

NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS

Moderator: Michele Higgs
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3 p.m. EST

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

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

Michele Higgs: OK. Thank you, Robbie. Happy New Year, everyone, and welcome to the Neighborhood Networks January conference call. This is the first call for 2007, and I thank you for joining us.

The topic for today's call is "Organizational Development: Building Your Center From Within So That Your Residents Will Never Be Without." My name, as you heard, is Michele Higgs, and I'm a technical assistance coordinator representing the team of technical assistance coordinators who work with you to address the needs of the various Neighborhood Networks centers around the country.

As I said, we're talking about organizational development today, and organizational development focuses on improving the effectiveness of an organization and the people in it.

A Neighborhood Networks center is an organization. It is made up of center staff, property management, property owners, the community, and most important of all, the residents. They

work together. They work together toward a common goal, for the vitality and sustainability of the center.

The purpose of this call is to help center staff organize to manage themselves, their resources, their time, and their centers most effectively in order to serve their residents.

Before I introduce our speakers, I want to remind you about the Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool, also known as the START business plan.

START contains resource materials that help you look at the capacity of your center and provide the foundation upon which you can organize your activities. It will help you look at who your residents are and survey your residents' interests and needs.

It will also help you organize your thoughts and plans while you assess and evaluate your center's operations. START is also key in crafting the partnerships that strengthen the center's profile in the community. These partnerships are vital when considering how your center can, and will, grow.

If you have questions about the START business plan, resident surveys, marketing plans, or general questions pertaining to Neighborhood Networks, please 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. Again, toll-free call is (888) 312-2743 or visit the Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org. I also want to remind listeners that a verbatim transcript of this call will be made available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site in about two weeks.

Now let's acknowledge the following centers, new to the neighborhood. There are 14 this month. We have Caroline Arms Learning Center in Florida, Cathedral Hill Homes in Minnesota, Monaco Arms Achievement Center in Florida, AHEPA 1 Apartments in Georgia, East Gate Apartments Learning Center in Georgia, Morris Heights Learning Center in Georgia, Regency Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center in Georgia, Tall Pines Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center in Georgia. We've got to give Georgia some applause here! Broadway Towers Learning Center in Tennessee, Titus House Neighborhood Networks Center in Pennsylvania, Centennial Plaza Neighborhood Networks Center in Missouri, West Side Community Services in New York, Azalea Gardens Learning Center in Alabama, Forrester Gardens Learning Center in Alabama.

So let's hear it for these Neighborhood Networks centers and welcome them to the neighborhood.

Now, this afternoon, we want to help you connect the dots when it comes to enhancing the work of your center. A Neighborhood Networks center is an organization, and it should be presented as such. You know, you create a center schedule and abide by it. When you say you're going to be open, be open. You can create rules and regulations that guide operations so the staff and residents are clear about center policies and procedures. From center staff and center resources to cooperation and buy-in from the managers and owners, to the commitment of the community and stakeholders; from establishing your mission and goals to creating a START business plan that defines who and what you are, the concept and practice of organizational development comes into play.

But you didn't call to hear me ramble on. The presenters who will address you today speak from the experience of helping organizations grow.

Our first speaker, Ron Butler, has experience developing and managing national community development initiatives and resource development and management for nonprofit and for-profit organizations.

Further, he has worked closely with over 25 Neighborhood Networks centers over the past five years. He directed a national initiative in conjunction with HUD that supports partnerships between institutions of higher education and public and private organizations to revitalize economically distressed communities.

He also founded and directed the Neighborhood Housing Development Corporation in Illinois, one of the first certified community housing development organizations in the nation that has become a leading nonprofit affordable housing developer in the state.

Currently Butler operates a multi-faceted consulting firm that has provided training, strategic planning, organizational development, and technical assistance to public and private organizations.

We will also welcome Becky Taylor who has been director of the CWA Cayce Learning Center in Nashville, TN, where she oversees center programming and administration. She's been there since 2000.

She's been working with the Neighborhood Networks centers since 1998 when she opened the Pulaski Neighborhood Networks Computer Learning Center in Pulaski, VA. You may note that CWA Cayce has been recognized as a Model (Level 3) center in the Neighborhood Networks Center Classification system and it was the first center in the nation to be designated.

Becky will speak about what organizational development looks like from the ground up because clearly CWA Cayce is doing something right. Our speakers today will help you look at the

concept and reality of organizational development and help you learn how to turn your centers into Model (Level 3) centers and we'll do it one center at a time.

So pull out your pencils, everybody. Ron, would you like to get us started and talk a little bit about organizational development and how to use resources to make your centers toe the line?

Ron Butler: Thank you very much, Michele, and welcome, everybody. I think, as Michele said, she made a very important point which is the very first thing as you think about your organization and its growth and development is to think about business planning, strategic planning, because that will drive, as most of you know, everything that you do.

Many centers are either working on their business plan or are thinking about how to put together a business plan which is, in effect, a strategic plan. So as you think about and work through the development of your business plan, you're actually thinking about your organization and the growth and development of your organization over the short and long run.

