

NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS

Moderator: Michele Higgs
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3:00 p.m. EDT

Operator: Thank you for standing by and welcome to the Neighborhood Networks conference call.

Please note that today's call is being recorded.

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

Michele Higgs: Thanks, Sarah. Welcome everyone to the Neighborhood Networks July conference call.

As you heard, I'm Michele Higgs and I give a nod today to Veronica Sanders, who is out onsite now, for convening our speakers for today.

I am also joined by Sheba Asberom, and we represent the technical assistance team that works with you to address the needs of the various Neighborhood Networks Centers around the country.

The first thing I'd like to say is a hearty thank you to all of you who were able to join us for a very successful RTAW – that's Regional Technical Assistance Workshop – last week in San Francisco, California. Those of you who attended the presentation of awards to centers that achieved Certified or Model status will no doubt remember the flash of cameras and the smiling faces.

But the celebration of these goals goes far beyond that moment. Receiving one of those plaques commemorates a center's performance, and that gives the center stature, not just among other Neighborhood Networks centers, but in its community as well. When centers truly serve their communities, they can use that growth to bring distinction to their work. Our speakers today will tell you how.

Our call is entitled, "Using Tracking and Evaluation to Ensure Your Center's High Level of Success."

Last month, we had a quote from Lewis Carroll, the author of Alice in Wonderland. It is still applicable today. "If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there."

So we're talking about another aspect of organizational development: tracking and evaluating what you're doing and where you're going. Tracking will help you know who is using your center and how they are using it. Evaluation will help you learn how users benefit from what they do in your center and the effectiveness of your programs.

Helping participants achieve their goals helps you achieve your goals. Once you see what is happening at your center by tracking your activities, you can evaluate the performance of your participants and your programs and learn where to tweak or trim.

Before I introduce the speakers who will discuss our topic for today, I want to tell you about the new centers we are welcoming to the neighborhood. We have 10 this month. There's Independence Hall Neighborhood Networks Center in Texas; Clarksville Area Senior Housing Incorporated in Michigan; Fairways Village Neighborhood Networks Center in Texas; Fairmont Plaza Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center in Missouri; Chelsea Plaza Homes/E.A. Freeman Leadership Institute in Kansas; Pollock Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center in Ohio; Reyn Rock Neighborhood Networks in Colorado; Colonia Tepeyac Neighborhood Networks

Center in Texas; Judah House Neighborhood Networks Center in Connecticut; and Meadow Brook) Neighborhood Networks Center in New Hampshire.

We welcome all 10 centers to the neighborhood.

Now, about our Neighborhood Networks resources; first, there's the Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool, also known as the START business plan. START is a straightforward online resource that helps you examine the needs of your residents, determine what resources in your community can address those needs, and keeps track of the partnerships that address them.

START creates an organized plan that strengthens a center and makes it more attractive to potential partners as well as donors. START also provides institutional memory for your organization and a foundation upon which you can organize your activities.

Now wait, there's more. If you have questions about the START business plan, resident surveys, success stories, specialties and ideas, or general questions about the Neighborhood Networks Initiative, you can call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line at 888-312-2743. You can also visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org.

Don't forget online networking through the Neighborhood Networks online message board. You can share information with other centers, post news, and ask questions. Be aware that this is not a real-time resource, but you can post your information then revisit the board in a day or so to see what kinds of responses you received.

Just go to the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org and click on the Neighborhood Networks online networking link to the right under the green banner labeled "Helpful Tools."

Click on the "Enter Online Discussion" link and add your comment to the category that suits your query. Go visit. Check it out. Post a message.

Let me also remind listeners that a transcript of this call will be available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site in about two weeks.

Our topic for today is tracking and evaluation. Very heavy stuff, but critical to a center's success. Our speakers today represent three different perspectives that understand this process. They'll help you bring distinction to your center as you learn the importance of tracking and evaluation.

When you know and can document what works for your participants, you'll have no trouble telling others. And that makes bringing resources and activities to your center easier.

I'd like to have our speakers tell you how it's done. We will hear from LaToya Shields with Gulf Coast Arms Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center in Houston, Texas. She wears a number of hats as a liaison and advocate for residents. She began her work as a volunteer intern with Ujima, Inc. while in college, ultimately coming on as a staff member and social services coordinator with Gulf Coast Arms.

