

## **NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS**

**Moderator: Michele Higgs**  
**January 8, 2008**  
**3:00 p.m. EST**

Operator: Good day everyone and welcome to the Neighborhood Networks monthly conference call.

Today's conference is being recorded.

At this time, I would like to turn the conference call over to Michele Higgs.

Michele Higgs: Thanks, Kim. Greetings of the New Year everyone, and welcome to the Neighborhood Networks January conference call. I'm Michele Higgs and today I'm joined by Cheryl Dixon, who coordinated the content for this call.

Cheryl and I represent the technical assistant team that works with you to address the needs of the Neighborhood Networks centers around the country. I thank all of you for joining us for this month's call, "Workforce Development – Programs That Work".

But before we begin today's call, let me welcome three new centers to the neighborhood. Those centers are North Park Plaza Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center in Minnesota; Fayette Hills Unity in West Virginia; and Centennial Village Opportunity Center in New Jersey. Now, while 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 assess the needs of your residents, determine what resources in the community can help you meet those needs, and help you keep track of the partnerships that address them. START is the key to developing those partnerships because it is a true business plan that strengthens the center's profile as a business, making the center more attractive to potential partners. START also helps you examine the capacity of your center and provides the foundation upon which you can organize your activities.

Now for more resources, if you have questions about the START business plan, resident surveys, or questions in general 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](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org).

Let me tell you about online networking through the Neighborhood Networks Online Message Board. You can share information among yourselves, post news, and ask questions. Be aware that this is not a "real-time" resource, but you can post your information and revisit the board in a day or so to see what kinds of responses you have received. Just go to the Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org) and click on the Neighborhood Networks online networking link to the right under the green banner labeled "Helpful Tools." When you get there, you can take a minute to review the instructions or dive in; select Enter Online Discussion and pick a category for your comment.

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.

About our topic for today, "Workforce Development – Programs That Work;" one of the major challenges our Neighborhood Networks centers face is helping residents to help themselves when it comes to approaching the job market. Today's workforce is ever-changing and wildly

competitive, requiring more of workers as they try to move forward. Many residents are hindered by the lack of basic skills. Others need training in the specialized skills to keep up with today's technology. Both situations leave residents unprepared to enter the workforce and stay there, and they are keen barriers to employment and advancement.

Workforce development programs are essential for Neighborhood Networks centers' success because they can assist a number of residents to remove those barriers, improve job skills, and ultimately pace their progress toward self-sufficiency. While it's important for residents to have access to job postings and resources for approaching these positions, it is equally important to keep residents in the positions that have resulted from the success of their efforts. It's also constructive to approach workforce development with some understanding of what the employment picture looks like for job seekers in your area.

During today's call, we hope you will learn how to provide residents with the information they need, available through the programs you offer, the Internet and other resources, and help get them engaged and keep them interested in your center's workforce development activity. We hope hearing from programs that have been successful in establishing meaningful activities for residents will give you some ideas. We have a number of speakers who will share information with you today, so I'm going to ask Cheryl to go ahead and tell you about each of them before we begin.

Cheryl Dixon: Our first speaker, Nelse Grundvig, monitors the Labor Market and Occupational Research Group for the North Carolina Employment Security Commission and is a part of the management team for the Labor Management Information Division. Also, as trainer for the Labor Market Information Training Institute, he has helped individuals across the nation understand and

effectively use labor market information. He will share with us a picture of what the larger workforce looks like.

We'll also have Carolyn Harris, center director of the Community Network Learning Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Carolyn has been the director of the Community Network Learning Center for more than seven years. The center has made great strides in developing workforce development programs for its residents; it achieved Model status in 2006. Carolyn certainly has some secrets to share with us.

Sophia Comas-Phillips joins us from Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey. She will speak about the work of the Diane Armstrong Family Learning Center, which serves Goodwill Terrace residents and the surrounding community in Astoria, New York. The center's graduation ceremonies for 60 adults completing the ESL, computer skills, and basic education classes were featured as the kickoff event for Neighborhood Networks Week 2007.