That's important because there are short-term goals and objectives that you'll develop and long-term goals and objectives you'll develop. Also you'll be thinking about internal operations, which is really what we're talking about today, which is organizational development; and then external activities, relationships with other people, stakeholders, partners, etc.

As I said, today we're focused on, or will be focused on, the internal operations, what I like to call the infrastructure of the organization, which is comprised of systems, manuals, procedures, staffing and your budget, which I'll come back to.

All of it leads to a strong and sustainable organization. No organization – I've worked with many over the years – not any of the really good ones and long-lasting ones wouldn't have made it if

they had not developed internally first, the infrastructure, the guts of the organization, if you will, the operations of the organization.

So let me jump ahead a little bit and mention a couple of things in terms of how you really start with the planning process. Really your budget, in a way, is part of your planning document.

So I wanted to start our conversation, or my presentation, around, you know, sort of making sure you develop a good, solid budget for your organization. That's been an issue I've seen around the country. Organizations don't really develop clear, strategic budgets.

Once you've developed a strategic budget you can then design a resource plan to help achieve the programmatic goals that you have.

So the first thing is to develop a budget. I should say that, actually, the budget would be the second thing. The first thing is to develop your program activities, think about what you want to do and then you develop your budget based on what you hope to undertake in the short- and long-term.

The budget, I'm focusing on that because it is not only a planning tool, it's a management tool and, as you think about how you manage staff, whom you hire, how many people you hire, whether you can afford a program, which programs you keep, which programs you have to terminate, it serves a really critical role in organizations' development.

We can get into some more detail about the budget. I only have a few minutes to do the presentation but I really want to hear questions about budget development and really in a broader sense, it's financial management because as you get resources, financial resources in particular, you have to be able to manage and report on those resources in an efficient way.

That's where you get into record keeping and tracking, and a system where you use technology, use your computers, to help you become much more efficient as an organization.

We've moved to the Internet, you know, to software programs. Life is a lot easier if you learn how to use the technology that's out there today to operate your organization and especially around financial management.

One of the things I emphasize is groups, organizations have to be good at managing their financial resources as well as their human resources.

Other parts of organizational development would be oversight, which is setting up committees and advisory boards and other entities that will help you achieve your goals because, of course, as a staff – and I know many of the centers have one or two people operating the centers. You can't do it by yourself, of course.

So having committees, strong committees made up of residents and stakeholders who can bring resources, whether its human resources or financial resources to your organization, is critical. They also help oversee the operations so that you do stay on track.

They also work with you around your planning processes. So you need to have these other entities, these other important people as part of your operation so that they oversee and help in resource development as well.

Marketing and communication. I think these items are as big as budgeting in a way because it's very difficult to attract financial resources if you don't effectively market your organization.

There are a number of ways to market your organization, of course. Again, I don't know if we want to go into detail right now but you can certainly ask questions and get more specific around that.

There are all kinds of venues, whether it's the Internet, whether it's local newspapers, whether it's your own newsletter, all kinds of ways to market your organization but it is critical that you get the word out about what you're doing, your programs, your operations, how effective you are, how you attract volunteers, whatever way that you can sell what you're doing, that is how you attract resources and people to help you with what you are trying to accomplish.

Let's see. I would add a big thing that does not happen enough which is taking time, stepping back, and evaluating what you do. We talk about tracking and reporting, and we do it in sort of a mechanical way when we do it, but it should be more organic. It should be sort of an ongoing process.

You should always be looking at what you're doing, evaluating, analyzing what you're doing so you can shift. If you need to do a mid-course correction you can do that, but it's an ongoing process. It's just not at the end of a grant, not at the end of a program period. It's ongoing. Evaluation is an ongoing process and it is very critical to being strategic about your work and being effective in accomplishing what you set out to accomplish.

Let me just say one sort of macro – make one or two macro statements, big statements.

Residents have to be at the center of your work. That is just so critical. That means that residents serve on those committees and that you train residents to perhaps help you with some of the operational matters.

Sometimes it's a little tricky to have residents involved in the financial end of your work, but if you can find, you know, good residents that are capable, or can be trained to handle certain things, I

think it would be an asset because over the long run it's about sustainability and the residents are going to be there. You may, or may not, be there.

You want to be able to build a capacity of residents to operate the center. What if you, you know, find another job or whatever? Or if you're out for a while, the residents can step in then – and you have a kind of succession plan, which is also part of the planning process.

So, think about how you get residents involved in the internal operations as well as reaching out, doing marketing, and all that other stuff to attract stakeholders to your organization.

Let's see, I think for right now I'll stop there. Michele?

Michele Higgs: I have a question for you ...

Ron Butler: OK.

Michele Higgs: You just made an interesting point here, in that a number of times technical assistance coordinators when they're working with centers, try to help the center directors to find volunteers or residents to work with them. But, is there anything that you might suggest in terms of, I guess, materials to help center directors train people to do some of the tasks that you're talking about? Because I know you can assess, you know, trustworthiness or whether they work well with you, but that's sort of esoteric. Is there any kind of site you might suggest, or where we might get questions to test people to see what their aptitudes are for doing certain things?