Christine Jackson has held various roles with the Martha O'Bryan Center. She has worked with stakeholders to develop customer-driven programming for the past 16 years. In fact, she worked closely with one of our Model centers, CWA Cayce, in Nashville, Tennessee. She strives for excellence by implementing and monitoring best practices, establishing relationships with community agencies based on mutual respect, trust, openness, and supportiveness.

The next voice you'll hear will be that of LaToya Shields. LaToya, are you ready to get us started?

LaToya Shields: Yes, ma'am.

Michele Higgs: Thank you much.

LaToya Shields: We're going to start by talking about the importance of tracking activities for center success. The first thing we want to know is the effectiveness of programs or activities on the residents.

Tracking and evaluation can provide information that will inevitably improve center programs. Tracking allows you to see who's coming in the center and why they are coming to the center. Evaluations make it possible to pinpoint the elements of the programs that are most effective and determine what needs to be changed. Evaluations enable us to eliminate counterproductive practices that may waste time, energy, and resources. Resources are limited so we want to conduct evaluations to eliminate wasted monies that we may not have or that we can allocate to other programs or uses.

Information on effective programs can be used to seek additional funding, meaning if the tracking and evaluation of programs prove their success, then we're able to go out to other partners and vendors and seek funding.

Also, tracking and evaluation justifies what you spend and how you spend it. It also provides information to promote the adoption of programs which will establish and create more partnerships. And the more partnerships you have, the better your programs are.

As information on the effectiveness of different programs begin to accumulate, it becomes possible to compare programs and determine which ones are most effective and what content is for what population. Population is also important item to track and trace when you're evaluating.

Population is important because you may have one property with just a certain population and you may have a program that may be successful. Then, you may take that same program to another property and it may not work. So a lot depends on the population.

Basic issues in program evaluation include deciding the goal you are trying to achieve. Some program goals may be simple and may be used to create understanding and knowledge, and some program goals are set to change behavior. Overall, tracking and evaluation is important because it brings validation to the program.

There are two approaches that can be used to track program evaluations. The first, qualitative, is the evaluation of the residents who participate in the program through techniques such as interviews, post-program surveys, journaling, and the easiest one, observation.

The other approach is quantitative, which involves gathering information that can be used for the outcome of the program, such as a questionnaire. A lot of times if you have a focus group, you can conduct pre-test and post-test evaluation.

At this site we use both techniques. The technique that we use most often is a survey, which is a quantitative approach. We go door to door with our surveys. We ask residents what they want. If they were involved in a program, we ask them how did they feel about it, did the program help, how did it help, would they recommend the program to other residents, and things of that nature. Overall, the center's success is determined by the effectiveness of the tools used to track and evaluate programs and services.

Michele Higgs: How do you staff your efforts? Do you have a group of volunteers that help you with your qualitative and quantitative analysis?

LaToya Shields: Yes. We have volunteers. What we have here at Gulf Coast is called a "ground outreach team." Sometimes this property can be difficult as far as getting information back about

certain programs. So what I have incorporated is called a 'ground outreach team.' It's a group of volunteers. There are four groups and they're all age appropriate. Their job is to approach residents in their age group. For instance, I have a group of teenagers. That particular outreach team evaluates teenagers that are involved in afterschool programs or abstinence class or something like that. This approach has worked to get more input from the residents.

Michele Higgs: So you find that if they're approached by folks that are like them, they're more likely to be outgoing with the information.

LaToya Shields: Yes, they are more cooperative. I tried it when I first started here, with very interesting results. They were like, "OK, who are you?" As they've gotten to know me, it's a little bit different. But I have found that it just works better if you have someone your age telling you about the programs because they also go out and conduct outreach to let residents know the kind of programs we offer.

And, when it's time to get the information on how the program works, those teams also go out and get that information. It is a lot better for me because it's more accurate.

Michele Higgs: So let me ask another thing. How often do you conduct your surveys? Or are they conducted for a specific purpose?

LaToya Shields: Generally, we'll conduct two major surveys. Throughout the course of a year, we conduct surveys, in the spring and in the fall, that ask the residents what they want, what they want to see on the property, and what kind of programs they think will be helpful for them.

So we conduct two large surveys throughout the year, major ones. Then as needed, we may conduct an additional one or two. If what we've come up with is not working, we'll go out and do something else.

Michele Higgs: OK. Now, I'm not putting you on the spot here but I had one more question. With regard to the journaling, is that for a specific program or activity?

