

## NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS

**Moderator: Michele Higgs**  
**July 7, 2009**  
**3 p.m. EDT**

Operator: Good day, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for standing by and welcome to today's Neighborhood Networks monthly conference call. Please be aware today's conference is being recorded.

Now for opening remarks and introductions, I would like to turn the conference over to Michele Higgs. Please go ahead, ma'am.

Michele Higgs: Thank you and welcome, everyone, to the July Neighborhood Networks conference call. I hope you all enjoyed your Independence Day holiday because now it is time to get down to business with our topic today, Finding Work When Times Are Tough.

I am Michele Higgs and I have been reading the paper. In a recent Washington Post article entitled *Job Losses Dampen Hope for Recovery*, I learned that economists think it is highly likely that the jobless rate will hit double digits again this year.

One day, economic predictions give us hope; the next, I read that unemployment is hovering around 9 percent. And when you consider the full measure of unemployment, which includes people who are working part-time who want full-time work, and those who have given up looking for a job, the figure jumps to more than 16 percent.

Now let's get real. Times are tough all over. But there are little winks of light here and there for folks who are trying to polish up rusty skills, find a new direction, or carve out new careers. That is what we are going to talk about today.

We have three individuals who are eager to tell you what is going on out there and help you provide some guidance for the residents who use your centers. We have Jackie Angerhofer, who is center director for the Aberdeen Workforce in Aberdeen, Maryland; Sherry Duah who is job search skills instructor with the United Labor Agency in Cleveland, Ohio. And to present the topic from the center's perspective, we will hear from Craig Knudsvig, deputy director of the Grand Forks Housing Authority in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

I know you listeners have plenty of questions for these folks, but if you will let me do a little housekeeping, I will get out of the way.

I would like for you to join me as we welcome nine new centers to Neighborhood Networks this month. They are: Parkview Senior Citizen's Computer Center in the Bronx, New York; Indio Garden Resource Center in Indio, California; Carlton County Club Villas Neighborhood Network Center in Santee, California; AHEPA Apartments Seniors Neighborhood Networks Center in Lavergne, Tennessee; SEBCO Housing for the Elderly Computer Center in the Bronx, New York; Keystone Centers Neighborhood Networks Center in Spokane, Washington; Ukrainian Village Computer Center in Warren, Michigan; Lakeview Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center in St. Matthew, South Carolina; and Coventry Place Meadows CRT Computer Center in Hartford, Connecticut.

Thank you and congratulations to all you new centers! Let me quickly review for you the resources available through Neighborhood Networks that help to guide your centers to success.

First there is the Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool known as START. You know START as your online resource for organizing your center's activity and tracking the achievement of specific goals.

Another use is as center staff completes the START business plan and focuses on the annual assessment and evaluation to review progress; you can commence your center's climb through the center classification process.

Completing the assessment and evaluation and having it approved by your HUD Coordinator elevates your center to Certified center classification and starts your center on the path to Model center classification.

START is easy to access and easy to update. Visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site, which is [www.neighborhoodnetworks.org](http://www.neighborhoodnetworks.org) and click on the link for the START business plan to the left of the home page.

The Neighborhood Networks Web site will give you details on advancing through the Neighborhood Networks center classification process or you can contact the Neighborhood Networks toll-free information line at 888-312-2743 for further information and assistance.

Use the Web site to find out what is current with Neighborhood Networks. Learn about funding opportunities and get details about the RTAW next week in Philadelphia. Register your Neighborhood Networks Week's activity and learn about other special events.

Don't forget the interactive virtual learning courses. These courses present residents and center staff with an opportunity to participate for free in a unique and meaningful learning experience. If you would like information about providing career preparation programs for your residents,

register now for the Career Preparation Interactive Virtual Learning Course and invite your residents to participate as well.

This course will focus on building goal setting skills that can be used to develop and successfully implement a career plan. Check the Neighborhood Networks Web site for the registration form and course catalog.

Now remember, if you have questions about the START business plan or other Neighborhood Networks topics, you can call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line at 888-312-2743. You can also try online networking with your peers using the Neighborhood Networks online message board.

Visit the site and take a look at the strings that have already been posted. You will find lots of information and some great ideas there. Now this is not a real-time resource, but when you post your information, you can revisit the site in a day or so and see what kinds of responses you have received.

