

NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK

Moderator: Michele Higgs
May 8, 2007
3:00 p.m. EDT

Operator: Thank you for standing by and welcome to the Neighborhood Networks monthly call. Today's conference call is being recorded.

At this time, I would like to turn the call over to Ms. Michele Higgs; please go ahead.

Michele Higgs: Thank you, Gwen. This is Michele Higgs; welcome to the Neighborhood Networks May conference call. I am the technical assistant coordinator representing the team of technical assistance coordinators who will work with you to address the needs of the various Neighborhood Networks Centers around the country. I'm joined today by Jennifer Brower.

Thank you for joining us today. You know, we here at Neighborhood Networks always speak about the importance of hosting special events for and at your center. You have this wonderful resource, your Neighborhood Networks Center, on your property and you want to let your residents and your communities know all about it, right? Well today we hope to help you learn how to create events that will get your residents engaged and get your community to take notice. Our call today is entitled: "Event Planning: Capturing the Attention of Your Stakeholders."

Everybody loves a party; why not put special events to work for you and your center? You can introduce your center to the resident population at a party. You can have residents meet their

neighbors at a party. You can show off your center to the community at a party. Whether it is a grand opening, a cook-out, an awards ceremony, or a monthly birthday celebration, periodic gatherings at your property help residents celebrate themselves. Parties make people feel good. Folks come together at an event where business is not the only thing on the agenda. Even if business is the main event, special events offer opportunities for residents to get to know one other as well as a special opportunity for community vendors to showcase their services.

For instance, when you have a health fair, or a job fair, that gives members of the community a chance to bring information about their services to the residents of your property. Special events help residents get a chance to overcome their shyness and learn about the activities on their property and in the community that can help them reach their personal goals.

And guess what? There's food. Whether it's an ice cream social, a cook-out or a volunteer recognition ceremony, food is the great leveler. When people can't make time for a meeting, they will come out for a party.

But today we'll talk about the art of special event planning, planning special events that are successful, fun and effective. Representing our centers, we welcome Karen Voiss with Tuatin Valley Housing Partnership. Karen has been involved in community development since 1994 and has the expertise and enthusiasm for working with residents, community members, and service providers, to advance opportunities and support residents in their move towards self sufficiency. Karen has held many special events in partnership with local businesses and organizations to promote the needs of residents and gain organizational support. She will speak of her successes and offer some tips.

We will also welcome VeTalle Fusilier, an event producer and marketing communication specialist, who will help us understand the best practices behind special events planning. Mr.

Fusilier is a partner in an events production firm in Washington, D.C. and an instructor with the event management certificate and tourism programs at George Washington University.

Finally, we will welcome Kristen Stevenson, training and special events manager from the Neighborhood Networks staff, who will tell you more about our own upcoming special events, Neighborhood Networks Week and the Neighborhood Networks National Training Conference.

Now, we have four new centers to welcome to the neighborhood today and they are Kingsley Court Retirement Center in Oregon, Christian Towers and Gallatin Senior Center in Tennessee, Woods Edge Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center in South Carolina, Hickory Hollow in Michigan and Pecan Valley Neighborhood Networks Center in Arizona. Whoops, looks like I've been in the punch . . . that was five centers; and since we are in a party mood today, let's send up some balloons to welcome these new centers to the neighborhood!

Let me remind you about the Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool, also known as the START business plan. START will help you look at the capacity of your center, and provide the foundation upon which you can organize your activities. It will help you assess the needs of residents, and determine what resources in your community can help you meet their needs. Also, I guess it would help you find out who in your community would be good to work with on that special event. So, keep your START plan up to date!

If you have questions about the START business plan, resident surveys, upcoming special events, or general questions about Neighborhood Networks, please call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line at 888-312-2743. You can also visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org. Also, let me tell you about the online networking available through the Neighborhood Networks Message Board. There, you can share information among yourselves, post news, ask questions. Be aware that this is not a "real-time" resource. You can post your information and then revisit the board in a day or so, to see what

kinds of responses you have received. Just go to the 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." When you get there, follow the instructions and guidelines, or select "enter online discussion." I encourage you to give it a try. The message board is just one more way to connect with your peers, and learn more ways to help your centers.

May I also remind listeners that a transcript of this call will be made available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site in about two weeks?

OK. I've told you all of the news of the day, so I'm going to open up this conversation with Mr. VeTalle Fusilier and if you can tell us a little bit about the ground work of doing special events, Vetalle?