LaToya Shields: I use journaling in one of my high school programs. It's more work because you have to sit and read everything, but you really get the gist of how your programs are working because the residents feel more comfortable writing their feelings down on paper. The ladies in particular like the questions being open and personal, instead of yes and no.

They can give me details as to why they didn't like programs. Plus it worked. It's just a lot of work for me. But I like the process and it worked real well with the afterschool program too.

Michele Higgs: I see. So it allowed you to drill down to what they really thought.

LaToya Shields: Right. It gets very detailed.

Michele Higgs: Well, don't go away. I'm going to ask Christine to speak at this point and then we're going to come back for questions.

LaToya Shields: OK. Thanks.

Michele Higgs: Christine?

Christine Jackson: OK. Well, thank you. I appreciate being here today. I really enjoy evaluation and tracking because I see it kind of as the marriage between quality, service, and business standards. It's a way to talk about what you do so that other people really understand.

When I started out working with the CWA Learning Center, we took into consideration what our two different customer groups wanted.

The two different customer groups I'm talking about are the funders, the people who help support your program, and the other is the person that you're actually serving, whether that's a youth or an adult. What do they want? What do they value?

We know that if we keep the customer's needs in front of us, we'll always be on the right path. But we can't discount what funders need and value, either.

Beyond the normal things that you would track, like age, gender, residence, would be the employment history and literacy levels. Some of these things are very sensitive, so you won't be able to get this information and you shouldn't try unless it's valuable to you, until you've established a relationship of trust with those that you're serving.

Other things that you might be tracking are specific characteristics of your customers. You might be tracking the number of people you serve, but you might also be tracking the number of services that you have.

Other things to consider when you set up an evaluation is what else you need to know and what funders might want to know. For instance, they might want to know who your partners are and what services they're providing. There's a lot of emphasis today in not duplicating services and working together in communities.

So that's important. Sometimes funders want to know what government officials you're working with and whether there is a community impact. When you talk about measuring the impact your programs are having on a community as a whole versus individual change, that's a whole other area of different measurements.

We have several different areas that we track. I'd be glad to answer any questions about early child care. Plus, we track all kinds of social, emotional, physical, and academic goals, using standardized assessments.

Standardized assessments are great because they allow you to look at your customer versus somebody else's customer. But they're not always the best thing. In this particular case, they're made specifically to assess growth in young children. There are many assessments out there for that type of measurement.

We have a youth program for which we use High Scope (High/Scope Research Foundation – www.highscope.org). They have an assessment that will not only provide a framework for good quality service but also will allow you to evaluate your program. This is becoming a focus point with funders. They want to know that the customer is receiving quality service and that the service itself is a best practice.

We have adult education and employment. For our adults, we used a standardized assessment that's utilized worldwide. For helping to prepare people for the work force, there are many different kinds of employment career assessments for your use.

Take a look at what your local business, Chamber of Commerce, or other folks want to see in the community. We track the number of meals that we serve every day in our Meals on Wheels program, as well as the number of emergency food boxes that we deliver. We have very simple software that allows us to track those programs.

I can tell you that last year, and this is something you ought to be able to track, we served 24,111 meals. It's really nice to know that number instead of making a guess.

We have just started a brand new parenting program for which we're developing our own assessments. What we have discovered is a fun way to conduct assessments with community residents that helps to eliminate the barrier of literacy levels; we use clickers.

What we do is we put the assessment up on a PowerPoint and we read it. It's very simple. The answer is an A, B, or C; or one, two, or three. And they get to use their clicker, which sends the message to the computer. Immediately a graph appears and shows how many in the group believes one thing or chose A, B, or C. In this way, they get to participate but they're not raising their hand; it's a very safe way to get this information for your funders and for yourself.

We also track emergency social services, like rent assistance, transportation, utilities, and medical needs. This is also a very straightforward, simple software database developed in Access that allows us to track these services.

How many times do we evaluate these things? It depends upon the funders' needs. It depends upon our needs. We very strongly believe that you shouldn't assess unless you're going to turn around and use that information to better your programs. There's just too much wear and tear on you and the customer to conduct these evaluations for anything other than that. So sometimes you'll do it on a monthly basis. Sometimes it's quarterly or three times a year.

With our reading program, we use the standardized assessments used in the local schools. We do that at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the school year.

