

NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS

Moderator: Michele Higgs
June 10, 2008
3:00 p.m. EDT

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

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

Michele Higgs: Thank you, Janine. Happy summer, everybody. I hope you all have found a cool and dry place today. Welcome to the Neighborhood Networks monthly conference call.

As you heard, I'm Michele Higgs, and today, I'm joined by James Augone. We represent the technical assistance team that works with you to address the needs of Neighborhood Networks centers around the country. I thank all of you for joining us for this month's call, Organizational Development: Knowing Who You Are and What to Do.

According to Lewis Carroll, who gave us Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass, "If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there." That's what we're talking about today: knowing where you're going and where you're taking your center.

To have a sense of what you're doing, you need to have a purpose, or a mission. With regard to Neighborhood Networks centers, the mission drives the activity, and it's important enough to be one of the first entries in the Start business plan. Once direction is established, centers can start planning, looking at short-term and long-term goals and objectives, and establish the road that will take you to "there."

Before I get carried away talking about our topic, we are welcoming five new centers to the Neighborhood today: Riverain Point Apartments in Illinois, Deaconess Tower Computer Center in Michigan, Brookstone Neighborhood Networks Center in Washington, Laurel Highlands Village in Pennsylvania, and Mission Place Neighborhood Networks Center in Kansas. Welcome to all five centers. Welcome to the Neighborhood.

Let me tell you about our Neighborhood Networks resources. First, there's the Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool, also known as the START business plan. START is an online resource that helps you consider the needs of your residents, determine what resources in your community can address those needs, and helps you keep track of the partnerships that address them.

START is a key to developing partnerships because when the data is compiled, it creates an organized plan that strengthens the center's profile as a business and makes the center more attractive to potential partners as well as donors. START also provides institutional memory for your organization and builds the foundation upon which you can organize your activities.

Now, for more resources, if you have questions about the START business plan, resident surveys, success stories, special event 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 or ask questions. While this is not a real-time resource, you can post your information, then revisit the board in a day or so to see what kinds of responses you have received. Just go to the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org and click on the Neighborhood Networks Online Networking link to the right under the green banner labeled Helpful Tools. Follow the instructions and guidelines

to learn how things work, or dive right in and click on Enter Online Discussion. Go visit. Let me also remind listeners that a transcript of this call will be made available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site in about two weeks.

Now, to our topic for today: Organizational Development. Now, that sounds very scientific and painful. Actually, it is just the process through which an organization develops the internal capacity to operate most efficiently and effectively to meet its mission and to sustain itself over the long-term. That is actually quite exciting if you look at it as becoming the best you can be, which is what Neighborhood Networks centers want to do and what they encourage their users to do. Our speakers today will help you connect the dots when it comes to making your Neighborhood Networks center an effective organization.

Your center is an organization and should be presented as such. For instance, users should be able to rely on the center being open when the schedule says it will be open. If the center is scheduled to offer a program or a class, you should be prepared to do just that. There should be rules and regulations that guide operations so that staff and residents are clear about center policies and procedures.

And these are just a few of the ideas that come into view when discussing organizational development, but you don't want to hear from me. Let me introduce our speakers. We will first welcome Becky Taylor who has been the director of CWA Cayce Learning Center in Nashville, Tennessee since 2001, and she oversees center programming and administration. As a Model Neighborhood Networks center, CWA Cayce will no doubt provide some great examples for us. We'll also hear from Matthew Roderick, who is center coordinator with the Arrowwood Computer Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He's responsible for grant reporting, outreach to other community organizations and curriculum development. Finally, we'll be joined by Angela Lewis, who is a service coordinator for the Village at Lakeview Neighborhood Networks Center in Edgewood, Maryland. These speakers represent centers at different points in their development. I trust you

will get a broad perspective as you see the role organizational development plays in the process of Center Classification, which is Neighborhood Networks' process of measuring a center's contribution and growth.

Becky, can you get us started?

Becky Taylor: Sure will. Hi from Nashville! I'm just going to let everybody know what we've done to build our organization up from the start. I've been here for eight years, so there are a lot of years of practice that went into this.