Then we will welcome Theresa Youmans and Sandra Hagins, owners of Able Solutions Training and Development Center in Hampton Roads, Virginia. Youmans and Hagins have initiated a workforce development program with a HUD residence community workforce center in Virginia Beach, Virginia and a partnership with local church workforce centers in Hampton Roads, Virginia. They illustrate how networking with the local, state, and federal agencies and partnering with local communities, school boards, and educational institutions is the key to developing and growing workforce development programs that enhance the workforce for employers and help to achieve the goals of potential employees.

Michele Higgs: Thanks, Cheryl. Now that you've heard about all our speakers, I would like Nelse to get us started. Nelse?

Nelse Grundvig: Yes. Thank you for allowing me to present some information this afternoon. I hope what I have to say will be helpful.

Let me start by talking a little bit about what we see as the future of future job markets. In general, when we put on the 'what-will-happen-in-the-future' hat, we have to think about a lifetime of learning and being able to adapt to a dynamic environment. That includes technical, social, and economic change. If the '90s are any indication of what's going to happen in the future, hang on to your hats because change in the future is going to happen even faster.

We need to start looking at larger patterns. We'll also need better problem-solving skills, including the use of technology and stronger communication skills. When we look into the future, those jobs that continue to grow and to flourish will require the ability to find the answers.

English skills are going to be more critical in the future. The other thing is better math skills; particularly if they're applied. For those of you that are suffering from algebra fear, I'm sorry, but people are going to need to have to know how to deal with math.

I'd like to talk a little bit about some of the myths that people have concerning jobs, and to try to put this into a context that may help. The first myth is employers hire people. You've heard that myth a hundred different times. The reality is employers do not hire people; they hire skill sets. If you don't have the skills, don't bother applying. If all they needed was people, they wouldn't bother to ask about the skills that you have as a person. If you think about the job that you possess, you have it because somebody thought you had the skill that was needed to move forward and to help the company.

Another myth is that employers care about the community. I'm not saying that they don't, but the reality is employers care about the community about as much as you care about the neighborhood. The first concern is for them to be able to stay in business. If they can't stay in

business in your neighborhood, they will move elsewhere. In other words, businesses are still very much concerned about making a profit.

Another myth is: "I don't need to worry about soft skills. That's something that the computer can do for me." The reality is employers cannot afford to have staff that is not worth their word, unable to perform their tasks, unwilling to help or feel entitled. If you don't have that kind of mindset, you're in trouble.

Good English skills are going to continue to be necessary. As a matter of fact, right now, English is considered to be the international language of business and there's no reason to believe that that won't continue to be the case for the next 20 years. I'm not saying that foreign languages aren't important, but first and foremost is to get the English skills down; particularly with regard to work safety, the ability to use technology, the ability to interact and communicate your ideas clearly and concisely.

Another fairly common misconception is: "What I do on my time is mine." Unfortunately – we all do this, by the way – we judge a business by who they hire, and who they're associated with. Character and customer service count and if you cost the business more than you bring in, you're a liability and they can't keep you.

So, when we look to the future and we see where we're going and how we're going to get there, the things that count are going to be – and this is from the employer's perspective – can you make it work for me; can you do it the way that I need you to do it, and can you encourage customers to come back.

We suffer, in some ways, from a myth of "If I work hard I can succeed." That is still true, but if you work hard it's probably more accurate to say you *may* succeed. But if you don't possess the skills that the employer needs or the ability to acquire those skills, you *must* fail.

Michele Higgs: This sounds like a wake-up call to me.

Nelse Grundvig: Well, yes. The other side of this is we have to realize that employers are going to continue to require people to be aware of and to develop their skills. In North Carolina, where I work, I try to make projections as to what will happen to the state's economy. In North Carolina, of the 64 occupations that are managerial or business related, 45 are going to require a four-year college degree or experience. Not all jobs are going to but one out of five jobs will require a four-year degree.

The jobs that don't require a four-year degree are the jobs that typically have the highest turnover; they typically have low pay and employers have a fairly hard time getting people to fill those positions. But the other side of it is that employers think of those as starter jobs; where people can start but not necessarily move up. The only way you're going to move up is if you have the skills.

The percentage of jobs that are going to require post-secondary training in this country is going to continue to increase. You definitely need to consider developing your skills. That doesn't mean that everybody has to go to a four-year college, but it does mean you have to be open to learning and doing more things more often. If you stop and you think about the technology that you yourself have experienced, you have seen that things have become easier in some ways because of the use of computers, without having to know how to do the programming. But you've had to learn how to use those computers more effectively to meet the everyday needs of your employer. Generally speaking, those that don't require a four-year degree are going to continue to require technical or service training.