VeTalle Fusilier: Thank you very much. It's my pleasure to be able to speak to you about events, especially because they exist in principle, regardless of size and scope. The amount of effort and attention is only determined by volume, but the principles themselves are the same.

Let me back up for a second, all the way to attention. Because "attention" was a word that was mentioned in the introduction and I think it's important for us to understand that attention, in a broad sense, has become an economy of itself. There's a book called: "The Attention Economy," Should you happen to come across it, take a look at it, by Thomas Davenport and John Beck, as there are a couple of principles they put out. First of all, that when we do events now, we're competing in a much larger universe for attention because people have choices. They can go to the movies; wow, they don't even have to go to the movies, they can stay home. They can rent a movie and bring it home. They don't even have to do that. They can stay home and get a movie mailed to them. They can go shopping. They can get on the computer or they can come to an event.

One way to get the attention from people that you want to enroll, engage, or give information to is to give them attention. That's one of the things that we've seen as most effective.

Not to qualify this narcissism, but people want to answer the question: what's in it for me? What does this event do for me? Is it responsive to my situation? If the answer to that sheds some light, or creates some enjoyment or some information for the most fascinating of subjects, "me," then people will find it fascinating.

That being said, let's look at events in a structured method. I teach a model at George Washington University that's adopted pretty much across the board and it's a five-step model. Research is the first step; design being the second, planning being the third, coordination being the fourth, and evaluation being the fifth.

When we think about this model, it begins with research, and you want to research. First of all, who is your intended audience, what do you know about the attention you wish to attract that's going to translate into attendance? That leads you to think about things like the best time and date, the way to communicate the event, and everything, including the production of the event.

When you think about research there are five questions that you can ask that always help you kind of clarify this notion of having an event, and the goal of the event. Five "Ws". The first question is: *why*? The first question is *always why*. Why are we holding the event? Are there alternative ways to achieve the purpose or communicate this information? What are the political factors within the organization or within a locality, you know, a neighborhood, a city, a state, a region? How do they influence our notion of why we hold the event?

The second question is: *who* are the stakeholders? Certainly, Neighborhood Networks is a stakeholder in the event. There may be other people who have an interest, and hold a stake in

the event. Oddly enough, almost everyone involved as a vendor or a service provider is a stakeholder in the event; and it's important for you to realize that because most stakeholders don't pass their resumes around. People get someone to bring out the moon bounce or the kiddies entertainment stuff because they saw it somewhere else and they liked it. So for vendors, it's very much the last thing that they did that sells the next thing that they will do. So they are a stakeholder.

Most important, never forget your audience as a stakeholder in the event. A lot of times, we get involved in getting the information across that we want, or creating the impression of the organization that we want and we lose track of the audience and how they feel about things. Now this has demonstrated itself very recently in many of the conferences and stuff that I've observed, in that, they'll have the CEO scheduled last, like they were doing a show, and he's the headliner. Unlike with a show, if they wait too long to bring him forward, people will leave. Then the CEO is upset, because there aren't enough people watching his presentation; and the people aren't there, because they didn't stay long. So what we've seen is that perhaps we need to put the important speaker first instead of last, not get hierarchical but make sure he's there for the messaging.

The third *W* is *when*. The time and date will dictate what venue is available, and will certainly speak to your audience.

The next thing is *where*. Where will determine the outcome of the event, how easy is it or difficult is it to get to. Think about traffic, think about travel time. The final thing is *what*, what is the thing we are going to develop?

Those are five things that I hope you research, and that will provide a lot of clarity for what you are looking towards when putting together an event.

The second phase of this is design. This begins with wild brainstorming. *Never* limit your brainstorming by money. Start thinking about the most wonderful thing you can do, and then filter that down among your stakeholders, your staff, and come to an agreement that's doable. Also remember, if you start talking about Michael Jackson and you end up with Tito Jackson, you've still got a *Jackson*. You've got to think about that.

The third phase is planning, and that's where you take this dream that's a design and you realize that. There are three things that you want to think about when you are planning. The human dimension, the human resources are capital. Think about where does the talent, the effort, come from? Do you have volunteers?

Then there's the financial consideration, certainly one that is dominant in most of our thinking. What will happen if we don't get enough money, how will that change our plan? Who will ultimately be responsible for contractual obligations? Most importantly, what is our cash flow? How can we spend money? When can we spend money? Sometimes, you will have someone agree to donate some dollars to help you do something. When can you access that? Because depending on the organization, it may not be something that can happen within days. It may take a month to get that money.

Then there's the political dimension. Every event, every move you make has political ramifications and you have to be sensitive to them.