The first thing that we do to start to build our organization is to do a resident or customer survey. First and foremost, you need to know the needs of your customers. They are the experts on themselves. We do not know better than they about what they need. Our job is to provide the tools required to meet those needs. We have ideas. Obviously, if we've been in this business for a while, we have ideas about what our residents' needs might be, but we absolutely have to confirm those with our customers. Otherwise, we waste time planning something in which no one may be interested.

So, survey your residents. The survey needs to be short, to the point, and preferably multiple choices with checkboxes. Make it one page, something that can be done in just a few minutes. We don't want to discourage our residents from participating. Allow a place for residents to write their contact information if they want to be involved in the process. This will come in handy when you're trying to build your organization further. So start with your resident and your customer survey. I believe Neighborhood Networks has some examples to help you.

The second step is a resource inventory for forming partnerships. Now that you have an idea of what your residents are interested in, find resources that are available to you. You really need to know your area. What are the universities and other academic institutions in your area? What

are the big corporations and small businesses in your immediate area, and what are the other nonprofits with similar missions nearby and perhaps serving the same population? There could be a group of agencies already doing what you're thinking about doing. I encourage you to talk to them and try to partner with them. There's no sense in reinventing the wheel if somebody's already doing it and maybe getting money to do it.

For example, we have a large refugee population in our area, and a lot of them expressed interest in adult English classes. So we went to the agencies that are already conducting adult English classes. The city offers them, a local literacy agency offers them, and there's a church that offers them.

So we talked to them and partnered with them. We told them that we have very interested students, a wonderful space for them to conduct their classes, so they joined us with a teacher and curriculum. So it was a win-win for both of us. That's ideal; it doesn't always work that way, but there may be some collaboration possible. They may be willing to train your teachers or your volunteers. They may be willing to help recruit students for you. The possibilities are endless. So once you've found those resources, you can begin to form partnerships.

The third thing that helped develop our organization is the foreman advisory board. We do not have our own 501 (c)(3), but fall under the umbrella of another 501 (c)(3). We found it important to have a group of individuals to help us guide and inform those decisions.

Our group is made up of stakeholders, including a representative from the local HUD Office, usually our Neighborhood Networks Coordinator, somebody from the local housing authority, property managers, property owners, and someone from our 501 (c)(3). You also need a resident on that board so they can help inform your decisions, as well.

The board doesn't have any legal standing because they're not an official 501 (c)(3) board of directors. They're just there to help us evaluate, guide and provide some accountability for what we do. It also gives our stakeholders buy-in on the decisions that we're making. If they feel involved and interested, you've got their support later on when you need it. So it's really important to have them onboard and working through the process with you.

Once you have that advisory board or a group of individuals, it's really important to have a mission statement. First, who are you serving? What issues do you claim to address in the community? What did your residents tell you they needed? Is it literacy, education access, technology access, self-sufficiency, childcare, afterschool programs? What are those things that you plan to address, and how do you plan to address them? All of those things go into your mission statement, or at least that's what we did here at the Learning Center.

Our mission is: "The mission of the CWA Cayce Learning Center is to identify, address and support the long-term solutions to the educational, health, social and economic needs of all residents living in the CWA Apartments and James Cayce Homes." So our audience is the CWA Apartments and the James Cayce Homes residents.

We named our issues--education, health, social and economic needs--and how we plan on addressing them. So we're identifying, addressing, and supporting those needs. It's really important to have a mission statement that will guide you through everything that you do. That's not to say that it won't actually change.

The next thing along the road to developing a good organization is strategic planning, and there probably has been a whole conference call just on strategic planning alone. You need to have a plan to know how you're going to rollout your services. If you already have services, how you're going to change those services. Set goals. Start small but measurable. What are your tools?

Funders are always looking for numbers. They want to know what you've produced when you say you're going to produce something. For example, we measure reading scores with our children. So we say 40 out of 60 students enrolled in our afterschool program will increase their reading scores by at least six months, and we have a tool that measures that. We have a specific reading assessment that does that, and funders want that. That's what they're looking for. They want to make sure that their dollars equal actual results. So build that into your strategic planning. Set those goals. They can start small and grow with you as you grow.