Just go to the Neighborhood Networks home page and click on the Neighborhood Networks online networking link to the right under the green banner labeled "Helpful Tools."

Also a transcript of this call will be made available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site in about two weeks. Click on the conference call archive on the bottom of the home page.

Just think, in June jobs were scarce in every sector; manufacturing, the auto industry and suppliers, white collar professional and business services, information and financial activity; even the federal government lost jobs. The strongest sectors were education and healthcare, which grew in June by 34,000 jobs.

It is tough for residents to know whether they are moving backwards or forwards if they have been released from one job and need to retool for another. It can be horrifying, but it does not have to be. A little planning, a little success, some patience and determination can lead back to the best of times again.

We have representatives from two sides of this important issue and I am going to ask them to contribute on a few points before we open up for questions.

Michele Higgs: I'll ask Sherry the first question. What do you see for job seekers in terms of retooling for the marketplace?

Sherry Duah: Well fortunately in Cleveland, a lot of stimulus money has come from the government. So we have received a lot of funding for our agency. The industries that are most on the rise here are truck driving, transportation, as well as healthcare.

For a lot of our clients, who are interested in either nursing, or in getting their CDL Class As, there is a lot of funding for those types of careers.

Michele Higgs: Great. I am going to see if Jackie is on the line. Jackie?

Jackie Angerhofer: Hi, yes. Jackie is here.

Jackie Angerhofer: We are seeing a lot of people who are interested in truck driving, and the medical fields, also people who need to upgrade their computer skills. It is hard to believe that people still work in offices where things are done with paper and pencil. When they need to know Excel or Outlook or these types of things, we are sending a lot of people to classes.

Michele Higgs: That is great. Thank you. Craig, I am going to ask you what kinds of programs are you able to make available for residents at your center?

Craig Knudsvig: Well, Michele we have some of the traditional; access to computers, to Internet and Web searching capabilities, for people to use online searches such as Job Search North Dakota's Web site. Plus we have staff that can help them with that.

We also have, and I think I will touch on this a little later; classes on soft skills, workplace maturity, and job seeking. But for the most part, our programming is linked with the other partners that we have in the community.

We do some very in-depth computer training, a program we call Tech Force, which is intended to take someone who has little or no computer skills and get them to the point where, if they want it, they get all the way through a real high level of proficiency in Access or QuickBooks.

But in between, we use the National Human Resources Association of the Society of Human Resource Managers. We use our local chapter here to help us with things like mock interviews and interviewing practice.

We use our job service folks in many ways, including work experience placement for people who may have learned some of the technical skills but have not actually worked before or are experiencing a change in their work environment.

So, those are some of the things that we offer.

Michele Higgs: Well, you actually touched on two points. I am going to ask you to expand on partnerships. You were talking about the Human Resources Managers Program. Are there other partnerships that you use to help your residents?

Craig Knudsvig: Yes. Well as you said, I am the deputy director for the Grand Forks Housing Authority. Our Neighborhood Networks centers are owned by a nonprofit that we are the managing agent both for property and programs.

And so the first partnership I would mention is just that; our Family Self Sufficiency Program and other things we do at the Housing Authority.

I mentioned job service. Vocational Rehabilitation is another really good partner. It has provided us with funding and funding support for a number of things.

The University of North Dakota partners with us with several departments and programs, the Grand Forks Public School District, as well as the more typical Human Service agencies like the Social Service Agencies and the State Department of Human Services.

Michele Higgs: Okay. Thank you very much. I am going to give this one to Jackie. This is considered a tough economic period. How has the flow of job seekers changed for your site? Are you getting folks who are dazed looking, racing to the computers or racing in trying to learn how to do their resumes? What does it look like?

Jackie Angerhofer: I think that our workforce center traffic has at least doubled if not more. We are seeing more attendance at the different workshops that we offer.

Depending on which company is closing down, oftentimes we find people who have held jobs for a long period of time; for 20 or 30 years. Looking for a job in 2009, we have to get them used to the Internet and other sites, both to look for jobs and to look at some of the Internet resources for improving their resume, for even improving some of the skills that they have, so yes, we are extremely busy.

Sherry Duah: And also in Cleveland we have seen double if not triple our numbers as well in our centers, because all folks from all different backgrounds are now looking for employment.

Unfortunately in Cleveland, there are so many jobs that feed off of other jobs. For example, if Chrysler closes, the other companies that makes their buckles or their radio knobs or brake parts close as well.