Ron Butler: They have. There are a lot of tools out there on the Internet that can be used to sort of determine if people have certain skill sets to do certain things with organizations. I mean, I don't want to say – put one over another, but I think there are many tools and I'd be more than willing

to sort of help sort those out for people if they're interested in finding a tool to evaluate a resident's capability to support their work.

Michele Higgs: I got it. Well why don't I see if we can open up the lines now. Robbie? Can we see if there's anyone with questions?

Operator: Absolutely. If you'd like to ask a question over the phone today, please do so by pressing the star key followed by the digit one 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, for questions over the phone today, please press star and one.

We'll take our first question from Heather Boswell with AIMCO [Apartment Investment and Management Company].

Michele Higgs: Hi, Heather.

Heather Boswell: Hi. I just had a question. I'm kind of new at this. I'm wondering if you guys can recommend any resources for marketing ideas or suggestions. Is there just one place that we can go to look?

Michele Higgs: Well, I'm going to jump in really quickly.

Ron Butler: OK.

Michele Higgs: On the Neighborhood Networks' Web site there are a number of technical assistance materials that you can use. There's a possibility of downloading a number of things if you're looking to do a special event or if you're trying to contact the media. A lot of those tools are available for you there.

Right off the top, of course, I can't think of titles. But what you can do is start there and you can always contact the toll-free line at (888) 312-2743 and they can give you some assistance. You can even call and ask for me directly and I can, you know, help to guide you.

Ron, did you have anything else on that?

Heather Boswell: No. Thank you.

Ron Butler: No. I think you – I was going to say that Neighborhood Networks has manuals and things like that. So you actually covered it.

Michele Higgs: Yes. OK.

Ron Butler: Yes. Yes.

Michele Higgs: Covered it all. Robbie, anyone else on the line?

Operator: Once again, if you'd like to ask a question, it's star one. We'll go next to Regina Coda with a Neighborhood Networks center.

Regina Coda: Yes. Hello. Like she just said, I'm Regina Coda.

Michele Higgs: Hi there.

Regina Coda: I didn't hear my name being called when you called the new Neighborhood Networks centers.

Michele Higgs: What was the center?

Regina Coda: We're in Chesapeake, VA, and we're just the Neighborhood Networks Center of Chesapeake, VA.

Michele Higgs: Oh. Now that's interesting because we – had you submitted your START business plan and gotten it approved, because ordinarily, that's where I get that information from.

Regina Coda: OK. Probably that's not ...

Michele Higgs: It may not have ...

Regina Coda: ... submitted.

Michele Higgs: ... it may not have gotten through yet, so ...

Regina Coda: OK.

Michele Higgs: ... if you – just keep listening and you'll hear it.

Regina Coda: OK. I will.

Michele Higgs: But thanks for calling in. That was Chesapeake?

Regina Coda: Yes.

Michele Higgs: I just want to get that note so I can check on it.

Regina Coda: We're Hunter's Point and Forrest Cove Apartments.

Michele Higgs: OK. Hunter's Point and Forrest Cove. I doubt if it's an oversight but I will check on it.

Regina Coda: OK.

Michele Higgs: Thank you.

Regina Coda: Yes. OK. My question is on developing a budget.

Ron Butler: Yes.

Regina Coda: Well, first of all, who do you begin asking money for to run the center, to help with some of the finances?

Ron Butler: Yes. Before you start asking for money you need to think about what you want to do, and because when you ask for money you have to be really clear about what you're asking for.

So, the first thing you do is think about programs. What are the things – and the way you – and the way you should develop your programs is by first surveying your residents and other stakeholders and important people as to what's really needed in the community, what's really needed in your area so that you know that you're providing the services that they need and want.

After you do that, then you start thinking about how much is it going to cost to offer this particular service, or what equipment do I need to purchase to provide for this particular activity.

So, that's how you start developing your budget. If it's computer equipment I may need – and some of this, a lot of this in fact, is in the START business plan. So as you do the START business plan you'll see what I'm talking about.

They'll ask you how much it's going to cost you to get 10 computers for your center. If it's, you know, \$10,000 or whatever, then that begins to develop a budget for you whether it's your staff and your personnel costs, you know, how many hours you put in or whoever puts in, etc.

So your budget sort of evolves, as I said earlier, out of your plans for programming.

Regina Coda: OK. Well I'd like to bring in some help and I'd like to just give them something for their volunteer time.

Ron Butler: Yes.

Regina Coda: I don't know how to go about getting monies for that.

Ron Butler: There are a couple of ways. I was going to mention this earlier. Raising money is – just to put it on the table – it's a difficult thing to do especially in these days and times. But it's not impossible and especially it's much easier if you are real strategic and you plan. You think about what you're going to do first.

In terms of raising money for volunteers and staff, a lot of times that money is connected to a particular activity, whether it's a back-to-school program, you might go to a local community foundation, or you might go to a local business, or you might go to a local wealthy person. You could go to the local school, a nearby school, and see if they have some funding that they might do a joint effort with you.