When you are through thinking about all of that, like you haven't had enough to think about, then you have to think about a timeline. That's a way to think about what you're going to do to move the meter toward this event being real. You look at your timeline almost from the event day backwards, and then fit in milestones. There are a couple of great places that you can look at; corbinball.com has some good timeline stuff. Timelines allow you to check your progress and to understand the co-dependency of events. If you want to send out an invitation, first you have to

figure out where the venue is going to be, so you can put that on the invitation. You start by making a timeline to create a milestone path toward completion.

Fourth is coordination, and that's like conducting a symphony. You're monitoring all of the performers, but you are responsible for the delivery of the overall event.

Three kinds of decision making happen while you are coordinating an event. You can be autocratic. Sometimes, you have to step up and make the decision and let it ride. Sometimes you can get a consensus. You can talk to everyone. You can pull together. You can hold your hands, you can sing "Kuumbaya." It can all work. Finally, sometimes, the best leadership is to do nothing, and simply observe what's going on.

The fifth and least active method in most events is evaluation. Most people think if you have an event, and no one gets sick and nothing falls on anybody it was a success. You want to identify what you are going to evaluate and how are you going to apply it. That goes back to your research and that goes back to the first question, why do you hold the event? Those are best practices in a nut shell. You see how they all form one big circle? Because, in your evaluation, you go back to that first question, why did I hold the event? We held the event for this reason. Did we achieve that reason? Then you can look at the process, the staffing, the need for money, and apply that to your future efforts. Those, I think, are best practices that are demonstrated in all kinds of events, from children's birthday parties to the Olympics.

Michele Higgs: I think I see the clarity there. I don't want to cut off your point. Are you done?

VeTalle Fusilier: Yes, I'm done. I think that's enough.

Michele Higgs: I think that's quite good, just in terms of helping us see, I mean it really does provide the bones of what one would do to prepare for an event. Like you say, it could be applied as easily to the moon bounce at a kid's party on up to something even bigger.

VeTalle Fusilier: Yes, that's the thing that people get confused about. You know, these principles work at a children's party. They work at a wedding. They work at a political fundraiser. They work at the Olympics. There's still research that needs to be done. There's still planning. There's still a way to evaluate them. All of those things will help you so much in your own structure and development, because you don't – almost nobody does just one event, ever. You always do something after that, and so if you take what you learned at the family reunion and apply it to the Christmas party, then that's a series of events. We all have a series of events that we will be responsible for.

Michele Higgs: Well that sounds great. I'm going to let you stop and I have a question, but I'm going to hold it until after Karen speaks. Karen, do you want to go ahead and tell us what happens at your centers?

Karen Voiss: OK. Thank you. Hello?

Michele Higgs: Are you there?

Karen Voiss: Yes, I was hearing a lot of static.

Michele Higgs: Yes, so was I. I don't know whether that was your line or maybe somebody hung up on that end.

Karen Voiss: OK.

Michele Higgs: OK. Let's go.

Karen Voiss: All right. Well, first of all we have four different centers here in Oregon that we work with, and all four of those centers are at various stages and so we kind of look at the stage of the center in determining where to move forward in our special events arena.

One of the first things that we've discovered is targeting, as we just talked about targeting the audience. So, when trying to get residents involved and active in your center, one of the ways to build that is to have a special event, recognizing their involvement in the center. Recognize them with a certificate which is easy to access. We use Publisher a lot to print out invitations, to print out flyers, to print out certificates that recognize residents and/or volunteers. So if you have been working with your residents and having different programs, after three or four months, you could hold a recognition ceremony.

Yes, food is always good. We always have food at our events. Everything from, cookies to vegetable trays, to actually having dinners. Especially, for small centers, one of the things that we try to do is partner with local businesses. You could go to a Safeway or some of your local grocery stores that are right there in your neighborhood and talk about the fact that you are representing this group of people that live in the neighborhood and the event you are trying to put on. They're really usually pretty good about providing food or helping support events that are in the neighborhood. So that's one of the things that we look at.

When you are doing a recognition event for your residents, at least at our centers, we also try to involve our community partners, people who may have been involved in providing supporter activities to our centers, or people that we want to include and invite to future activities and have them get support.

By including them when we're recognizing our residents, we are showing them the things that we are doing at our centers, and how they could impact the individuals that live here, and here are opportunities for you to partner with us on those activities. So that's one sort of event that we do and we try to do that a couple of times a year at each center.

The second event would be an event where you are recognizing your partners. You may actually have your residents doing small activities, something they've learned over the last six months or over the year. We had a special event where we had all of our centers participate, and so we went and got trifle boards, and took pictures of the different programs and activities, posted them and put those up.