So we are starting to see larger numbers of folks from all walks of life and we do our best to service them as well.

Michele Higgs: So it is like a domino effect.

Sherry Duah: It is.

Michele Higgs: Now both of you addressed this a little bit, but I am going to put it out there again. What do you suggest for individuals who have been in the workforce for many years and have to deal with the challenges of looking for a job in what is called the Information Age? And like we were saying, you may have had someone who turned widgets for 20 years, and now all of a sudden they are faced with doing something else. What would you suggest for them in trying to get retooled?

Sherry Duah: Okay very good. Computer skills are very, very important if they have them. If they do not, it is a technical skill they can always learn.

One of the first things I suggest that clients do is network, start to network if they can, with their coworkers that have also left. If they can get names and phone numbers, especially if that company has closed, they are going to need each other as references.

Here in Cleveland, companies will call references and sometimes clients do not always have them. They do not remember to get references. The resume is important, but making sure that they get names, phone numbers, and reference information is very, very important.

Michele Higgs: Okay that is a good point. Jackie how would you respond to that one?

Jackie Angerhofer: That is extremely important. Another thing that has come up with many of our customers, not only are companies shutting down because of economic conditions, but because business has dropped off so much, we find that many companies are cleaning house. So, no, you have not been laid off, you have been fired.

We discuss with our job seekers how to address that issue of what to say with a potential employer if you were fired from a previous job. That is very, very important and they are very concerned about it. So while it might have been an incident that caused them to dismiss our client, they need to go back and look at their history with the company. Do they always get good annual reviews? Did they have a letter of recommendation from somebody?

Michele Higgs: Okay thank you much. Craig I am going to ask you a quick one. How do you determine the employment needs of your residents? Do you conduct a needs survey or just refer someone who is unemployed to an organization, or a social service organization, or a workforce development organization, or a company that is looking for employees?

Craig Knudsvig: We are pretty well plugged into our residents as to what is going on in their lives.

We have a resident services coordinator, in addition to our Neighborhood Networks staff, whose job it is to help them with needs of all kinds. So she knows their status.

We conduct surveys on a regular basis. Minimally, a couple times a year we talk to every resident. I suspect at least twice a year has been the average for a formal survey.

I mentioned our partnership with the university; we use a lot of interns to prepare and distribute surveys on various topics. Employment and employment needs or education leading to employment is just about included in every survey.

Additionally, our center is open to the community. So again, those partnerships with other agencies are a great way for us to get to know what the needs are in the community, what the job openings are in the community. We have developed relationships with employers that are apt to be hiring or that we know will steer us in the right direction for clients that have special skills or special needs.

Michele Higgs: All right. Thank you.

Craig Knudsvig: Michele, one thing I would mention. I think it was Jackie who mentioned almost a doubling in the number of people they are seeing. We do not see the economic peaks and valleys here that some parts of the country do, but the perception is the same.

We are seeing layoffs. We are seeing cutbacks in manufacturing and things like that. The news drives a lot of this anyway. So people that are not working, just by listening to the news, can very easily convince themselves that it is a much harder task than maybe it really is or that they can accomplish.

The other thing I want to comment on is I think it was Sherry that said that, even if employees are not being laid off, companies are clearing out. Many employees that are the highest paid, or the oldest who have been around the longest, or anybody that has had some issues as an employee, are losing jobs not as a layoff due to a downturn but as a way to become leaner and meaner.

Michele Higgs: That is a good point. The next question is what kind of increase in activity have you seen in your center with regard to job preparation and job search? Has there been an increase as a response to the perception?

Craig Knudsvig: Absolutely. We have two centers where we operate a Tech Force Program, a formal computer skills training program designed to lead to employment. Normally, by the time we get to what is traditionally the nice spring and summer weather here, activity drops off in both those centers so that it is almost what you would call quiet.

I was in one of our centers a couple of days ago, about the middle of last week, and there were people waiting in line to get on the computers. We have seen absolutely no drop off compared to what it normal at this time of year. Instead, we have seen an increase over what it is during our busier times of the year.

We are relating that directly to the fact that there are more people looking for work; thinking they are going to need to upgrade their skills, because something is going to happen to them or they will get referred by other agencies or whatever.

We are absolutely seeing an increase in activity of people seeking, in this case, computer related job skills.

Michele Higgs: Okay. Thank you. So you are really seeing a jump in the activities.

