable to contact the parent, or maybe the parent cannot make the school conference. We encourage our parents to attend the parent conferences. The teachers see that we are able to make contact so they'll come onsite to meet with that parent.

Once you get a parent to understand that they should monitor what is happening in the school, they feel more comfortable about doing it. A lot of times, we assume the parent just doesn't care. That is not the case. They don't know what they need to do. So we try to prepare them to be a little bit more active, and monitor what is actually happening with their child, as it relates to school attendance, grades, where they can be involved, and in what should they be involved.

Nakea Fuller: OK. Great. Thank you.

Leona Patterson: I'm going to say that this did not happen instantly. It took us a while to get to this point. Then we also made sure that we recruited unsuccessful children that we knew from the Pontiac

school district so they could go to summer school. We told them to go to summer school, come home at 1 or 1:30, and they could have all of the fun they wanted with us.

Michele Higgs: OK. Thanks, Leona, did that answer the question? I guess so. Jennifer, is anyone else on the line?

Operator: We will now go to Dorla Bonner for her question.

Dorla Bonner: Hi, thank you. I'm calling for Rockford, Illinois in the same vein as the previous caller. You were talking about inviting Sylvan in and using those supplemental funds. Can you tell me how you went about that with your school district? Because we don't have a primary school next door, but we have a lot of schools that surround us. Most of them are using the supplemental funds in their own afterschool program. So how did you do accomplish that?

Then, you also mentioned something about a resident staff that, I guess, Sylvan hired.

Leona Patterson: The supplemental money automatically goes to every child that is classified as failing in the school.

Dorla Bonner: Right.

Leona Patterson: No provisions were made for that to be done at the school. They had to go the vendor site to do this. The vendors were not immediately available; they needed a place to come. So what I did was partner with the churches immediately around us, the ones that could pick up some of the kids in those neighborhoods and the ones that I could pick up. We went to the school district and we told them, "Look, these are the kids that can be serviced. We will assume the responsibility for recruiting them. We will make sure the vendors are there, and also see that

you get your reports.” The Pontiac school district was having problems getting the kids to take the supplemental tutoring, because it’s done after the normal school day.

Dorla Bonner: Right.

Leona Patterson: So that’s why we did it that way. Then, we have one vendor who even tutors right in the home. They send a tutor into the home; the parent has to be there.

Dorla Bonner: OK. So you don’t have a Sylvan or something at your center?

Leona Patterson: No, no they come.

Dorla Bonner: Sylvan comes to your center?

Leona Patterson: Yes, they come to the computer center.

Michele Higgs: I think what we’re talking about here is the partnership and getting someone to come to your property.

Leona Patterson: Exactly, but they’re using the supplemental money.

Dorla Bonner: Right, directly from the school to Sylvan.

Leona Patterson: Yes.

Dorla Bonner: Because I’m into the supplemental tutoring, but I just missed that piece. OK, I got it.

Leona Patterson: I think we ought to all be thinking about that. You'd be surprised of the amount of money that is not being used, simply because parents don't know that it's available or how to access that money. The parent may not understand the letter that is sent to them. We rewrite the letter and give it to the school district and they mail it.

Michele Higgs: I'd like to go ahead had move on to another question, then. Jennifer.

Operator: We will now take our next question from Adetoun Omole from Housing Authority from the City of Milwaukee.

Adetoun Omole: Hi, everyone good afternoon. My name is Adetoun. I'm calling from the housing authority of the city of Milwaukee. My question will be for David, I think. We have a new center coming up and the population there is senior, and they're mostly Russian speaking. So, I'm wondering, outside of ESL, what other programs could we do with them that would be beneficial? Or how would I go about doing that?

David Zermeno: Sure. Well, with the Russian community, I tried as much as possible to create programs that are free. So for example, I established a relationship with one of the residents from the Russian community. I essentially, provided some training for him; I spent a good two days with him.