We always conduct the middle-of-the-year assessment before we break for Christmas because we know that we may lose some people there. If you don't conduct that mid-year assessment then you have nothing to compare it to.

It's a good idea to take a look at the trends that your customers exhibit when you're deciding how often and how you're going to use your evaluation tools, which can be normalized and standardized. Or, like the journaling, we've had great success using it with our adults, especially the women, who are finding their voice. That's a really great way to get them to open up.

Our youth and parents use the journaling program. It's nontraditional but a good source of data collection.

Finally, start with something that you know that you do really well and build your assessment around that.

We were very fortunate to participate in a research model, which helped to provide some structure. Research models are very unforgiving in that you have to do it their way. But if it's a good model and a good process, it will help you structure a tracking process that you can build on and add to.

Michele Higgs: OK. Thank you so much, Christine. Thank you, both of you. I do have a question for you, Christine. You mentioned a number of tracking software or research models that can help centers put programs into place.

Are there any suggestions that you have for centers as to where they might locate some of these materials at a low cost?

Christine Jackson: Yes. I'd be glad to share our war stories with you.

Michele Higgs: OK.

Christine Jackson: We tried desperately for two years, using some of our local United Way funding, to have two outside contractors build a database for us. At the end of two years and two different tries, we had no product that we could use. A lot of money and a tremendous amount of time were wasted. It was very hard to explain to my boss why it didn't work.

What we ultimately realized is that we needed someone that had to answer to us, to be responsible. So we sought out someone who could work onsite and hired them as our data manager.

Not everybody can afford to do that. In fact, we couldn't. It was actually a private funder who made that happen for us.

But I will tell you that children are so smart nowadays that I'm not talking about something super sophisticated. You could probably find a college student with an interest in computers that would design an Access computer database that you could tweak.

I would ask my board members to volunteer their time if anyone has a specialty. If not, who do they know? A lot of big businesses don't have time to come in on a daily basis but would be glad to send someone in to set up this software for you.

Then, even if you still don't understand exactly how to go about doing it, you might be able to have someone volunteer to come in like we did. The volunteer handled our childcare billing every month for about a year. You could get someone to come in and help you query the reports on your database.

I know that there's the notion that you don't really have the time or money to invest in this. What I would say is you don't have the time and money not to invest in this. There's no way to get

around having good data, and the sooner you have it means that you can collect and have years of data, a history, to show a funder. That will set you far above your competitors.

It's kind of a domino effect. So get started, and that's where a research project may help provide that initial research and that initial database that you'll need to begin to build on.

Michele Higgs: You just brought up another good point, and that is the word, initial, which makes me think "baseline," and that searches need to start somewhere.

Christine Jackson: Absolutely.

Michele Higgs: Because, what you're talking about is probably a minute down the road for our centers for obtaining software and a database. What would you suggest up front for a center that's trying to get a baseline for what's going on? Would it be your center's sign-in sheets? Are you trying to get folks to sign in on the computers just to know what they're doing and when they're doing it?

LaToya, you chime in on this one, too, if you like.

Christine Jackson: Absolutely. I didn't have anything like this when I first started out. I did everything on legal sized paper with lots of columns. I sat down and decided what I needed to know to build a good program.

I needed to know who my customer was, what kind of behavior I wanted to see changed, the degree of the change, when that change happened, and how often I would test. So, if I had three testing dates, those three dates went on the column.

If it was, for example, a testing score that I needed, instead of a check I would record the score. Instead of a check, enter the date. You can label this the Baseline Assessment, Milestone One.

It's a two-fold process. What do I have to do to make this happen? What output do I have to have? You can design a legal sheet that not only captures the measurement of what you're doing but also when you need to act. It helps if you're supervising other staff to remember that you're expecting a certain number of visits in this month. It helps to keep you on track.

Michele Higgs: What I'd like to do at this point is see if there are any calls on the line. Sarah, do we have anyone dialing in?

Operator: At this time, if you'd like to ask a question, press star one please.

And Christen Branch has a question.

Michele Higgs: OK.

Christen Branch: Christen Branch. I'm with Housing and Community Services in San Antonio, Texas. The property that I represent is Country Club Village, an elderly complex. I'm hearing the best ways to keep track of all community events regarding children. There aren't many events when it comes to the elderly, but I want to still make sure that everything I keep track of is efficient.

Could I use those same methods with the elderly as well, as far as the tracking?