Craig Knudsvig: Absolutely.

Michele Higgs: Now I am going to give this one to Jackie. What would you recommend to the newly unemployed? What is their first step? We talked about being certain they connect, and collect names and addresses, but after that where do they go?

Jackie Angerhofer: We have a series of workshops that they can attend. We have one that has job search and training information. With this stimulus money, everybody wants the training, but we make sure they learn how to job search also. One of the very effective things that we do is show them the Web sites where they can get labor market information. They think they are going to jump right into training without thinking too much about how much the new job would pay or what the training would be like.

We also really encourage them to have a skills-based resume. It is so easy for them to develop the kind of resume that just talks about the last job and what they did on a day-to-day basis. But we are really focusing on skills that can transfer to lots of different occupations.

I think that showing them these different Internet sites helps job seekers.

Michele Higgs: Yes. It gives them another skill that they can use.

Jackie Angerhofer: It does. And a lot of times with the Internet sites, people are not used to using the Internet for this employment information. By demonstrating it, they really get tuned into "Wow, I am going to go home and I am going to look this up and look that up and she showed me a place where I can find out what salaries are. She showed me something I can use to make my resume better."

It is really very convenient. Ten or 15 years ago, you used to tell people to go to the library and looks things up, but how many of them ever went? Now they are anxious to use their computers.

Michele Higgs: Yes that has become a fantastic tool.

Sherry Duah: You bring up a very good point Jackie. In the resume workshop that I conduct here at the United Labor Agency, we do the same thing. The labor market information; I love that Web site especially when clients come to us and talk about retraining, we send them to that Web site as it takes them step by step, things they need to know, how to advance the education they need.

There is a little section in there that is called Work Environment. I always go to it and say, "Okay, if you were in Shipping and Receiving and now you want to get into truck driving, or you were a home health aide and now you want to be a state tested nursing assistant, let's go to this Web site, and let's look at the work environment."

It tells you the worst part of that job. Then I ask clients to read that and then tell me whether they still want this training. And in some cases they will say no, they did not know they had to do this feature, or that it was going to require weekends, or they did not know a particular aspect.

Sometimes they will want to look for something else. So it helps to keep them honest; not just wanting the job because truck driving is more money, but whether they fit the job. Will their personality, background, skill set, honestly fit in with that job? It is funny, because money is one of the last items on that Web site. The money is last. The Web site focuses on training, the work environment, the worse part of the job; things that the employer will not tell them on an interview, and last, it gets into money.

So I tell clients that is how they have to think of it too. Can they do that job? Will they like doing that job? Then they can focus on the money later.

Michele Higgs: That is a terrific idea to find out if it is really something that you want to do before you jump in. And what is that Web site Sherry?

Sherry Duah: It is Labor Market Information. From here, we access it through the Ohio Department of Labor.

Michele Higgs: That is fine. I am certain it is something we can find plenty of listings. The next thing I want to do is open up the lines. We have put a little information out there. Let's see if we have any folks who might have a question.

Can we open up the lines and see if there are any questions?

Operator: Yes we can. For the telephone audience, if you have a question, please press star 1 at this time on your telephone keypad. Please keep in mind that if you have a speakerphone, please make sure the mute function is turned off. Again, that is star 1. We will pause for just a quick moment.

We will go to Mary Frances-Byrd.

Mary Frances-Byrd: Yes. I was just wondering what the exact Web site address is for the Ohio Labor Market.

Sherry Duah: I will actually check my computer now. Now you are calling from what state Mary?

Mary Frances-Byrd: Houston, Texas.

Sherry Duah: Okay. I believe the site is available in all states. This Web site actually comes from the federal government.

Mary Frances-Byrd: Okay.

Michele Higgs: It would start out with the Department of Labor, wouldn't it?

Sherry Duah: Exactly. So if you went to the Department of Labor, you should be able to access it.

Michele Higgs: If you go onto the Department of Labor dot gov, D-O-L dot gov, wouldn't you also find LMI in a drop down box?

Sherry Duah: You can. I am looking at that right now.

Michele Higgs: So what I can do Mary Frances is connect you directly and I can give you this information offline.

Mary Frances-Byrd: That would be wonderful. I appreciate it.

Michele Higgs: Yes.

Mary Frances-Byrd: Okay, thank you.

Michele Higgs: Did you have something else you wanted to cover?