There are all kinds of ways of attracting money, but it has to be put in the context of the program. It has to be done. It's not just to pay for a volunteer. It's to cover the cost of a program which would include the cost of a volunteer or staff person. You get what I mean?

Regina Coda: Yes. Yes, and for the overall operation ...

Ron Butler: Exactly.

Regina Coda: ... of the program. Yes.

Ron Butler: Exactly. Exactly. You won't be asking just I need, you know, \$1,000 for a volunteer. I need \$5,000 for the program, and \$1,000 will go for the volunteer or the staff person.

Regina Coda: OK. All right.

Michele Higgs: May I also interject that overarching this is that you need to know what you're there to do. That would be your mission statement from which everything else falls. You know, the START plan starts you off by helping you to develop a mission statement that reflects, you know, what the purpose of this center is and what you intend to do because that's going to be key when you're going out looking for money.

Regina Coda: OK.

Michele Higgs: One more suggestion, Ron mentioned schools. When you're thinking about volunteers you might connect with your local high schools or your community colleges in terms of offering internships. You know, if there's a student who's interested in a particular topic and you can provide them time, they might be interested in learning to teach computer science or whatever.

You have computers and you have people who need to learn. There's a match between what you need and what they need. That's what they're earning. They're earning the time learning to do what they want to do and you're not paying them in cash, but you're paying them in terms of letting them gain experience.

Ron Butler: Right.

Michele Higgs: If you could do that.

Regina Coda: Well, thank you.

Michele Higgs: Thank you. Thanks, Ron.

Ron Butler: OK.

Michele Higgs: Robbie, anyone else out there?

Operator: It appears there are no further questions at this time.

Michele Higgs: OK. OK. I think that was a good start. Thanks, Ron. We'll probably come back and then talk some more.

Ron Butler: All right.

Michele Higgs: Becky, are you still there?

Becky Taylor: I'm still here.

Michele Higgs: If you could take over and talk a little bit about CWA Cayce and what it looks like from the inside?

Becky Taylor: OK. Well there are several things I think that are really important in maintaining a healthy organization. As Michele said earlier I've been here at the learning center for about seven years now and just want to share some things that I learned along my journey.

So this is really where rubber meets the road, everyday kind of things that just helps us do our job a little bit better. So we wanted to share those with you.

The first thing I learned was recording and tracking data. Ron mentioned this earlier. One of the most critical things in becoming a successful Neighborhood Networks center is being able to record, track, and report data efficiently. Our funders more or less demand it from us now.

So, we've found Microsoft Access has saved our life. If you don't have a way to track your clients on your computer, or you're just doing it in Excel, Access is a great way to get started. I'd encourage everybody to take a class in it if you get that chance.

I took a class at another center and found it very helpful in meeting our needs and what we needed as far as the database was concerned. With that program we're able to create our own database that records our clients' demographics. It'll track milestones they've reached, class attendance, just to name a few.

We track what funders and others ask for us so we can report it to them regularly. As Ron said earlier, it gives us a picture to do an evaluation of ourselves, how are we doing with our programs, what have we done, is it being successful, are we meeting the goals that we set forth at the beginning? So we're able to look at that picture whenever we want to.

And, we're able to run reports as often as we want to without digging through stacks of paper and files that are sitting on our desk. So it takes a little work on the front end to get that data entered, but when someone calls and needs a number, you've got it there, more or less, at the press of a button.

Thanks to Neighborhood Networks we have START where we can store all that, as well as once we've got it all compiled. That gives us a great picture of what we've been doing as well.

The second thing I've learned is that we all need to have a clear understanding of what we're responsible for. It's very important that everyone working at the center understands what it is that they're there to accomplish.

Here at the center we all have job descriptions that we're familiar with. We've seen them. We've read them. We know what they say and we meet regularly to go over things that may have come up that we weren't expecting.

Usually, we all know this. If you just assume someone's going to take the lead on something, it may very well not happen. So we're really careful about how we delegate, and this doesn't just apply to paid staff, but also to volunteers.

I make sure to take the time to check in with staff and volunteers, make sure that they're feeling confident about what their responsibilities are and answer any questions regularly. A volunteer who's not sure of their responsibilities is very unlikely to come back.

I know I can speak for all Neighborhood Networks centers when I say we love our volunteers and most of us can't do our jobs without them. So that's been an important lesson.

The third one is about partnerships. We have a small staff, like most Neighborhood Networks centers, and we know we can't do everything on our own. So we've been really strategic about creating partnerships with organizations that can offer services to our residents that we can't do ourselves.

For example, we have a very large refugee population that really wants to learn English. There's no way I can teach an English class. I can't fit that into my day. More importantly, I'm not qualified to teach that class.

So we've partnered with three different groups to host their classes at our site. So, they provide a trained teacher and curriculum, and we provide students and a great space for them to use.

So, we challenge you to think about your community needs, what resources already exist in your area that may address those needs, and help you with that. We work a lot with a couple of larger organizations in the area. The city school system, just to name a few.