Then I taught a class, a computer class, for the Russian community and he translated for me. What has happened is that the Russian class has already learned so much that they had to move to a different session, and I had to bring in the next batch of Russians, and they are now going through, and they learned the Internet. They learned Microsoft Word. They started learning how to access resources on Russian Web sites, and how to get information, and then they were able to communicate with their relatives.

Establish a relationship with one of the residents who speak the language. Make sure that person is given training so that your expectation is being met, regardless of the language and the cultural barrier. What has resulted is I'm now teaching the advanced Russian class because I've established really good relationships with them. Of course, once someone has a good experience in the center, then they start telling their friends, and all of their friends start coming. You have to start thinking about new community programs. In our case, I've taken those advanced Russian computer students, and they're now learning English and computer training.

So that's something I've used. You don't have to hire anybody. You can actually use the residents in your community, if there's someone there who is willing to volunteer. In this case my Russian volunteer really enjoys teaching and he's also learning other things here administratively in the organization.

Michele Higgs: Excellent.

Adetoun Omole: Thank you.

Michele Higgs: That sounds like a wonderful way to work someone completely into your organization.

Thanks, David.

Leona Patterson: That's also a way to get them to be self-sufficient, because our seniors get hired through something called a senior aid program, if they want to work. It's a benefit for them, because what they earn is considered a stipend, so it doesn't impact their Social Security. And once they are here, and they do very well, some of our seniors return to work.

Michele Higgs: Great.

Leona Patterson: Plus they are working outside of Lancaster, and they are working in areas that they are interested in, but they got their basic computer skills and service delivery skills here. We have one who just got hired by Job Link.

Michele Higgs: Fantastic. Now, folks, I'm going to have to bring our call to a close. I can't believe it because we've had so much good information this afternoon, and so many good questions. But, the clock on the wall says we're running out of time.

David Zermeno: Do you mind if I just say one thing?

Michele Higgs: OK.

David Zermeno: I promise to keep it short. I just want to stress how important relationships are. For example, I'm always trying to be creative with the afterschool program. So I went to the supermarket here, and I met the manager and gave them our center's newsletters. So he's going to be sponsoring our snack program. I like to identify the community resources. I went to Best Buy, and met the manager there. I applied for a grant with Best Buy and I got \$7,500. But again, it has to do with establishing relationships; I can't stress that enough.

Michele Higgs: You have made a number of fantastic points this afternoon. Thank you so much, David. I hope everybody has taken notes. I want to thank all of our speakers. David, Debbie, and Leona. I really appreciate your contribution to this call this afternoon.

And I want to remind all of our listeners about the resources available through the Neighborhood Networks Initiative. Now, 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 can go to the Neighborhood Networks Web site and post it on the Neighborhood Networks online message board where the staff or your peers will see to it that your question gets attention.

Of course, you can always call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line with questions at 888-312-2743 or you can find resources at the Neighborhood Networks Web site, which is www.neighborhoodnetworks.org.

I have a new notice for you this week; the RTAWS are coming. The Neighborhood Networks regional technical assistance workshops will take place in Nashville, Tennessee from April 23, through April 25 and in San Francisco, California from July 9-11, with two-day grantwriting sessions preceding each set of workshops. Keep your eyes on your mailbox; your invitation package should be coming soon.

Again, our calls in the coming months will continue to focus on helping you build your center's capacity. The call on March 11 is entitled, "HUD's Super NOFA Process and How Neighborhood Networks Centers Can Participate". So prepare to learn how you can apply for grants for your centers when the Super NOFA, which is an acronym for Notice of Funding Availability, is published. That call will also address the benefits of partnering with community organizations, colleges, and universities to participate in the Super NOFA process. So, please mark your calendars.

Again, you've gotten a lot of good information today. If you have any questions, please post them to the online message board and we'll be certain to get them answered for you.

I thank our callers, once again, for a magnificent call. Leona, Debbie, David, thanks very much and Joyce, out onsite, thank you. Take good care everyone and we'll talk to you next time.

Operator: This concludes our conference. Thank you for participating and have a good day.

END