Christine Jackson: Absolutely. We track social events of our elderly. We track medical needs. We track repairs that we have to do to their homes or houses to keep them in their places so that they're not moved out of independent living.

There are a lot of things to track if you're looking at what kind of quality service will help seniors maintain their independent living. Then you just can create those benchmarks that will help measure that in the same way you would do anything else.

Christen Branch: I see. Well, thank you.

Michele Higgs: Thank you. Sarah, is there anyone else on the line?

Operator: Yes. Rylanda Wilson.

Rylanda Wilson: Yes. Hi. This is Rylanda Wilson from the Philadelphia Housing Authority. I've enjoyed this conference call today.

As it relates to children participating, is the Neighborhood Networks center part of a series of children's programs? Do you have summer camp and then afterschool programs? Or do you have preschool programs that are focused through the Neighborhood Networks center?

Is Neighborhood Networks first on the agenda or is it part of the array of services?

Michele Higgs: Well, the Neighborhood Networks center houses a number of programs. It is the site where all of these programs take place, whether it is for the little children or programs for youth.

It provides a computer technology center that is available for other activities on the property. So it's not separate from any of these.

Rylanda Wilson: OK. When you're conducting your evaluation, does it evaluate all the programs or does it focus on Neighborhood Networks? Do you do a survey or do you evaluate simply for the computer literacy needs? Or do you survey for all of the different needs?

Michele Higgs: I'm going to try to answer that one again. The programs are part of the Neighborhood Networks Initiative. So if you're doing, say, the programs for the children, its programs for children as part of Neighborhood Networks.

If you're talking about the programs for seniors, it's the senior programs as part of the Neighborhood Networks Center. So it's not separate. It's these programs that are a part of Neighborhood Networks.

Rylanda Wilson: OK.

Michele Higgs: Does that help?

Rylanda Wilson: That clarifies my question.

Michele Higgs: OK. Thank you much.

Beatrice Sprod: This is Beatrice Sprod. We're trying to get some clarification on surveys. We recently conducted one and this is how I'm basing some of the month-to-month activities. What I'm finding out is more of our youth are participating than the adults.

My question is how can you pull more adults into the programs?

LaToya Shields: Can I answer that? This is LaToya.

Michele Higgs: Go right ahead.

LaToya Shields: That issue that you're having is not uncommon. Among the properties that I've seen and that I know, that's how it works.

Beatrice Sprod: Yes.

LaToya Shields: We've tried everything here to get adult participation.

Beatrice Sprod: Yes.

LaToya Shields: We've even done things residents said that they wanted to do and they still don't participate. So what we have learned to do here is to take what we have, which is the children, and work a lot of programming around them. Then every now and again we'll have adult-specific programs.

But we've used a lot of resources and time that I talked about in my presentation to try to get adults to come out; and sometimes they just won't.

Beatrice Sprod: Then I did another activity, movie night. The adults said they wanted to be a part of movie night and the children said they wanted to be part of the movie night. However, it was more of a movie night for the children that responded.

LaToya Shields: Yes. I've learned, because I've been doing this for a while, you just have to take what you have. Take the group that wants to participate. It's not you that's doing anything wrong. This is an issue that's just across the board.

Beatrice Sprod: OK, because in a couple days we're hosting an ice cream social. The children are looking forward to it but we were trying to get the adults, again, to come out and socialize as well as the children.

LaToya Shields: Not to discourage you, but the adults won't come. Once you've tried every avenue that you can and you're still not getting the results that you want, you have to take what you have, which seems like you have a lot of children that participate, so just do more activities around the children.

Beatrice Sprod: OK then. Thank you.

LaToya Shields: Yes.

Operator: And once again, it is star one please and we have Ruben Salazar on the line.

Ruben Salazar: Hi. This is Ruben with Waco Housing Authority. I guess I have a couple of questions for the speakers. And thank you, by the way. It's a great topic.

Can they talk about the use of incentives to gather the surveys, for example, to gather them back from the residents? For example, free rent or any kind of other incentives, prizes?

And also, can they talk about strengths and assets when they conduct the surveys? In other words, not just what are their needs but what are the residents' strengths and assets?

LaToya Shields: I can speak on the incentive part. We used to offer incentives a lot more but now that I have the ground outreach program, more people are participating in surveys and things of that sort. When we conduct the two major surveys here at my site, we offer incentives. It's not so drastic as free rent because we're a Section 8 property so rent is already subsidized. But we do work with Wal-Mart and local grocery stores and partners.