Figure out how many staff persons you need to run efficiently. Can volunteers be used instead of staff? Work that into your strategic plan, and be ready for changes. As we all know, change is inevitable. Be ready and know that we're doing the best we can on the front end to set this up, but as we go, obviously we're going to change. Funding can change, staff can change. We even had our demographics change in our neighborhood, and that changed how we conduct our services.

Also, if there's a program you really want to do but can't get the money for, I suggest piloting a scaled down version of the program. Make sure that you measure everything that you do so that when you finish, you can go back to a funder and say we've done this, it's successful, and we want to expand upon it.

How can you help us? One of our computer classes is small with six adults and two volunteers teaching the class. I would love to make that a permanent fixture, where we're holding it year-round and have a staff devoted to it, but I don't have the money to do that now. So with each class, we do our pretests, our post-tests; we're measuring the skills these adults are gaining through our process. So when we do find the funder that's interested, we can say, "Look what we did, and look what these students did. How can you help us?" Funders are a lot more willing to talk to you at that point.

Then, finally, evaluation, evaluation, evaluation. When conducting strategic planning, figure out the length of your program before you evaluate. Are you going to go six months before you evaluate or will you go a year before you evaluate? It's always crucial to make sure that you do evaluate what you've done. Did you meet your goals?

Why? Why not? If you didn't, how can you change what you're doing, or does it need to be changed? These factors are all important, as well as having your residents or customers participate in your evaluation. Like I said at the beginning, the residents are the experts. We're along for the ride, and they'll be honest with you. They're willing to share what they got out of something, what they didn't get out of something. Really take that to heart when you're conducting your evaluation.

So that's what we do here at our center to build capacity within our organization. Michele?

Michele Higgs: All right, Becky. Thank you so much. I'm glad you went all the way to tracking and evaluation. That's key to learning what you're doing that's working and what's not and also showing the community what's working with your organization. Thanks so much.

I am going to go to Matthew now. Matthew, are you there?

Matthew Roderick: Yes, I sure am, and welcome, everybody, to Neighborhood Networks Conference Call. I have been the center coordinator here at Arrowwood Hills Cooperative almost a year. I was brought in to enhance the current programs as well as expand the opportunities for our residents to have access to technology and further their education.

We're kind of hybrid of a computer center or a community center. We have a sustainable resource, a computer lab, which offers our residents several opportunities to work with state-of-the-art equipment as well as the training needed to progress in career development. We have a

board of directors that is part of the Arrowwood Hills Cooperative. We're a housing cooperative in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and we have 350 units. So we're quite a big housing cooperative; and we have a diverse range of clientele, not only in race, but also in age; and we have seen those demographics change just within the last five years.

Becky already stated that a survey is a great way to determine needs in your area, and on another point, she noted that we should not reinvent the wheel. As a community center or computer center, you can do several things well, but you can't necessarily do everything well. So we've looked around at other organizations in our local community to expand the services that we can offer here at Arrowwood. We already offer some of the services at Arrowwood to bridge a gap in the community, such as the No Child Left Behind, and afterschool programs.

We have about 70 children registered in the afterschool youth and teen programs. The programs have really been a big hit because they addressed one of the things that parents felt their children needed; some direction after school that would reinforce the skills that they learned in class during the day.

Our community center has also started to offer job training skills and career development through a curriculum that considers the ongoing trends, at least here in Michigan. I'm sure you all know the car industry, at this point, is a pretty tough game.

There has been a shift toward technology and retraining the current work force. We wanted to stand out by offering resources here at Arrowwood to reestablish community involvement with several of our local residents. The workforce program has been a very successful one, including Web and graphic design, all the way to the basics of computer and resume building, and Microsoft Office software programs.

This helps facilitate a fertile atmosphere that brings together several people in the community that have leadership potential. We have had several volunteers from our classes because they found that the center served a lot of their needs, and they wanted to give back.