What we see in the future as far as soft skills go, not only for management, but for the workers in general, is we're going to be working with more diverse populations. That includes a broader

sense of culture, with more interactions. To accomplish that task will require improved communication skills.

We also have to be able to see both the opportunities and the challenges of the job as it's been laid out to us, and sometimes you'll hear people talk about that in terms of complex problem-solving. That's going to become a critical skill, particularly in the relative future.

You're going to have to prove your worth every day. It's not sufficient that "this is the way we've always done it and I'm the person that has always been doing it that way." Every day you have to prove to the business and to your customers that you're worth their time and effort. You'll have to apply problem-solving. Plus, probably one of the things that we're going to see more in the future is a differentiation between management and supervision continue to grow. So, you're going to have managers that won't necessarily know how to do everything, but you're going to have supervisors that are going to look at managers and say, "This is why we have to do it this way. Can you help us organize this in a way that helps us make it happen?"

I mentioned earlier that each of the states have different systems and local economy. Every state in the country has Labor Market Information (LMI) professionals that can provide a variety of information to help you. That includes supporting documentation for your marketing plans, occupations in different industries, industries where the jobs exist, economic data and reports, age and gender composition, location of businesses, employment and wages by both occupation and industry. There's also a variety of places where you can get information to learn how to use this documentation and one of them is the LMI Training Institute – [www.LMI-net.org](http://www.LMI-net.org).

The important thing to remember about all of this is your documentation is what counts. The economic conditions, wages, and employment are needed to help you show that you're being effective; they help the job seeker keep current with their information so they can find the jobs that they need to do; and you can look into the future and see what's happening in terms of where

we will be and how we match up. Michele, you mentioned earlier that it's time for a wake-up call; in part, because we can see the workforce having to adapt to these changes. If they don't adapt, unfortunately, they'll be left out.

There's a variety of things that we can bring to the table across the nation with the LMI shops. Fortunately, most One-Stop centers and workforce organizations have that relationship already, and would certainly challenge you to find out who they are in your local area. But they can include projections, both industry and occupation; measures of income; measures of inflation; and the skills that are required for the different occupations that I, as an applicant or as a jobseeker, need for my future. It's a national network. We're all tied together and we at LMI actually produce the information that you see in the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Census Bureau and several other places. That's what we're here for.

Again, I want to thank Michele for allowing me to do this synopsis. But we're all here and we're a resource for you. Thank you, Michele.

Michele Higgs: Thanks, Nelse. Thanks so much. Now please stay on the line in case there's a question for you, which no doubt there will be.

Michele Higgs: We often talk about the One-Stop centers when we are working with our Neighborhood Networks centers, so I'm glad that you brought them up in your presentation. The One-Stop centers are nationwide. So, that's an easy connection. I think we can connect folks to those centers.

The next person I'd like to speak with is Carolyn Harris. Are you there?

Carolyn Harris: I'm here.

Michele Higgs: You're there with the Community Network Learning Center in Huntsville, Alabama. I understand that you have been very successful down there. So please tell our listeners about the programs that you've developed and how they can do some of the work that you're doing.

Carolyn Harris: Well, first of all, Nelse was just talking about the One-Stop and that was the first partnership that I was planning to tell you about today.

We've had a partnership with our local One-Stop for several years and this past year we signed a formal MOU. The purpose of our partnership here is to address the low job skill levels in our community. We try to partner so that we can provide the best available job training programs and resources to our residents and other participants around our neighborhood. The scope of this partnership includes job readiness, job search, acquirement, and job retention. In our particular case, the One-Stop has agreed to provide periodic programs here at our site to address the training and employment needs of our participants. These programs are usually about two hours long; materials and handouts are provided by the One-Stop. Past presentations have provided labor market information, resume writing and interview guidance, job skills training workshops, and a lot of information about community referral.