The fourth thing that I've learned is understanding how I work and how my staff works. Everyone has their own style of how to do things. It's important for me to understand how I work and it's important for me to understand how those that I employ work.

I know I like to have lesson plans done a week ahead of time, but I also know that my staff is perfectly fine doing them a day or two ahead of time. Is it done in the time that I like to see it? No, but it gets done and it's done very well.

So, I don't stress them out about asking to see their lesson plans a week early because I know they'll get it done and they'll be great. They've proven that to me.

So, if we take the time to understand how we do tasks differently, we're not going to waste time worrying or arguing over things that in the long run really don't matter as long as everything's getting done.

The fifth thing that I've learned of the millions of things I've learned in the time I've been here, is to reserve time to take care of the day-to-day activities. I have a basket on my desk that's full of papers. I look at it all week. It taunts me. It reminds me of one of my least favorite things to do and that's filing.

Well, it's my least favorite task but it's something I have to do in order to maintain any sort of control over my work space, and the way that I disseminate information. Neighborhood Networks centers typically don't have the extra staff to delegate these things to. I don't.

We have busy schedules, but one thing I've learned since I've been here is that you have to make the time to get the little things done. So, every Friday I've blocked out a little time to do my filing, fill out purchase orders, make sure all of my data has been entered, things that don't have to be done the minute it touches my desk, but things that need to be done.

Nothing else interferes with that because it's a standing appointment on my calendar. So if we don't take the time to do what seems mundane, we get unnecessarily overwhelmed and that affects our performance.

So, I have run through all of that and then Michele's looking at her watch going ...

Michele Higgs: No. No. No. By all means go on.

Becky Taylor: Hopefully, I've been able to give you all a few things to consider in this New Year about how managing those day-to-day activities will lead you to more success because it's been the little things that's put us ahead and kept us competitive.

Ron Butler: Michele, may I add a couple of things?

Michele Higgs: By all means.

Ron Butler: OK. What Becky just mentioned about, you know, making sure staff – the whole staff is on the same page, I mean –I think meetings are really important. Not to have too many meetings, but it is really critical to have good meetings with staff and volunteers so everybody's on the same page.

Sometimes, you know, it's a make-or-break. You could make or break the program, or the organization. If you're on the same page and understand where you're headed and meetings, many times, help you do that.

A lot of people don't like meetings. Some – and I agree with them – but some meetings are really important and you should always plan to have meetings at certain times so there's the consistency within your organization about the purpose of the meeting and when they're going to take place.

A couple of other things. Trained staff. I think it's critical for staff to stay current in all kinds of things that are going on involved with running an organization or running a program.

There are free training programs that are offered through community colleges, or schools, or other organizations. You should take a look at what's being offered so that – especially around operations and management of organizations – because it will help you and your organization

over the long run if you're well trained and current around organizational development and just organizational management and operations.

The third thing I want to mention is the connection. Michele mentioned this earlier. The connection, or relationship, with the owner and manager. You're a unique kind of nonprofit organization because of your connection to the property.

In many cases the connection, if you have a good connection with your property manager and owner, the likelihood of sustainability of attracting resources, at least for the midterm, you will be much greater.

Beyond that is just the planning. It can support you in planning your programs if, at times, they may even connect you with key stakeholders, connect you with key funding sources, that will help sustain your organization.

So, I just want to emphasize that keeping the owners and managers at the table, if you will, will help in the short and long run.

Michele Higgs: Great. Those are all great points, Ron. I don't want to jump in if you're not done though.

Ron Butler: No, that's all.

Michele Higgs: OK. OK. Those are all great points. I want to throw out just a suggestion before we go to questions and answers, and that is that folks who are participating, think about the little things. Becky has mentioned the day-to-day.

When she was talking, I recalled some time ago when someone called in to mention that for success stories and accomplishments for his center he had a little basket attached to his wall and

whenever someone did something good he would throw the little note of whatever into this basket.

When it came time to go after funding, or to impress the boss or whatever, he had something to draw from. You know, and he knew, where all of this information was. He had all of it captured in one place because, as Becky said, sometimes your desk can get full of paper and if you're not filing it right away it mounts and mounts and mounts.

I thought that was a good tip. Before I open the lines up, Becky, did you have anything else?

Becky Taylor: One thing I do want to add just quickly is that it had been mentioned about committees and having people there to help you. One thing that's really made us successful is the formation of an advisory board.

That board is made up of property owners, property management – we serve two different properties, so they're all invited to attend – someone from the local school system, residents, and other agencies in the area. We meet quarterly and get together and share what the center's been doing that quarter, but also to share ideas, things that are happening in the community that we need to know about.

That's probably been one of the huge things that's really contributed to our success is having that support system and that network of individuals that meets quarterly.

Michele Higgs: So would you then say that's just because of good communication ...

Becky Taylor: Absolutely.

Michele Higgs: ... with the community and within the center is key?

Becky Taylor: Absolutely.

Michele Higgs: Great. Great. Robbie, I'm going to open up the lines, please. Can we see if anybody's called in?