As far as determining internal staffing needs, we determine that by the amount of program attendance and participation. We've got an afterschool and teen program, as well as a summer camp program. Due to the large turnout, we've had to expand internally to accommodate the young people with activities such as crafts, recreation, and some basic computer literacy. For the teens, they've got different objectives that have been identified by surveys. They ask for help in math or with applications for summertime jobs. We try to keep an open mind as to what the community wants from us rather than dictating what they should want, and because of that, we've formed some successful partnerships. Arrowwood Hills Cooperative itself is not a 501 (c)(3), and because of that, I'm sure many of you know the limitations in applying for grants.

Looking in our own backyard, there were several other organizations that were willing to work to extend their programs into our computer center. In turn, we would be able to extend some of the offerings that we have here through additional funding. So the board has been very active and very caring about our population. We've got a large immigrant population; we address a lot of their needs through English as Second Language courses. We have hosted those programs for several years.

One last thing, Neighborhood Networks has really helped us out. We were given the opportunity to be visited by a technical assistance coordinator in January. The coordinator helped us lay out a plan of what to do next. We've been acknowledged as a Certified Neighborhood Networks center, and because of that, we now have a sustainable interest in the local community.

So it's been a wonderful program in which to participate. As far as a future vision, we are starting to offer referral services, health resources services, and more. We've got several volunteer

programs with local high schools that assist the youth with homework, special projects like science experiments, or whatever may be of concern during that week in school.

So we try and cater to the needs of not only our residents, but the local community. That's where you really start. People start listening when you start offering opportunities, not only for your own community, but the local community.

Michele Higgs: Just to follow up with what you're saying, you have a lot of outreach to your community. You're very sensitive to what's going on, particularly with the job market being what it is. I take it that part of your mission, is to serve not just the property but the surrounding community as well.

Matthew Roderick: That's correct. We have a technology gap here due to economic limitations. Last week, I met with the University of Michigan's School of Education. They're working with a mathematics literacy project that is currently statewide. Because of our contacts and our willingness to listen to the needs not only of our residents but of the local community, we've been able to create partnerships that should be long-lasting and effective.

Michele Higgs: Let me ask you one quick question, and then we're going to move on to Angela. When you mentioned that you are now a tier-two center, you're meaning the certified status with regard to the Center Classification process?

Matthew Roderick: That is correct.

Michele Higgs: OK, I just wanted to be sure, and one last thing. With all of the programs that you have, have you started documenting the guidelines and curricula for all of your programs?

Matthew Roderick: Yes, that's a great question and something that I didn't touch on. One of the historical grants that we've been receiving for several years is a block grant. As you know, to

acquire funding consistently, you need to do some accurate reporting, and I've been involved with forming milestones and performance targets. In that way you ensure, as Becky touched on previously, that organizations are able to see a positive effect with the grant money and how it's spent.

So if you are open to listening to other people, there's a huge demand out there. With that demand, windows of opportunity open up as far as funding goes.

Michele Higgs: Well, thank you much. I think I'm going to stop there and see what Angela's got going on at Village at Lakeview, right around the corner from us in Edgewood, Maryland.

Angela?

Angela Lewis: Yes. Good afternoon everyone and greetings from Village at Lakeview located in Edgewood, Maryland. I am the director/services coordinator for Village at Lakeview, and I've been out here since June of just last year. I've overcome a lot of the different challenges that face centers that are just starting off; no programs, just an empty building.

I started by visiting the Small Business Development Center, a national program for anyone who is interested in starting a business. One of the key things they advised me to do in opening a center was look at it as if it were my own business. While I don't get any benefits from it as if it were my center, I do have compassion for the betterment of people by making better choices for their lives, their children, and their community.

One of the things that I think is very important as far as establishing partnerships is using different assessment tools. The best assessment tool is one-on-one communication. We have a property that has approximately 233 units. I started reaching out to people during the summer; people were outside so I would take advantage of that. As the kids would get off the school bus, I would

approach people and form a relationship with them, talking just nonchalantly about things that are going on in their lives and in mine. I would ask them about some of the things that they thought were pros and cons and made mental notes. Some people feel cornered when you have them fill out a piece of paper. They're not going to be as apt to filling out paperwork as they would to voicing their feelings in a nonthreatening conversation.