In addition, the participants learn about the resources that are available at the One-Stop for which they can register and become involved. They also learn about additional services that the One-Stop has that they don't necessarily bring to the center. The One-Stop has a large resource room that has job and career skills information. They have copier, fax and e-mail services; Internet access and training; keyboarding and computer tutorials; GED classes, and basic skills enhancement. They work with the Workforce Investment Act in training, so they have funding for local colleges and employer-based training programs. They also have the Veterans Services and the Vocational-Rehab in the same building, so participants can find out about all those programs just by attending one of our two-hour sessions here at the center.

Of course, some of the things are duplicated. We also have computer classes; access to the copier, et cetera. But they find out about resources that they can use if they're not here onsite or if we're closed for some reason. There's no cost for the services at the One-Stop, but some programs do have eligibility requirements. Some things like age – there's a cap on the age – or income levels, et cetera.

So that's our first big partnership. They also provide us with a lot of materials that we can have here at the site. They have a lot of good booklets and information brochures that help on things such as interviewing, dressing for jobs, helping to find daycare; all those sorts of things. So they have a lot of good resource material.

The second partnership that I wanted to mention is one that we have with one of our local community college, the Calhoun Community College. This partnership is formalized now with an MOU and they come onsite two nights a week to provide GED classes; the classes last for anywhere from three to four hours. We've had several graduates and we have a lot of people who are getting close to graduating. So we're real excited about that.

As part of the GED training, the state of Alabama has also incorporated an assessment tool called "Work Keys". A lot of what Nelse was discussing is covered in that assessment program about understanding what your skills are; it's a program that helps employers identify workers that are better suited to their jobs. So, Alabama has decided that that's one of the things that they're going to really stress in all of their work programs and that's one of the things that we have here at our site; the Work Keys.

Those are our two biggest partnerships and they help us provide training resources to our residents, even though we don't really have a qualified employment person on our staff. Since we only have two people that are employees, it's difficult to do everything. So having those partnerships is about the only way we can get a lot of that done.

We do have a few other services onsite that are not a result of those partnerships. We have computer-based employment skill software on all of our computers so that residents can work at their own pace to find out what their skills are; increase these skills; and find out what jobs they're best suited for. If they've been in and out of jobs all their life and they haven't really been able to stick with anything, sometimes just taking an assessment to find out exactly what they're better suited for will help them get into jobs that they can retain.

We also have a Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) videotape series on employability, which covers a wide variety of topics, such as completing job applications; meeting employers' expectations; and workplace safety. They can either come to our center and view the videotapes or check them out so that they can take them home and view them at their leisure. This is a series that some of you may have on your PBS station as well.

In our work resource area here, we have a lot of training booklets. We keep job listings. Each month, I post new job listings and we earmark Web sites under "Favorites" so that all job seekers have to do is come in and just get on the favorites and start looking for jobs. Also our resource area has bus schedules so that if residents don't drive they can find the closest bus stop locations.

We also provide one-on-one training for things like resume preparation, conducting Internet job searches, and completing job applications. Work skills that are simple sometimes are the difference between someone finding a job and not finding a job. So, we try to do our best to work one-on-one with people who aren't comfortable in a larger group situation so that we can get them out there and looking for employment.

Those are the main points that I had.

Michele Higgs: It sounds like an embarrassment of riches; that's what it sounds like. You've got the PBS series; you've got the self-paced assessments; you've got the connection with the One-Stop. It sounds like you're doing an awful lot for your folks down there.

Carolyn Harris: Well, we try. The other part of it, of course, is always trying to get them to come in and take advantage of those resources. But that's a whole other workshop.

Michele Higgs: OK. You've given us an idea for another call. I'm going to go on to the next speaker and please stay on the line for questions.

Michele Higgs: Sophia.

Sophia Comas-Phillips: Yes.

Michele Higgs: I'd like you to speak about what's going on at Diane Armstrong.

Sophia Comas-Phillips: Well, we're very lucky in that our host organization, Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey, has a plethora of resources for us. The Diane Armstrong Family Learning Center got started because we had a community resident that started out working for the organization who lived across the street in the housing projects. She worked her way from a clerk-typist to becoming one of our senior vice presidents. It was her dream to have a center for the community. It's not that our community is isolated but it's in a little area of its own, with not many resources. We don't have a supermarket in our area. We have schools, but crossing that barrier to what we call the 21<sup>st</sup> Street line is a big deal for our residents.