So the last major survey we had, which was for the spring, we held a drawing. Everyone who turned in a survey put their apartment number into a box and then we pulled three names.

We had a TV donated and we had two \$100 gift cards from Wal-Mart. That helped the number of surveys that were returned to us.

Ruben Salazar: OK.

LaToya Shields: People do want \$100 in free gift cards because that's food for them. You can do whatever you want with \$100 at Wal-Mart. People said, "Oh my goodness. Yes!"

So we do offer incentives here. We do it for the children as well.

Ruben Salazar: OK.

LaToya Shields: You know they'll win a free lunch, a good lunch. Just anything, anything creative that you come up with works.

Ruben Salazar: OK. Thank you.

Michele Higgs: Christine, did you want to address any of that?

Christine Jackson: Yes. We, too, use incentives. Just like LaToya does, we found that gift cards from Wal-Mart or the grocery store are very popular. Sometimes it doesn't have to be a big deal. A little something will do.

One of the ways we get people to the center is to make up welcome baskets. When residents come in to enroll or register at the office they get a coupon that tells them they can come to the

center and pick up their welcome basket. So it's one of the ways to get them in the door and for us to meet them, especially if you're a small site and you don't have a lot of staff or your staff is part time and you aren't able to get out.

Although, I'll say that there is nothing like getting out and meeting people. So there's no substitute for getting out there and knocking on doors and having casual conversations to learn the most important information.

We also empower our residents. When they come up and say they want something, or they'd like to do this or they'd like to see us do that, we say, "OK, why don't you do that?" We help provide the resources but we turn it around and put the power in their hands to get it done.

Now that's a little nerve-racking for overachievers, and I'll admit to being one. But it doesn't have to be perfect. Doing that goes a long way to establishing trust, building on their strengths. We've had small quilting classes started. We've had a community garden started, a church service twice a month.

These things start out very small and it's very slow, and you have to be very patient but keep at it. I think centers sometimes bail before really giving an idea enough time to take hold. It takes sometimes six or seven months.

Sometimes, you have to turn around and do it over again. Look for your community leaders. Look for the people that are hanging around.

Here's a good tip. It just occurred to me. One of the things that we discovered is that people were coming in and would just sit around in the lobby around the receptionist's desk and talk to the receptionist because they really didn't have a whole lot going on.

Those have become our community advocates. Those are the people who talk about Martha O'Brien and CWA Cayce more than we do, and they are glad to take flyers out, knock on doors, and get things started in the community.

So those are just a couple of suggestions for community impact.

Michele Higgs: A couple of terrific suggestions. I hope everybody's taking notes out there.

Sarah, do we have anyone on the line?

Operator: Not at this time.

Michele Higgs: OK. And Christine, I just want to make a point. After you had spoken it occurred to me that during an RTAW session I heard someone saying just what you were talking about, that it's helpful to get out, walk around, look people in the eye, and chat with them to let them know that you're human and they're human. It shows so much respect for their humanity and their "people ness" that it brings them in rather than pushing them away.

Sometimes you'd think that the attention would make people shy away. But just the opposite, it brings people to you. The other point is that the one lady that's always out sweeping the front stoop or out in front of the building checking out what's going on, she's one of your community leaders. She's one of the people that you want to bring into the fold to do stuff for your center.

Since we're getting close to closing time, I am going to ask Sarah if there's anyone else on the line. I don't want to close this down if there is someone interested out there.

Sarah, do we have anyone?

Operator: As a final reminder, ladies and gentlemen, star one please. And Tommie Love, your line is open.

Tommie Love: OK. Thank you. This is Tommie Love. I'm with the City of Galveston Housing Authority, and I have a couple of questions.

One of them, regarding the welcome basket, we are HUD funded. Where did you get funds to organize a welcome basket? And what kind of things do you put in it?

I have a second question concerning how to get adults engaged. I also have a lot of children participating but my adult participation isn't as strong. What do you suggest to get those adults in during the day when the children are in school? I go door to door to let them know the center is here. But the adults still don't utilize it the way they could. What are some of the things that you did to get your adults into your centers?

Christine Jackson: OK, the welcome baskets first. We initially started buying those and we put cleaning products in them because that's something that isn't covered by food stamps and we know it's something that our families need.