Operator: Absolutely. Once again if you'd like to ask a question over the phone, please press the star key followed by the digit one on your touch-tone telephone at this time.

We'll take our first question from Dana Gumbs with DB Consulting Group.

Michele Higgs: Hi, Dana.

Joyce Mortimer: Hi. This is Joyce Mortimer. I have a couple of points for Michele. I think that Regina and Heather and others might be interested in learning more about TARGET, which is the Technical Assistance Resource Guide and Educational Toolkit that has been produced.

I believe that copies were sent out to all center directors. However, I guess that anyone can call the toll-free number for more information about how to get additional copies.

Michele Higgs: Exactly. Exactly.

Joyce Mortimer: The second point that I'd like to make, that Becky mentioned, is how really important recording and tracking data is to a center's success. She talked about database development and maintenance.

She talked about Access, Microsoft Office's Access application. It does scare people sometimes. One of the easiest ways to begin developing a database is to use Excel. You can use an Excel

spreadsheet and that can be transferred as you begin to learn more and more about Access.

That can be transferred, exported, into the Access program.

The critical point that she made is that you've got to start somewhere so that you can pull that information quickly when you need it. So you can start with Excel, begin to learn, use the tutorials to learn Access, and then export the information.

You can also go to Microsoft Office for the step-by-step online tutorial.

Michele Higgs: That's some great information. Thanks so much, Joyce. That's a good point and one that I neglected to mention. TARGET is a new publication that has been produced this year by Neighborhood Networks. It includes a lot of the information that Regina and Heather were asking about with regard to marketing information, just all kinds of information. It's a huge book.

If it didn't go out to the centers I would suggest that you give the toll-free number a call. Again, that's (888) 312-2743 and make that request and they'll be able to get a copy out for you.

Robbie, do we have any other one on the queue?

Operator: Once again, if you would like to ask a question, it's star, one. We'll go next to Prince Obiri-Mainoo with Winn Management.

Prince Obiri-Mainoo: Yes. I ...

Michele Higgs: Hello there.

Prince Obiri-Mainoo: ... yes. Thank you very much. Becky, my question is, it's actually not a question. I think I missed your second point as you were enumerating one, two, three, and I don't have my second point yet.

Michele Higgs: This was for Becky?

Prince Obiri-Mainoo: Yes. This is for Becky Taylor, please.

Becky Taylor: My second point, if I understand you, is understanding that everybody should have a clear idea of responsibility, so everybody understanding what it is that they're at their center to do, whether it's your staff or your volunteers, everybody should have a very clear vision and be working toward the same goal.

Prince Obiri-Mainoo: Oh. OK. Thank you very much.

Becky Taylor: You're welcome.

Michele Higgs: That was good. Thank you. Robbie?

Operator: We'll go next to Tarsha Marcellus with Ujima.

Michele Higgs: OK. Thank you.

Tarsha Marcellus: Hi. This is Tarsha with Ujima. My comment, I believe that Ron made, was (inaudible) the meeting and the staff training. That's one thing that we really committed to last year was holding on the first Friday of the month a meeting just for the staff, and then the second Friday doing some sort of training.

The difference that it has made has really truly been a big difference. You can tell with the staff and just make sure that everyone stays on point. So, I really do encourage everyone to do the meetings.

So yes, they are a headache. Friday is not an ideal day, but it works out best for the centers and we've really been able to see a difference.

Regarding the relationships with the managers and management, that's one thing we always say going in, is that if you don't have the relationship with the management and owners, it's just hard for it to work.

The best way that it works is when you are on the same page with the management, staff, and the owners because if the managers have your buy-in, it's just such a win. We've seen the difference between not having that buy-in and when we have it.

We truly have a great management relationship. They do so much in just helping to support the program and the services. So, I just wanted to comment on those because those were great points ...

Michele Higgs: Great.

Tarsha Marcellus: ... that we found to be just really successful.

Michele Higgs: Terrific. Some validation.

Tarsha Marcellus: Yes, yes, yes. and thank you for the tip on the success stories. That's one place we've been struggling with, on capturing them and remembering them. We do monthly reports for the managers and owners.

Michele Higgs: Yes.

Tarsha Marcellus: Trying to go back and say, how you remember what happened, you know, the first of the week, the first day, you know ...

Michele Higgs: Yes.

Tarsha Marcellus: ... we had that success story. How do you capture that right then and there and then remember it when it's report time to basically put that in. So, I'm definitely going to share that in our Friday meeting.

Michele Higgs: Oh terrific. I thought it was a great idea.

Tarsha Marcellus: It definitely was.

Michele Higgs: You know, it's something that looks different than everything else on your desk. You might be able to use it and remember.

Tarsha Marcellus: Right.

Michele Higgs: Good. Good. Thanks for calling in.

Tarsha Marcellus: Thank you.

Operator: We do have another question.

Michele Higgs: OK.

Operator: Scott Charleboix with Kiemle Hagood.

Michele Higgs: Hi Scott.

Scott Charleboix: Yes. Hi. My name's Scott Charleboix. I have a question for Becky.