After hearing what their needs are, I started attending different community events; I attended a lot of the Chamber of Commerce meetings in my area. I attended and recently joined the Rotary Club, which does an excellent job in forming partnerships because their goals line up with those of the center. To establish a successful partnership, you need to look at places with goals similar to those you want to achieve for your center. I have also formed a partnership with the local Department of Social Services.

That's how I obtained my internal staff. A lot of them have to have work experience or perform some type of task to continue receiving their benefits. I use them in different capacities like answering the phones or serving as chaperones.

I think that when you're opening a new center, it's very important that you establish a good relationship with your community policing entity, whether it's your local sheriffs, your troopers, or your police officers.

They have programs that benefit the community. Also, get to know your local delegate, politicians, or your local mayor and make sure that they are aware of your center.

If the center is in a hard to serve area, make sure that your partner's goals align with yours. For instance, if the center is in a high-crime area, has a drug problem, or whatever the need is, the partner should be made aware that you have the same goals. How can the partnership fulfill the need so that everyone is successful?

Building a good team of partnerships is the key piece here. Having strong partnerships with multiple community organizations can fill many of the needs for a center that's just opening up. For example, we have strong partnerships with a couple of churches in our area. Because I conduct the grant research, they take the responsibility for receiving the money and then hosting the program through their 501 (c)(3) so that fills some of our financial needs.

When I started in the Small Business Development Center, I was told we needed a board, but it was also important to have a resident counsel. Because we have such a large property, one person from each building was recommended by the rental office to represent their building as the resident counsel. You have one responsible person, and I'm sure there's one responsible person in any of your properties, apartment buildings, or however your property is set up. They meet with the regular board, and we sit down collectively to develop ideas and programs that benefit everyone.

Another strong point is to have a good working relationship with the rental office. The rental office can give you insight on residents that isn't apparent. For instance, I had a parent whose children were removed from the home; I had to brainstorm to find a program to help her regain custody of her children. That's when I formed a partnership with a local organization called the Family Tree that offers parenting classes and parenting support group classes. That's when my relationship with the rental office came into play. If her children would never come to the center for whatever reason, or they would come and then all of a sudden I wouldn't see them anymore, I wouldn't know why they weren't coming. That's why I think it's very important that you have a very good working and confidential relationship with the rental office.

Also, our center is not just for the residents of the Village of Lakeview. All of our programs are free, number one, and they are open to our local community. The people that don't live on the property are always welcome to participate in any of the classes or services that we provide.

We have a 100-percent working computer lab with five computers, scanner and a printer. We partner with the Corporate County Office of Surplus. It's a procurement office that donates to a local community center that is trying to promote self-sufficiency for customers. It's a write-off for them.

We also have a couple of other different educational programs. We have GED and adult basic education that are provided by our local college. They receive grant money through a section of the college that is 501 (c)(3); they're able to offer the program to us free of charge. So, their 501 (c)(3) does benefit us as well.

Michele Higgs: Angela?

Angela Lewis: Yes?

Michele Higgs: I'm sorry; I'm going to jump in real quick for you. First of all, I want to highlight one of the things that you've been saying and that is the importance of partnering with another organization in the event that your own organization doesn't have a 501 (c)(3). It's very helpful to be able to seek funding if you don't have a 501 (c)(3) of your own, and it is something that can happen. You can get it. It's just a little time consuming to file the paperwork and work through the IRS to get it.

The other thing is that you started out by saying that you consider your organization a business; all of the work that goes into creating and making a business grow goes into your Neighborhood Networks center. Going back to another point you made, you were talking about the survey, just talking with folks casually. I came in contact with a center director some time ago who said he did "doorjamb" surveys, and that reminded me of what he was doing, just sort of standing in the doorjamb and talking to people as they walked by. If you're relating to folks one-on-one, you can get some good information from them. So that's very, very helpful.