Sherry Duah: Just to mention, not only for her but for all listeners, if they can access that Department of Labor Web site in each of their individual states, there is also a section titled, "related occupations." In other words, if I looked up nursing assistant, and for whatever reason I cannot do that job anymore, after salary and the wages, there is a section called related occupations.

The Web site will give you 5, 6, 10 or 12 other jobs that you could do. It assumes that you like the position you were in and that you were good at it, and it gives you other related occupations.

Part of the frustration when you lose your job is not knowing what to do next. But there are other jobs that you still might be qualified for that may not require a lot of training. And you just do not know how to tap into that, but the Department of Labor Web site gives you that information.

Michele Higgs: Okay excellent. Thank you.

Jackie Angerhofer: And the other Web site that I like to use is A-C-I-N-E-T dot org.

It is also developed through the Department of Labor. When you go onto that site, it gives you the money information first, which is how I get people interested. But you can select a state, so you pick a job and a state.

Jackie Angerhofer: And you can either type in a keyword for the occupation search or select it from a menu. Oftentimes when people select from a menu, especially for occupations like office occupations, they are able to see related jobs so you are able to tell them not to back themselves into a corner, look at all of these different jobs.

Michele Higgs: Is that A-C-I-N-E-T dot org?

Jackie Angerhofer: That is correct.

Michele Higgs: Okay. What I would like to do is ask another question. This speaks to what Craig had discussed about soft skills. In addition to giving folks access to information and increasing their technical skills, what do workforce development agencies do with regard to the soft skills?

Getting those folks who may have been turning widgets for 20 years who do not know how to go out and shake hands and interview at this point. What other kinds of workshops or access might you have for them? Sherry I would start with you on that.

Sherry Duah: Okay. We actually cover all of that. A lot of that is covered in my workshop. It is called soft skills, but I tell clients that the technical skills are very important, and employers are going to look at those technical skills. But sometimes when we look at job listings, you will see "must be punctual." So the soft skills for some folks, for some industries are important, for instance, "must be safety conscious".

Some of those soft skills are very, very important. If you do not have them, you really should not try for that job or go for that training. In other words, nurses and social workers are in the people business. So if you really do not like people, there is probably nowhere you could go at a certain age that is going to teach you how to really like people.

I start out with what strength folks have. So if they tell me look, I have been around customers for 20 years and I do not want to deal with customers anymore, then that is fine. They want to get out of the people business. So I would not target customer service type jobs for that individual.

But if they can get to work on time, if they like to work with their hands, then I look for those other skills that are important to employers and avoid soft skills where those skills play a big part of that job.

Michele Higgs: It is all about assessing that person and whether they will be suitable for this kind of job

Sherry Duah: Exactly.

Sherry Duah: One client told me, I just refuse to show up on time for work. And I just do not want to be on time. To some employers, that can be horrible. But I found that certain companies, like Sherwin-Williams and AT&T, have flexible time schedules where all you have to do is call your supervisor and negotiate the time you can come in.

I tell them on the downside, if that company ever has to lay-off, guess who they are going to want to lay off?

Sherry Duah: But you will be more successful if you find something that is in line with who you are as a person.

Michele Higgs: Good point. Jackie I am going to ask you to cover that one too.

Jackie Angerhofer: Well, when we host different workshops, we talk about these soft skills. We also talk about what employers are looking for when somebody goes on an interview. What kind of stories are you going to tell to help you connect with the employer? We also conduct a career assessment that looks at work values and helps people think about skills. They may say, "Oh yes, I did not realize that because I am well organized that is a very valuable skill."

So we help them zero in on skills and work values that are important to different kinds of occupations. Then they come up with examples for their resume and little stories to tell when they go on job interviews. So, that is how we address soft skills.

Michele Higgs: We have another question on this side. Marisa?

Marisa Connaughton: Thanks Michele. Well, it is more of an inquiry. Let's say you are somebody wanting to learn about the type of skills that you have or you lost your job and you were in a

certain field that you may not like anymore. Or you do not know how to target or identify the skills that you would need for a particular job. Aren't there exams that can help you discover what you would be good at because you may not know? Maybe you were in the nursing industry, and now you are out of a job, and you want to identify other skills you may have to fit in other types of industries.