Michele Higgs: OK.

Scott Charleboix: I'm Microsoft certified in Access. How do we get a copy of your database?

Becky Taylor: Well, that's a great question.

Michele Higgs: Oh. Sharing.

Becky Taylor: If you would – I can give you my e-mail address.

Michele Higgs: You can do that or I can, you know, I can make the connection for you. It's not a problem.

Becky Taylor: OK. Then we can chat that way. We've been fortunate enough to work with another organization that has the data manager who's helped us create one. So, I can get you in contact with her and she would be able to give you that information.

Scott Charleboix: Good. Thank you.

Michele Higgs: Well, I will be able to make that connection for you, Scott.

Becky Taylor: Thank you.

Scott Charleboix: Thanks a lot, Michele.

Michele Higgs: OK. Thanks so much. Robbie, anyone else on the line?

Operator: Once again if you do have a question, please press the star key followed by the digit one. We do have a question from Tara Mikhail with AHEPA-78 Apartments.

Michele Higgs: OK. Great.

Tara Mikhail: I just wanted to see – I caught the end of the discussion today. I wanted to see if it's going to be posted on the Web, or are they going to e-mail it out?

Michele Higgs: Absolutely. In about two weeks there should be a verbatim transcript on the Web site.

Tara Mikhail: OK. How do you get to that, to the link for that?

Michele Higgs: It would be www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org and then you would go down to – goodness gracious, I look at it every day – I want to say News Events. It'll have Archived Conference Calls. Underneath that you will see points for each of the calls that have taken place over the last year.

Tara Mikhail: OK. Great. Thank you so much.

Michele Higgs: OK. If you have any questions or any problem with that, call the toll-free line which is (888) 312-2743. They can walk you through it.

Tara Mikhail: 2743?

Michele Higgs: Right. If you go to the main Web site, on the front page, just run all the way down until you see the Archived Conference Calls.

Tara Mikhail: OK. Thank you so much.

Michele Higgs: OK. You're very welcome.

Operator: We'll go next to Delphine Smith with Jimmy La Memorial Computer Research Center.

Michele Higgs: OK. Delphine. Hi.

Delphine Smith: Hi. My question is: will you make that database information available to everyone?

Michele Higgs: What do you say, Becky?

Becky Taylor: Well, I don't know that we can put out our database.

Delphine Smith: No, not look at your database but like ...

Becky Taylor: Just the main Microsoft Access?

Delphine Smith: Just a sample.

Becky Taylor: We might be able to put that together.

Delphine Smith: Not – we don't – I don't need your database.

Becky Taylor: Right. No, no, no. I can talk to the data manager at the other center. We might be able to put some screen shots together and I'll talk to Michele about how we can best work that out ...

Michele Higgs: Yes. Yes.

Becky Taylor: ... and put that on the Web site maybe.

Michele Higgs: Yes. Why don't we take that offline and we can arrange to work out something for you, because I think the screen shots might be a good idea because you just need to get a sense of what's there because you're going to create your own. It'll all be different.

Delphine Smith: Yes or either just, you know. Is there any type of Yahoo! group or anything that this is part of, or do you just have to do it off the Web site?

Michele Higgs: Are you talking about getting the Microsoft Access?

Delphine Smith: No, just like sharing information that way, besides the little success stories. I know we all see the little success stories, but there's never anything about them, like a discussion group.

Michele Higgs: Oh. Now that's an interesting point. I mean, that's what we're here for. That's what the monthly conference call is all about as you, you know, have questions about the topics that we present then you get to do just what you're doing now. In terms of like a Listserv or something.

Delphine Smith: Yes. Like in between the monthly meetings.

Michele Higgs: Right. I understand exactly what you're talking about. Let me get back to you on that.

Delphine Smith: OK.

Michele Higgs: OK, Delphine? Thanks so much.

Delphine Smith: Thank you.

Michele Higgs: Okey doke.

Operator: We'll take our next question from Jeniece Pitts with Allied Housing.

Michele Higgs: OK.

Jeniece Pitts: Hi. How are you guys doing?

Michele Higgs: Real good. How about you?

Jeniece Pitts: Fine, thank you.

Michele Higgs: Good.

Jeniece Pitts: First, I just want to thank you guys for providing so much valuable information. Secondly, I'm really new to this position and am finding as I'm here kind of training myself that we're not recording or tracking any data.

I certainly understand how to write an Access database. I've wrote many of them. My problem is what kind of data do I need to be recording? I can't seem to get a straight answer out of anybody who's been here before and I'm just wondering if you guys could provide me with that information or if there's resource I should be using.

Michele Higgs: Well there's something else we can help you with and to go into in detail would probably not be a good idea.

Jeniece Pitts: Exactly.

Michele Higgs: You do want to find out who, what, how much, and when, you know, little details like that, in terms of what the usage is for the center because those are the kinds of details that are important when you're going after fundraisers and things like that.

Becky, did you want to tackle that at all?