I'd like to stop and see if we have any questions out there because there are some folks who have questions for you. So if you have any other comments, please hold them and we'll come back to you.

Angela Lewis: OK.

Michele Higgs: All right, thanks. Janine, can we open up the line and see if there's anyone who wants to ask a question?

Operator: Thank you, Ms. Higgs. The question-and-answer session will be conducted electronically today. If you'd like to ask a question, please do so by pressing the star key followed by the digit one on your touchtone telephone. If you are using a speakerphone, please be sure your mute function is turned off to allow your signal to reach our equipment. Once again, please press star one on your touchtone telephone to ask a question.

And our first question will come from Debra Mauldin from St. Monica's Elderly.

Debra Mauldin: Am I on the line now?

Michele Higgs: Hi, Debra. Go ahead.

Debra Mauldin: Hi. How are you? I'm listening to all your speakers, and a lot of the information that I'm hearing are things that I'm already doing. I work with an elderly population of 60-some odd residents, and my position is resident service coordinator. I've been here a year.

I've been very effective with my residents. I'm very effective with people. However, I'm running into resistance with the board in terms of progressing. So I'm looking to find out how do you get your board to agree with some of the ideas that may benefit your clients or your community?

Michele Higgs: OK, I'm going to throw that out to any of our speakers.

Angela Lewis: I do have a question for you. Who selected the board and how long are their terms?

Debra Mauldin: I have no idea who selected these board members. This place has been in existence for 13 years. I was hired by a board. I met maybe six members. I think they're very old boards, and that's pretty much all I know about them.

Angela Lewis: I can give you just a little bit of advice. I believe you're talking about the board that owns the property. Is that what you're talking about?

Debra Mauldin: I believe they're the owners of it. I really don't know. They don't talk to me. I've reached out to them, but I haven't received a response. I haven't gotten one, and I know that I'm doing well because if I wasn't I wouldn't still be here.

In terms of trying to get them to help the center progress, we have a facility that has a kitchenette, where we can have a breakfast program. We have a wonderful, beautiful community room that I utilize, but I'd like to utilize it even more, and I'm just not getting anywhere with the board. So I'm looking for direction on how to get them to listen to me, or just take notice of some of the things that have been going on.

Angela Lewis: A suggestion would be to start with your community officials, your mayor. Hold events that they would come to that would be recognizable. Start getting some press releases in the newspaper that will grab recognition of their property. Send that to them with something like a

proposal to say this is just the start of something great or something new. Tell them, "Here's my proposal for making it more beneficial not just for you but for the property and everyone else that's involved." That would be my suggestion.

Debra Mauldin: I do have the mayor coming. He's been here before, and it's funny because I used him as a recommendation to get the job here. So I have somewhat of a relationship with him. We've had a discussion regarding a proposal for a computer room that's being underutilized, and I'm working on getting volunteers to come in and work with the residents on that.

But he's actually coming back to our agency in October. So I have a little time to put something together, and I'm glad that you've mentioned this. At least I know I'm on the right track because I have already invited him. It's already been confirmed.

Angela Lewis: Believe me; your owners would love it. They would love to hear something from an official with the importance of the mayor.

Debra Mauldin: OK.

Matthew Roderick: That's a great idea, and I just wanted to make a few more comments. We have a board that's plagued with inertia over here. A lot of the inertia comes from fear of not knowing what's going to come from the changes. If you can show your board members that, "we've got an empty building here that we're paying rent on or we're paying a certain mortgage on, we're paying electricity, utilities, and if it's under-utilized, we're spending more money than if we were to be able to have it fully staffed".

Debra Mauldin: OK.

Michele Higgs: Becky, did you want to weigh in on this?

Becky Taylor: My suggestion would be to reach out to one or two of the board members and befriend them. It's great to have kind of that liaison, somebody who can speak up for you when you're not there just to say, hey, did you hear what she's doing and what they've done this week? Did you see this in the paper? Get somebody that can be your advocate on the board. That's going to take some work to figure out who that will be.