Sherry Duah: Okay. Yes there are. I think Jackie mentioned that her agency does that. We call them assessment tests here at the United Labor Agency. You could find those anywhere. If there is a local library close to you, check with the librarian about assessment testing; that is a very good place to start to help you along with your job search.

The Department of Labor Web site might give you some good ideas too, if you want to make a change. You want to go from nursing to truck driving then, is that what you are saying?

Marisa Connaughton: It could be or that you just don't know what you like or what fields you would be good at.

Sherry Duah: Yes. There are assessments and we do those. I tell clients in my workshop, it helps if they know what they want to do. Even if they want to make a drastic change, it helps if they know what they want to do.

Then we can research the training or, whatever they are going to need. But if a client comes in and says, "You know what, I have been doing this job all my life, I do not know what I want to do, I do not know what I like doing anymore," then yes, I would refer that person to a case manager and the case manager would set up an assessment test.

What I love about that is they will get options. Usually they will come up with at least five to 10 different jobs that they never thought about before. Once they hear them, they say "oh okay, yes,

that sounds like something I might like.” So yes, it is called assessment testing and it should help.

Michele Higgs: Sounds good. Thank you.

Marisa Connaughton: I have one more question for you. Have you heard of a book called *What Color is Your Parachute?* Is that a good option for people to read a little bit about that?

Sherry Duah: Yes. We actually keep it. I think they update that every year. We have copies of that publication here and it is very encouraging, very positive, and very informative. One of the key things about acing an interview is that you have to stay positive. But yes, love that book.

Michele Higgs: It has been around forever. Craig you were about to say something?

Craig Knudsvig: I used that book myself about 25 years ago when I was unemployed. We still buy the new version every year.

Sherry Duah: Yes.

Craig Knudsvig: All of them are wonderful. None of them are silver bullets. But the key is to get people taking positive steps. And if they find something in that book or wherever that they can build on, that is really the whole idea. I read a book some years ago called *The Fifth Discipline*. The guy who wrote it is named Senge. He talks about how we tend to think of ourselves as our job. When you're asked what you do, you respond by saying, "I am this, that or the other thing." You don't say what is involved in the job but the title. We like to encourage people to sit down and discuss what they really do. What part of your job were you good at? What did you struggle with? What did you like? What didn't you like?

It is just amazing what role people will take as they look at their skills, goals, and dislikes from that point of view. The tools that are out there can help them do that. They are all good ones if they get people thinking in the right direction.

Jackie Angerhofer: Yes. If you do not know what you want to do, job assessment is the best thing because you are not wasting a lot of time.

Michele Higgs: Great. Thank you. Is anyone on the line out there?

Operator: Yes, we have a call from Joyce Mortimer. Go ahead please.

Michele Higgs: Hello.

Joyce Mortimer: Hello. My question relates to green technologies. With green technologies, where do you start in terms of assessment testing? It is nearly impossible to find an assessment test to identify a person or an organization that is knowledgeable enough about green technologies to guide them in the right direction. For example, if they are interested in engineering technology and want to move up the ladder, where do they start? If you could point to a section of the Department of Labor Web site or something else it would be appreciated. Thank you.

Sherry Duah: The green technology is so new. We are kind of fortunate here in Cleveland, with monies, with resources coming into the community. Cuyahoga Community College, our local community college, is advancing in green technologies. So we see it now in construction, in building materials. There is something called sustainability and we see that a lot now in Cleveland.

And Tri-C, Cuyahoga Community College is an area that teaches green technologies. You really have to research that by starting with your local library.

We are fortunate here in Cleveland because when it comes to construction, HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) you almost have to go green. You cannot keep using antifreeze. You cannot keep using the old chemicals because they are harming the environment. Everybody knows that now. Here in Cleveland the push is to use more sustainable materials in commercial and residential building. It's new; it's the next big thing.

Start your research at your library or your local community college. I have not researched the Department of Labor yet but I am sure it is going to emerge in the next year or so. But right now, I would start with the local libraries and your local community college.

Craig Knudsvig: Just to add on to that, Sherry is right on with that. It's kind of an ordinary saying, but, sometimes the best way to find out something is to ask. Right now, ask community colleges, anybody that is teaching trades or has an engineering department, ask them even if they do not have a department of information about green technology. You may find an instructor or professor that will talk about that. Many of the instructors in community colleges may be employed in the field or many of them may be instructing green technology as a part-time or second job.

Additionally, contact architects as they are probably at the front line. They will know what is coming next and what skills will be needed to make it happen.