Becky Taylor: I think a great place to start is, quite literally, is to go to START, to the START system on the Neighborhood Networks Web site and just see what kind of questions they're asking, because I think they ask a lot of questions that are similar to questions that a lot of our funders are asking, a lot of our advisory board members are asking.

Definitely start with demographics, who they are, where they live, their ages, attendance, how often they come to class if you're doing classes. I think START is a good place to go, initially.

Michele Higgs: Have you had an opportunity to visit that yet?

Jeniece Pitts: You know, actually, while I was listening to the call I pulled it up and started browsing through it. It's really interesting because, you know, this fax just came across my desk and the person who sort of trained me really didn't give me any information about Neighborhood Networks. I'm finding it's a really great tool to use.

Michele Higgs: Oh good.

Jeniece Pitts: So I'm actually really happy that I stumbled across this.

Michele Higgs: Well if you – you know, take a look at that online, which you can do. Also, I've given out this toll-free number a thousand times. Everybody should know it ...

Jeniece Pitts: I actually have it.

Michele Higgs: OK. There are folks at that toll-free line that can walk you through and help you work through that program.

Jeniece Pitts: Perfect.

Michele Higgs: So if you have any questions, you know, they could help you do that.

Jeniece Pitts: Sure. Well ...

Michele Higgs: Becky brings up a good point. You know, the kinds of things that are addressed in the START plan give you the rudimentary things that you need to create your database.

Jeniece Pitts: Right. I guess I was just more concerned, I mean, do I need to buy software to track, or can it just be something as basic as a log, you know?

Michele Higgs: I mean, that's where it can start.

Jeniece Pitts: Right.

Michele Higgs: You know, that's where it can start. As Joyce had mentioned earlier, you can go to Excel and then go to Access, but a lot of centers start out with, you know, a sign-in sheet.

Jeniece Pitts: Right.

Michele Higgs: You have to have something ...

Jeniece Pitts: Right.

Michele Higgs: If you're doing classes, or something like that, you want to know who's coming in the door and what they're coming in for.

Jeniece Pitts: Exactly.

Michele Higgs: So, it starts as basically as that, but then, you know, you have to keep track of those pieces of paper.

Jeniece Pitts: Exactly. Well, thank you guys so much for answering that question.

Michele Higgs: Sure. Thanks, Becky. Robbie, anyone else?

Operator: At this time, it appears there are no further questions.

Michele Higgs: OK. Ron, did you want to throw anything else in?

Ron Butler: No. I just wish all of you well and hope that this was helpful in some way. I guess, Michele, if you want to share my e-mail address, or whatever.

Michele Higgs: OK.

Ron Butler: I'd be more than willing to share more information, more details ...

Michele Higgs: OK.

Ron Butler: ... than what I've presented.

Michele Higgs: All right. I can do that. I can do that. Becky, anything for you?

Becky Taylor: I just appreciate the opportunity to be able to talk with everybody today.

Michele Higgs: OK. Well, thank you so much for joining us. And I think we've covered as much as we can cover on the world of organizational development and we've gotten a lot of good questions so I appreciate everyone who has called in today.

We're getting close to the end of the hour, so I'm going to go through a little housekeeping stuff here if you don't mind. Since we have a few minutes left I just want to remind you that our February conference call – gosh, we're into a new year. Isn't that something?

That'll take place on Tuesday, February 13, 2007, at 3 p.m. That'll be on the topic of "Office of University Partnerships, How to Make Your Local University or Community College Work with the Center."

Also, I want to skip ahead to tell you about an innovative call that we have planned for March on the topic of workforce development. We're planning an interactive roundtable discussion that will include residents as well as center staff and professionals.

You'll learn more, of course, but mark your calendars for March 13, 2007.

I want to offer my sincere thanks to Ron Butler and Becky Taylor for joining us today. It's been a really helpful call. It has moved along with a lot of good information and some good questions and I thank you both so very much.

I want to remind all of you of the resources that are available to you through the Neighborhood Networks Initiative. Aside from the Neighborhood Networks toll-free information line, everybody say it with me, (888) 312-2743, you may find numerous resources and information on the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org.

Plus, I wanted to tell you that it's not too soon to tell you about upcoming events with Neighborhood Networks. This year we will host our National Training Conference in Washington, D.C. That'll take place from August 8 through 10, 2007.

Then, of course, there's Neighborhood Networks Week which will take place from June 25 through June 30. You should look for the postcards reminding you to Save-the-Date in just a few weeks. I'm giving you plenty of advanced notice. So, we expect great things this year.

If you have any questions about either of these special events feel free to ring the Neighborhood Networks toll-free information line at (888) 312-2743, and they can set you on the right path.

I also want to take you back to the Web site. We've talked about success stories. I want to remind you that on the Web site you'll see success stories that could trigger an idea for you or validate a plan that you've been considering for your center.

Tooting your own horn in a success story. Tell us about the good activities that are going on at your center. The Web site will show you how.

I want to thank you again for joining us today and wish you a happy, productive 2007. Take good care and we'll talk next time. Thanks everybody.

Operator: That does conclude today's call. You may disconnect your line at any time.

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