Then we had residents from each one of the properties make a presentation on some kind of activity. So the children that participated in the Summer Reading Club, read from a book that they had read over the summer. Then we had a group of residents that did some basketball activity because we also had the park and recreation district there. The district had been working with us on recreational activities, and we wanted them to see the success of their involvement, so that we could build on our partnerships, and also appreciate and recognize what they had done. Relationships, in all of this, are just a huge piece of the ability to keep those partnerships intact, and recognize them as important.

So you can do that type of activity, and then we also give out plaques. Again, we don't have lots of money. As probably most of you are in the same boat, we generally give out plaques that we've printed of certificates off of Publisher, or publication software. Then we can go to the Dollar Tree or find inexpensive frames that are nice to put the certificates in. We also try to do some cut-and-paste with photos to make them personalized. Those are hanging in their office, and the next time you call those individuals to talk with them about an event or a partnership, they are going to see that certificate or photograph and remember that you actually do consider them a

partner. They are going to remember that you appreciated the work they did, and that you recognized them publicly.

One of the keys, when you are doing a recognition event, is to always try to get the media involved, wherever possible, sending out invitations to the media, and sending out press releases to the media. If you have information on press releases, we recommend that you try to find a local partner, like someone in your city hall, or a school district that you might be working with, they generally have a set press release, e-mail list and they can just send it out for you with a push of a button. They are usually pretty good about helping. So it's finding partners to support those types of special events.

Michele Higgs: Karen, you just brought up a point, which is actually the question I was going to ask of Vetalie about approaching the media. You have found that checking with partners in your area has been helpful in terms of their allowing you to use their template or something like that, or use their equipment to send out press releases?

Karen Voiss: Yes. That's been a huge benefit, because when the press release comes from the mayor's office, or the school district, stakeholders look at it for sure, because they want to see what's going on. If it comes from an e-mail that they've never recognized, they may glance at it, or not really understand it. So I think it really helps to utilize some of your larger partners in the community if you have access, to get those press releases out.

Generally speaking, they have a list of e-mail addresses already in their computer, and they can get you a template, or you can give them information. I've even had them actually write up the press release for me, and then send it back to take a look at. We did that with Tri-Met in the City of Beaverton for our groundbreaking that we held earlier this year, and it was great, because they sent it out for us. They actually drafted some things, got all of the key headlines in there and we worked on it together. It's helpful if you're not writing press releases on a regular basis, because

you may not know what's the best thing to put in there to catch their eye, and so if you can get that support, it's a real benefit.

Michele Higgs: OK, great. Not to cut you off, but I wanted to ask VeTalle his opinion on this as well.

VeTalle, are you still with us?

VeTalle Fusilier: I am.

Michele Higgs: OK. When working with the media, including say newspapers in larger areas, do you think that approaching them for help is a good way to get them to put your stuff in the paper?

VeTalle Fusilier: Well, I mean, Karen's exactly right. I mean, basically, when you start approaching the media, they pay attention. Again, we're in this attention economy, which is a finite resource, based on what they feel is going to resonate with their audience. Again, we're in the "what's in it for me?" So if they see something from the school district, if they see something that catches their eye because it's a bellwether, it's a magnet for their attention, then they will read it and discover in there that your event is being publicized. In a finite attention economy, and we all have a finite amount of attention, it really helps to have a partner. You know, you don't have a big stick, you want to walk down the street with somebody with a big stick; and so that always works.

Often, there are more lists, more access, and even relationships because people are reporting about, say, how the district is doing in the "no child left behind initiative." That's a federal initiative that allows them to have relationships that you can leverage. Maybe it's not the same reporter but they know who you should talk to. So it's a complete advantage to use all of your partners, and their relationships in every respect, but especially with regard to the media.

Michele Higgs: OK. Great! Thanks. I just wanted to get both of you weighing in on that particular topic.

Karen, did you want to go on?

Karen Voiss: Sure. Relationships are really critical in this business, and so the second event that I'm talking about where you are recognizing your partners really allows you to build on that. Again, they'll remember what you said, that you recognized them. So when you go back for another event, they are more willing to participate and/or contribute, or if you go and talk with them about supporting what you are doing by providing a class or training onsite, it really is building that relationship.