So Diane Armstrong wanted to bring in the resources. Unfortunately, she passed away. Our president, CEO, and our company believed in her dream so much that they opened up this center

in her name. That's how it got started. What we decided to do was to bring resources to the community where there weren't resources. We knew that it was going to be expensive, so we got a little creative, just like Carolyn whom I just heard speak, in that we invited local educational agencies to come in and partner with us. So we partner with the local Board of Education. The Department of Education came in to conduct our adult education classes. They provide us with our GED, our ESL and our adult basic education classes free of charge for the residents. We also partner with LaGuardia Community College that also provides services for us at different times throughout the day.

When we first started, we knew we couldn't fix everything. We had the Pratt Institute come in and do a study of the area to show us exactly what was missing; one of the issues was child care. We had young adults who worked at night or during the day and didn't have anyone to watch their children while they took classes. So we opened something in our center called the Discovery Room where we watch the children of the parents who take classes. It's not daycare and it's not childcare because the parents are onsite. That has boosted our enrollment. Children have to be between the ages of two-and-a-half and five. We have a waiting list of children now for the Discovery Room; we also have a waiting list of parents for the classes. Plus, we get students from all over Queens and from across the street from Highland Projects.

In addition to our ESL, GED and adult basic education, we also hold computer classes. We have two types of classes. We have a computer-assisted program where the students learn on their own with industry software, and we also have computer instruction where we teach the classes. Usually, we gear those classes towards our seniors.

We also have an afterschool program. So at 3 p.m., when all the adults leave, we have an afterschool program for children between 5-12. Our counselors are our high school students. From 6 to 9 p.m. we hold our adult classes again.

But within Goodwill Industries, we have our own temp agency. We operate our own One-Stop. We have workforce development programs with our local human resource administration. We also have a whole division servicing individuals with disabilities. Our resources for referring our students are just extensive.

Michele Higgs: Talk about soup to nuts.

Sophia Comas-Phillips: We make sure that our students have everything that they need, at tax time to conduct the tax workshop. During the summer our center closes down for adult classes and we open a summer camp for more than 100 kids. Within Goodwill, we also are a summer youth employment provider. We employ 500 kids throughout the city for the summer and put them to work. So that's another advantage that we have; for the summer we have youth between the ages of 14 and 21 that work for us. So we use them as counselors in our camps, in our administration, or in janitorial maintenance. Whatever field they want to go into is where we try to place them.

Michele Higgs: You said the age is 14-21?

Sophia Comas-Phillips: Fourteen to 21. It's actually funded by the Department of Youth and Community Services here in New York City. Our contract is to service youths from Queens and Brooklyn. We actually have youths that started out with us in our afterschool program, went into our summer youth employment program, then became group leaders in one of our programs, and worked through college. Now they're professionals and they're directors of our programs getting their masters degrees. So we actually keep our youth with us and we groom them to become professionals within our organization. We have a couple of directors and assistant directors and coordinators who actually started out with us in our summer youth employment program. In addition to running the Family Learning Center, I'm also the assistant vice president for our entire youth division. We have about 21 different youth services programs in the city.

We operate four beacon programs, which service youth and adults. We tie in workforce development for our adult piece. At Goodwill, we have a motto. "We try early intervention. If we get them when they're in our youth services programs, we're trying to put our workforce development programs out of business". That's our motto.

We go to executive staff meetings and we tell the senior VP of workforce development, "Yeah, we're going to put you out of business, because we're going to get to them before they get to you."

Michele Higgs: There you go. That's a great goal.

Sophia Comas-Phillips: Yes, we have resources for our students and that's what counts. If we can't do it, then we'll refer them to another agency that can. We have partnerships with the Floating Hospital, Phoenix House, which is a rehabilitation center; and with museums and cultural centers to expose our students to different things.

Michele Higgs: This is phenomenal. I'm going to stop you now and let folks ask you questions. You can stick with us, right?

Sophia Comas-Phillips: Yes.

Michele Higgs: OK, good. Hang on just a moment and I'm going to ask Theresa to tell us about Able Solutions.

Theresa Youmans: OK, I'm listening to Carol and the Diane Armstrong Center and you're doing a lot of what we plan to be doing. Able Solutions is a new workforce development center. We haven't opened yet but we've begun the process of partnering with the Workforce Development Network

already in the community. We've begun to build partnerships with local community churches, with the educational institutions, and with the military personnel offices to build a network.