Besides the cleaning products, we also put in community information, people to contact, important numbers, maybe a map, you know goody items, too, bubble bath. Deodorant and mouthwash go over really big as well.

So we've done that for a while. We've had churches, many different churches, and church groups participate. Most recently, about a year ago, we had a neighborhood church from across the street take an interest in our center. Some of the folks from their church came over and with some of the adults in our adult education class put those welcome baskets together.

We really like this because it's an equal opportunity event. Nobody has more power than anybody else. The church provides the supplies, and when they can't, we ask for donations from other people.

To your second question, try bingo. I can't remember where you said you were from, but here we could have our whole gym full if at any time we open the door and said we were going to hold bingo. We've done it as Friday night events with children and family. We do it during the Christmas holidays. It is very popular.

We go to the Dollar Store and get dollar items as prizes. They really don't care about the prize. They love it.

Tommie Love: OK.

Michele Higgs: Any other ones? OK. I want to remind you that we've drifted a little off of tracking and evaluation. But I think with the activity that we've been talking about can be measured, too, to see if they're successful.

I do hope you have gotten something from this call that you will use when creating tracking and evaluation programs for your centers.

It looks like we are just a few minutes before closing. I'm going to ask one more time, we've got just a few seconds left, is there anyone on the line, Sarah?

Operator: We have Adetoun Omole.

Adetoun Omole: Good afternoon everyone. This is Adetoun from the Housing Authority in Milwaukee. I have a quick question. We have a program here that has to do with games. But they're basically introducing the children to different kinds of professions.

For instance, we have a flight simulator so they get an idea what it is like to be a pilot. How do you track that?

Michele Higgs: Christine, LaToya, did you get that one? Hello?

Christine Jackson: What is the behavior you're trying to change?

Adetoun Omole: It's not about a behavioral change. It's about exposing them to different kinds of professions so that everybody doesn't want to be a singer or a basketball player, that there are some other things as well.

Michele Higgs: Christine, was that you?

Christine Jackson: I would say to just use attendance.

Adetoun Omole: OK.

Christine Jackson: Michele, I don't know how Neighborhood Networks tracks participation by residents.

Michele Higgs: Well, I guess, it's just measuring how many children are using this particular game to attract attention to this particular profession. But then what is the goal? Are you trying to get them go to school also? What are you trying to do?

Adetoun Omole: Yes. We want to make them keep going to school.

Michele Higgs: And how young are these children?

Adetoun Omole: From eight to 15.

Michele Higgs: The simplest thing is to see how often the youngsters are using those games. If someone shows a particular preference, you'll see that in the number of times they use that specific game.

In terms of measuring a goal, which is what you're trying to do when you're tracking, you're trying to determine whether this is meeting your goals. And if you're trying to get them to go into certain programs in school, then that's your goal. But you have to determine what it is you're measuring for first.

Adetoun Omole: OK.

Michele Higgs: Does that help?

Adetoun Omole: Yes, it does. Thank you so much.

Michele Higgs: OK. Well folks, we really are up to closing time. Thank you so much for that last call.

I want to remind you of all the resources that are available to you through the Neighborhood Networks Initiative. Now, we don't always get to hear all of your questions on the call, so if you still have a question after the call, you can go to the Neighborhood Networks Web site and post it on the Neighborhood Networks online message board where staff, or even your peers, will see that your question gets attention.

Of course, you can always call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line with questions at 888-312-2743. You'll find resources and current information on the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org where you'll also find the START business plan.

Now, we've got a party on the calendar. The week of August 4th through 9th is Neighborhood Networks Week, and it is the time when Neighborhood Networks Centers nationwide throw a party.

To help you with ideas and planning, the Event Planning Guide will be in your mailbox shortly and can also be downloaded from the Neighborhood Networks Web site. Summer is the time for celebrations, and Neighborhood Networks Week is reason enough for a party. Once you decide what you're going to do, be sure to register your event online.

Our call for August 12th is on the topic of "Apprenticeships: A New Way to Work." We will talk about increasing the skill level of residents through supervised on-the-job training, looking at both government and private apprenticeship opportunities. Please join us for this call on August 12th.

Thanks to all of you for joining us today. Thank you, Christine, LaToya. Happy Neighborhood Networks Week, everyone. Take good care, and we'll talk to you next time.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, that does conclude today's conference. We thank you for your participation. Have a great rest of your day.

END