Sherry Duah: Exactly.

Michele Higgs: Yes and I think those are both good ideas

Joyce Mortimer: My last question relates to soft skills development. There are many people who want to switch careers but they never upgraded their skills through certifications and they have fundamental weaknesses such as poor spelling.

Michele Higgs: We all do, thanks to text messaging.

Joyce Mortimer: I am thinking of healthcare professionals, who would like to advance to radiology or something else, but they do not have those soft skills; specifically, one example would be spelling. How does someone with that weakness strengthen it because an adult basic education does not fit their need?

Sherry Duah: Well I would recommend crossword puzzles. Spelling is just something that they would really, really have to work on. But I think with nurses it kind of comes with the territory because they are abbreviating stuff all the time.

If you look at a medical chart, doctors and nurses communicate in their language and use a lot of abbreviations. So you would see something as SOB, which means shortness of breath. I do not know if they would ever get away from that. They just have this habit of abbreviating and it just comes with the territory.

Joyce Mortimer: Thank you.

Jackie Angerhofer: Community colleges sometimes offer classes to upgrade people's writing and English skills. Some of the jobs in the medical field are very high tech as far as the level of math they use.

Sherry Duah: Exactly.

Jackie Angerhofer: Community colleges never tell people “you cannot do that”. They will say, “Before you do that, you need to take remedial courses.” This gives people a feel for whether they can learn this if they try really hard or whether they should choose something different. For instance, whether they should choose something that are more patient care and soft-skill related versus the more technical areas, which are very academic.

Craig Knudsvig: For those that are delivering services in Neighborhood Networks centers, technology based services, you may never be able to fix a bad speller that completely. Certainly somebody who has been in that medical field does not use words completely anymore; and the behavior of text messaging has sort of affected all of us. On the other hand, I had a lady the other day that did a mock interview. As she was sitting here in a lab she could use Microsoft Word to check the spelling of every word. Don’t forget to do that. So there are tools. Yes, perhaps they have made us lazy in the spelling area, but go ahead and use them.

Michele Higgs: Spell Check has spoiled us, but that was a good point. We are coming to the close of our call and I wanted to ask Craig one thing. Do you have a success story that you would like to share with us?

Craig Knudsvig: I have several of them. We just had a person who finished what we call our Tech Force Program, who came in with no computer skills. More importantly, she had a misunderstanding of how computer skills are used in the job market and had this typical “I have to be a secretary” mentality. And we told her she could do other things, she ended up in a very non-traditional occupation using handheld devices. I think the success story is that it has changed her personality completely, and she is now able to see herself as a problem solver for the next job that comes along and she can make better use of the skills she has. I think she was 54. So I guess the success is an older worker making great strides in her life, just because she changed her mind about the job market and how she could fit into it.

I could tell you all kinds of stories about people who did not know anything about computers and now are whizzes but I think for us the real success is when somebody starts to see the power that they have thanks to connecting with us.

So our success story today is simply that by helping somebody learn something that they were afraid of or not quite sure of how it could be used, you can really change their life.

Michele Higgs: That was great. Thank you so very much. And with that we have come to the close of another conference call, and I want to thank you. I want to thank Jackie Angerhofer, Sherry Duah, and you, Craig Knudsvig.

I want to remind you that our second RTAW for this year will take place in a little less than a week in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 15 through 17. There will be a pre-conference grantwriting session on Monday and Tuesday, July 13 and 14.

We look forward to seeing you there. If you still have a question after the call, you can post them on the Neighborhood Networks online message board or you can always call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line with questions at 888-312-2743.

You will find more details and current information on the Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.neighborhoodnetworks.org](http://www.neighborhoodnetworks.org). Don't forget, Neighborhood Networks Week is coming. On August 3 through 8, we celebrate Neighborhood Networks centers across the country. So plan an event and post it to the Neighborhood Networks Web site.

On August 11, we will talk about Centers Serving Smaller Communities, Maximizing Minimal Resources and serving centers in rural areas.

Thanks again to all of you for joining us today. Thanks to Jackie Angerhofer, Sherry Duah, and Craig Knudsvig for sharing tips on picking through the rubble of this economy for those shiny little pieces.

Thanks to all of our callers. We will talk to you next time.

Operator: Once again, ladies and gentlemen, we conclude today's conference call. Thank you for your participation.

END