We're trying to build a strong network of employers for potential employees. One of our methods is to have the employers come to the center and we'll provide workshops for the potential employees and seminars and career fairs. We want to build a very strong network by working with the employers to find out what qualifications employees will need.

We will offer job development; job readiness courses and workshops; resume writing, how to complete an application, cover letter writing, interviewing skills, dress for success. There will also be life skills classes to help residents with job retention. I feel the workforce development centers need to develop, build, and enhance the skills of employees. We also have to build a strong relationship with our residents. I think with a network like that, we will be able to provide quality employees and have a good network of employers.

We do partner with the school system; the local school system in Newport News here in Hampton Roads. We are partnering with a Neighborhood Networks center, the Friendship Village out of Virginia Beach. So we're in the building stage right now. But a lot of what you all are already doing is what we're trying to build towards.

Michele Higgs: OK, Theresa. I'm going to stop you then and one of the things that I hear that's consistent among all of you is that partnering with outside organizations; educational institutions; churches; other nonprofit organizations, and community organizations is key to constructing a workforce development program for your residents.

I'd like to start off the question-and-answer session. My first question is for Sophia, with Goodwill Industries. Is the kind of work that you're doing with Diane Armstrong nationwide? Can all of our centers look for opportunities to partner with Goodwill?

Sophia Comas-Phillips: There are Goodwills in every state; however, they are all autonomous. We are connected by a member service center, which is called Goodwill Industries International. But if anyone is interested, I could always connect them to their local Goodwill in their area because we're a tight-knit group.

Michele Higgs: Is there a Web site or a link or some information that we can spread?

Sophia Comas-Phillips: If you go to the Goodwill Industries International Web site, which is Goodwill.org and type in your zip code; it'll show you to your nearest Goodwill.

Michele Higgs: Let me ask one more question. To whom should an inquiry be directed?

Sophia Comas-Phillips: See, that's the thing. All Goodwills are totally autonomous and totally different.

Michele Higgs: I see. A little research needs to be conducted.

Sophia Comas-Phillips: Yes, for instance, we have our own youth services department. Some Goodwills actually have their youth services under their workforce development, which we do not.

Sophia Comas-Phillips: Some Goodwills don't have youth services at all. Some don't have family learning centers. Some who have them are listed under a different name. So, it's very tricky.

Michele Higgs: Got it. Well, let me ask Kim if we have anyone on the line with questions. Kim?

Operator: Thank you. If you would like to ask a question, please do so by pressing the star key followed by the digit one on your touch-tone telephone. If you are using a speakerphone, please make sure your mute function is turned off to allow your signal to reach our equipment. Once again, press star one to ask a question. And we'll pause for just a moment.

I do have a question from Sandra Hagins from Able Solutions.

Sandra Hagins: Yes, good afternoon. It's been a pleasure listening to all the speakers and this question is actually addressed to Carolyn out of Alabama. It seems like our business is actually like a mirror of your business. Do you have a Web site that we can access for information so we can network and see how you actually set up your business?

Michele Higgs: Why don't we handle that information offline?

Sandra Hagins: OK.

Michele Higgs: I think you're speaking of Carolyn in Huntsville? We can exchange that information for you.

Sandra Hagins: OK, thank you.

Michele Higgs: Anybody else Kim?

Operator: I have no further questions at this time.

Michele Higgs: OK. Well, I can talk about workforce development all day. I think we've had a really good information session here and I wanted to ask a question of Carolyn.

What kind of insights could you give to new centers who are trying to start workforce development programs? Because I know it's not an easy task and you've had a lot of good activity going on there.

Carolyn Harris: It's not easy. That's true. I think the main thing is to remember that all centers are different. It depends on the size and location of your center. We're lucky enough to have a One-Stop here in our city, and I realize that there are a lot of cities who don't have that opportunity. So that makes it a little bit harder.

But I would think the main thing is to learn the resources in your community. That's the biggest thing no matter what program you're working with; whether it's your work skills; your youth programs; or your senior citizens. Whatever you're working with, you have to know the resources. You can't always have everything there at your center that you need, but if you are able to either partner with an agency or to at least send your residents to that resource, I think you're doing what Neighborhood Networks centers needs to be doing.