Debra Mauldin: Yes, the board members are elderly except for one, which is the president. From my understanding, she makes most of the decisions or she's the one that sways the board her way. So I don't know if I should befriend her.

Michele Higgs: May I ask one question? Are you the closest person to their board? Is there someone else like an executive director who sits on that board ex officio who could be the bridge for you?

Debra Mauldin: No, this is a small organization, and in my position, I'm the first resident services coordinator that's been brought in. So I am the change, and I've made a big change since I've been here for these residents, a positive one. I've kept the board very informed of everything I'm doing or want to do, and I do it all in writing, but I just get no feedback, no nothing.

Michele Higgs: Taking advantage of the suggestions that you've gotten and bringing them some positive information from the community might just help.

Debra Mauldin: OK.

Michele Higgs: OK, we're going to move on to our next question. Thanks so much, Debra.

Debra Mauldin: OK, thanks.

Michele Higgs: Janine?

Operator: Our next question will come from James Nordeen from Cooperwood Learning.

James Nordeen: That is Copperwood Learning Center.

Michele Higgs: OK, James. Thank you.

James Nordeen: You're welcome. My question is about partnerships in the 501 (c)(3). How does the IRS look at that, or what do you have to have? I'm working with a couple of 501 (c)(3) partners, and how does that work? Is it that they control the money, is it that when we get a lot of donations, the 501 (c)(3) is useful for tax deductions for us?

Michele Higgs: So you're asking how that umbrella relationship works.

James Nordeen: Yes, the umbrella relationship and participating in the 501 (c)(3) with our partners. Is there a document?

Matthew Roderick: I can give some insight to that. This is Matt at Arrowwood. We are in the process of getting some new partnerships going. Since we are not a 501 (c)(3), one of the things we wanted to do is make ourselves eligible. I talked with the board about the reasons why we're not a 501 (c)(3); there are several areas that need to be set up, including budgeting for the computer center or the community center.

It would be set up as a sole entity, something separate from your housing cooperative or your resident cooperative. What ends up happening is you have to keep track of separate staff and separate expenses. This causes a lot of red tape for a lot of organizations, plus you have to appoint another board of directors. So there's some redundancy involved, but of course, you know, if you have your 501 (c)(3), you get to dictate how you want to spend your money.

James Nordeen: Right.

Matthew Roderick: With our current partnerships, some things are in place and are available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site. As examples are some letters of agreement and memoranda of understanding, which outline specific tasks that are involved once the grant is acquired, and how the funds are distributed. They can be fairly detailed depending on how much assistance you get legally, and determines exactly how the funds will be given to you.

James Nordeen: OK, those letters of agreement then would be the umbrella, if you wish?

Matthew Roderick: The memorandum of understanding would be more of the umbrella. The letter of agreement is a specific document that pertains to an activity such as if a computer class that is being hosted at your computer site in collaboration with the partnership.

James Nordeen: OK, very good. Thank you.

Matthew Roderick: You're welcome.

Michele Higgs: OK, thanks. Great! Janine, is there anyone else on the line?

Operator: We do currently have two questions remaining in the queue, and the next question will come from Keya Mitchell from William Plummer Plaza.

Michele Higgs: OK.

Keya Mitchell: Hi. How are you? This is Keya Mitchell.

Michele Higgs: Very well. Go ahead.

Keya Mitchell: I am the services coordinator manager at Plummer Plaza and I was just wondering if any of you had served as coordinators, even service coordinators, at your residence because we actually do all the things that you say. The only thing we've added is the actual computer component of it. So I was wondering how you guys tied in service coordination to your Neighborhood Networks.

Michele Higgs: I'm not sure I get the question.

Keya Mitchell: OK.

Michele Higgs: Is there anyone who can respond to that. A number of Neighborhood Networks centers have services coordinators, resident services coordinators. So I'm trying to get to your question.

Keya Mitchell: Great. Okay, we already had service coordination, and we saw many of the things that the Neighborhood Networks centers were doing we were already doing. But then I guess as it opened up, it appeared as though service coordination in Neighborhood Networks almost merged, because we didn't know anything about Neighborhood Networks, but yet we were doing all the programs under service coordination. Then when Neighborhood Networks came up, it seemed like a merger. So I was just trying to see if there was anyone else who actually felt that way and how were they doing anything differently, because the only component that we're adding is that now our service coordination is coming under Neighborhood Networks centers.

Michele Higgs: Well, Neighborhood Networks is predominantly the assistance you get in running your center and the resources that you get even as a services coordinator. You would have access to technical assistance and all of the resources available to you through the Initiative. This may be

something that we need to discuss in detail offline because I'm still not certain I'm clear about your question.

Keya Mitchell: OK.

Michele Higgs: OK, so why don't we hold on and do that.

Keya Mitchell: OK.

Michele Higgs: All right. Thank you much. Now it looks like we have come to the end of our call, but, Janine, if we have one more on the line and it's a quick one, we can do it.

Operator: OK, we do have one more on the line. The next question will come from Sheba Asberom from DB Consulting.

Michele Higgs: Hello, Sheba.

Sheba Asberom: Hi. Here's a quick suggestion for Debra Mauldin at St. Monica's. You may wish to increase your visibility by taking advantage of the Neighborhood Networks Week activity. By working with a few of the residents who have an interest in computers and technology, you may be able to train them to develop fliers and invite the surrounding community to come in to learn a little bit about what your residents are doing. Your residents are senior adults. They've been cooking, they've been eating, and they've had families. They've got a lot of knowledge and skills. They could go to a site such as Kraftfoods.com, where you type in the ingredients that you have in your refrigerator or in your pantry, and then Kraftfoods.com gives you a list of different recipes from which to choose. You can use those recipes; you can chat about different ethnic backgrounds' favorite dishes. Here, you would have seniors coming in, learning a little bit about

computer technology and helping to develop fliers to invite members of the surrounding community in for an open house.

That would be one way to raise visibility. The mayor is coming; you've invited the mayor already. You can also invite one or two of the board members, send an invitation, develop the little card of invitation signed by the residents and asking them to participate. That may be one way to begin raising visibility, increasing the buy-in on the part of the board members and also generating excitement among the residents.

Michele Higgs: Good idea. Thanks, Sheba. And that leads me to our closing because Neighborhood Networks Week is coming up August 4th through 9th. It's a great time to plan events at your center because the whole country will be celebrating Neighborhood Networks Week.

With that in mind, I want to remind you of the other available resources that you can find through the Neighborhood Networks Initiative. First of all, we don't always get to hear all of the questions on a call. So if you have a question that didn't get in, you can go to the Neighborhood Networks Web site and post it on the Neighborhood Networks online message board, where staff, or maybe even your peers, will see that your question will get attention. Of course, you can always call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line with questions, and that's 888-312-2743, or you'll find abundant resources and current information on the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org.

Now, don't forget the Neighborhood Networks Regional Technical Assistance Workshop is coming up in San Francisco, California, July 9th through 11th. That's preceded by a two-day grantwriting session. Hotel registration at the federal rates will end this Friday, June 13.

The RTAW brochure is available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site for your review. You can see what workshops will be offered by going to the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org.

Now, our call on July 8 is entitled, "Using Tracking and Evaluation to Ensure Your Center's High Level of Success." Just think; if you keep track of what you do at your center, you can validate your successes and crow about them to the neighbors, not to mention that tracking your activities helps you measure your progress towards your goals.

Now, Laurence Peter, an educator and author of The Peter Principle, said, "If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably end up somewhere else." So join us for this informative call on July 8, and don't forget to celebrate Neighborhood Networks Week, August 4 through 9, throw a party, and get some attention for your center.

I want to thank all of you for joining us today, and thanks, Becky and Matthew and Angela. We got a lot of good information. Becky gave us some points on organizational development, and I hope you all took note of them. Matthew talked about the broad scope of activities that are possible, when you address organizational development at your center, and Angela reminded us to consider our centers as businesses, which is what a center is all about.

I hear some noise. That must be the kids coming back for their afternoon session. Take good care, everyone, and we'll talk to you next time.

END