Even thinking about workforce, consider your local businesses. If you're just a small city or you don't feel like you have all the resources you need, get to know those local businesses and what they're looking for in their workforce. If they're getting a lot of people that are new hires that they don't keep on the job because they don't follow the company schedule or they don't follow the supervisors' instructions, then those are the things that you could offer in a workshop. Encourage job seekers to have better work skills; work on job readiness, not just computer or typing skills. Consider a workshop on how to talk with someone at work, how to dress at work, and how to manage time to ensure that workers follow the time schedule. So I think you've just got to look at what your community needs and what your residents need, and try to match them.

Michele Higgs: Well, that is ideal because I was just looking at some information that we put together about workforce development. We identified major industries in the area, something which Nelse

spoke about, and researched the local labor market, then determined what skills the residents need.

We've talked a lot about soft skills as opposed to hard skills. Soft skills include communication; problem solving; and time management, realizing that you have to get to work on time and do what you're supposed to do while you're there.

Carolyn Harris: Right.

Michele Higgs: Also included is teamwork. Not all tasks are done individually; you might have to work with other folks. You have to have that skill in addition to technology and industry skills.

I'm going to stop rambling and ask Kim if there's anyone on the line.

Operator: Yes, we do have a question and that comes from Joyce Mortimer from Neighborhood Networks.

Joyce Mortimer: Hi. This is a great session. I have two questions. The first question relates to retention of job readiness participants; people who are learning the soft skills so that they can maintain a job. What has been your collective experience in helping people to move forward? I've heard what you've said and you've got successful strategies. Over a five-year period, have any of you gone back to revisit those former participants to find out who's still working.

The second question is a larger issue that relates to downturns in the economy. You've all experienced that with your organizations, but what do you think is the likely impact of the situation; the economy and what that may mean for new entries?

Michele Higgs: OK, I'm going to throw that out for anyone. Who wants to pick up on either of those questions?

Nelse Grundvig: Well, if I may, I'll take a stab at the second part of that. When you're dealing with new entries and you're talking about a downturn in the economy, unfortunately, there's not a single answer that fits the equation well. In some cases, if the economy starts to contract, you may see people who have better skills being pushed down because their businesses have not been successful in competing. That may make it more difficult for people starting out without the skills because suddenly, instead of competing against people like themselves, they're now competing against people who have more skills and experience. Employers will hire those people that they feel can work for them and if somebody's willing to do it, they'll hire them.

On the other hand, when businesses do go into a contraction mode, there is an opportunity for people to take a look and see what skills are going to be needed as they start to expand. When there is a lot of turnover, that's usually an indicator of business expansion. So when business contraction takes place, those new hires are more likely to keep those jobs and develop those skills while they're working; if that makes any sense. So, it is difficult for new persons coming in, but once they get in, it's a great chance for them to develop those additional skills and abilities because, well, frankly, the opportunities for other jobs aren't going to be as available but it gives them an opportunity to pick up the skills in an environment where they know that they're currently working.

Michele Higgs: OK. I think Joyce is no longer on the line, so I will thank you for your response, Nelse and ask if anyone has a response to the earlier question about retention. I would ask Sophia, since you have a lot of services at Diane Armstrong.

Are you there?

Maybe she's having phone problems again. Does anyone want to take that one?

Carolyn Harris: This is Carolyn. I'll just tell you that as far as job retention, unfortunately, it's not as high as we'd like to see. It's always difficult for us to completely track it because we do have residents that are moving in and out and they don't always keep in touch with us. But I think we've learned to track as well as we can.

But if we know we've had success with one resident, then we try to build upon that when we're working with another resident, to let them know that this was the situation with one person and this is what happened and, let them know how they're succeeding at work; if they've been promoted or if they've moved into a different type of job. Then I think any success that you have is going to help you when you're working with a resident by letting them know that if they stay with it, and they're willing to put the work into it on their end that, then there's something out there for them. So, I don't really have any statistics but we feel like any one success is a success. So, we just build on them.

Michele Higgs: That sounds great. Cheryl, did you have a comment?

Cheryl Dixon: Well, actually I was thinking about how you described what a work development program should look like to qualify as a success. There are various definitions for a successful workforce development program.

We have mentioned the rise of someone from basic clerk level all the way up to vice president, which is an obvious success. But any small contribution, large, medium, any size, is certainly a welcome contribution. I wanted to also have everyone keep in mind for their centers, that whether you have a new center where you're starting off with the basic skills and you're doing in-house work, or whether you're developing and building bigger programs with larger partnership efforts, that all of them can be considered successful.

Michele Higgs: Well, sounds good to me. Kim, do we have anyone else on the line?

Operator: Yes, we do have a couple other questions. Our first one will come from Mariana Stachnik from  
Lithuanian Center.

Michele Higgs: Hello, Mariana.

Mariana Stachnik: Hello, Michele. Thank you for this wonderful program that we catch religiously.

Michele Higgs: Oh, great, thank you.

Mariana Stachnik: Yes, very informative. Thank you very much. My question is for Nelse. I would like to  
verify the Web site. How do you exactly spell – LMI?

Michele Higgs: Nelse, do you have the link for the LMI? We'll include it in the transcript but perhaps  
Nelse can give it to us again?

Nelse Grundvig: Oh, sure. There – the LMI Training – excuse me. The LMI Training Institute has, on its  
pages, links to not only the various LMI shops across the country but also the workforce  
development pages as well. That link is [www.LMI.net](http://www.LMI.net), like Labor Market Information.

Mariana Stachnik: OK.

Mariana Stachnik: Dot-org. Thank you very much. Thank you very much for everything.

Michele Higgs: Let me see. We've got just a couple of more minutes. Do we have any questions, Kim?

Operator: I do have one more question and that comes from Janie Raymond from Summit Assets

Michele Higgs: Hi, Janie.

Janie Raymond: I love what I'm hearing here and I'm wondering how to get in touch with someone in the Neighborhood Networking to try to get some of those programs here in Morris Heights in Statesboro, Georgia. How can I get in touch with these programs? I think a lot of these programs will be wonderful for the tenants here.

Michele Higgs: Tell me the name of your complex again.

Janie Raymond: It's Morris Heights.

Michele Higgs: Morris Heights, in Statesboro, GA.

Janie Raymond: Right.

Michele Higgs: What we'll do is get in touch with you offline because there is a lot of information that we can give you, but at this point in time, I think it might be better if I call you and give it to you over the phone.

Janie Raymond: OK, then. All right, thank you.

Michele Higgs: Thank you, so much. OK. Kim, we have come to the end of another Neighborhood Networks conference call. I can't even say we have a few minutes left because there are none. I would like to thank all of our speakers for being with us this afternoon. We've gotten a lot of good

information and judging from the calls that we've received our callers think there's been a lot of good information, too.

Now let me remind you of the resources that are available to you through the Neighborhood Networks Initiative. You will find abundant information on the Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org) and if we didn't get to your question today you have an outlet. You can visit our Web site and post your question on the Neighborhood Networks online message board. Of course, you can always call the toll-free information line at 888-312-2743.

Now, for our upcoming call, on February 12<sup>th</sup> our topic will be "Who's in Your Community? Serving All New Residents," an exciting discussion which will present useful ways to deal with the diversity of residents that make up a Neighborhood Networks center. So save the date and mark your calendars.

I thank all of you for joining us today. Thank you again Nelse, Theresa, Sophia, Carolyn and Cheryl. Take good care. Happy New Year, everybody, and we'll talk to you next time.

Operator: That does conclude our conference call for today. Thank you all for your participation.

END

**Links for further information:**

[LMInet.org](http://LMInet.org) – For labor market information; such as, economic data, where jobs exist, trends in hiring and wages.

[careeronestop.org](http://careeronestop.org) – To find the Career One-Stop center in your area.

Goodwill.org – To locate the Goodwill Industries organization in your area.

litlink.ket.org – Public Broadcasting Service GED prep and Workplace Essentials Skills Web site; click “questions” or click on the blue book on the left to get started. There is a cost for these VHS tapes, so check the site first to see if the series is being broadcast in your area--but this offers an opportunity for centers to exercise their partnering and grantwriting skills.

\*Also, review Section 4 of your *TARGET: Technical Assistance Resource Guide and*

*Educational Toolkit*. Entitled “Moving Residents Toward Self-Sufficiency,” it will serve as a guide to positioning your center to give a boost to your residents in their effort to stabilize their livelihoods.