The third one, again, and because generally most centers are fairly small organizations with very limited staff, one of the things that we found is that a lot of the local businesses will do events onsite for you for one day. So, for example, we've done a couple of events at restaurants. Where we are able to send out invitations to individuals and the sponsors and partners that we've been working with and say come over with friends and family and buy your dinner at this restaurant on this night and proceeds from the sales will be donated to our organization. We've made anywhere from \$1800 to \$3000 in a night. We've generally done fairly small activities. A lot of restaurants, like pizza chains, offer all kinds of different ways to access or build that type of fundraiser.

When you are working with those organizations, for example, they may let you put up a flyer, or pamphlets or information about who you are and what you do in the community three weeks ahead of time, inviting the general public to stop by. These flyers let the community know about your event and what you're doing and participate because proceeds will be donated to your organization, and this is who you are. So you are getting your name out there and you're getting recognition. We actually have put banks on the tables the night of the events, so that people who don't know us or people who do know us and want to donate more than just the percentage of the meal that they paid for, have a way to provide additional funding for the event and for the organization.

I know Michele was talking about ice cream socials, those kinds of things are all great onsite, even if you can get your local ice cream parlor to support some of them, and they are wonderful fundraisers. They are smaller, and they take some work, but they don't take a lot of work and for us, this has been a really great opportunity to get our name out there. Again, we usually do that after we've built at least some volunteer base recognition, with partnerships throughout the county or the city, because you want to be able to invite those people. So it makes it a win-win for the restaurant. You are reaching out to your partners, and your constituents and they are increasing their service and recognition themselves. It really helps when it can be that win-win situation.

So those are really three different things that we do, we also do groundbreakings. You can do auctions, but they are very time consuming; golf tournaments, all ways that you can do special events and fundraisers, but those events really take a lot of manpower, a lot of volunteers, a lot of partnership and support and time to be successful. So the smaller events we found have been really great in recognition for our organization. We had two articles in the newspaper just last week, just based on building on our partnerships that we've gotten out there, not even for a special event. Those help for future events and activities; and that's really, I think, it.

Michele Higgs: That's plenty. That's plenty. On the heels of that, since you threw some good ideas out there for things that we might do, I'd like Kristen to talk a bit about our upcoming special event on Neighborhood Networks Week, because maybe some folks could have gotten some ideas, and then I'd like to open up to questions, OK.? Kristen?

Kristen Stevenson: Great, thanks, Michele. As Michele said, my name is Kristen Stevenson, I am one of the staff who works on planning events for Neighborhood Networks. By now, you should have all received some save-the-date postcards for the two upcoming Neighborhood Networks events, as Michele mentioned, Neighborhood Networks Week, and we also have this year, the Neighborhood Networks National Training Conference.

First up is Neighborhood Networks Week. That will be held June 25 through 30 this year. As always, we will be having national events that will be held to support the week's celebration. These events are being confirmed now and will be e-mailed to all centers as well as made available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site, once confirmed.

This year, the ever-popular Neighborhood Networks Event Planning Guide has been updated to include many additional resources that will assist you in planning your event. Another addition to Neighborhood Networks Week this year is the addition of special event days. These days were created to enhance Neighborhood Networks Week and encourage more centers to host local events. Special event days will be called Do It for You Day, and that's on Tuesday, June 26. The second special event day is called Get Connected Day which is Wednesday June 27. Know Your Neighbors Day is Thursday, June 28. Once you get the Event Planning Guide, you will see a little bit more about each of these events, and some information about what you can do during these events.

For example, for Do It for You Day, you could possibly hold an employment and career advancement event such as arranging transportation for residents to attend a nearby job fair, or hold a career or job fair at your job center. You can hold educational development events, such as planning a trip to a local university or community college, or arrange for a tour for youth to a local school or a technical institute.

For Get Connected Day you can hold any one of many technological events, a technology expo at your center, inviting college students majoring in computer science to visit the center. Know Your Neighbors day is probably the most popular special event days that we'll see which are grand openings, open houses, award ceremonies for partners, volunteers; things like that. All of these special event days have some new resources that will be available in the Event Planning Guide in the back in the appendix. We really hope with the addition of the special event days, the

additional resources in the Event Planning Guide—there are resume and cover letter templates and sample mock interview questions, crossword puzzles, scavenger hunts, sample flyers, potluck sign up sheets, word searches, sample job descriptions, a plethora of new resources that you might have had to create yourself in the past, and didn't have time--that we have made it a little bit easier for you to host an event.

We are really hoping our Neighborhood Networks centers will exceed the more than 600 centers that went online to register last year. Again, you go to www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org, look for the link for Neighborhood Networks Week and you'll see the online registration is available, and, you can also call the 800 line that Michele, I'm sure, will give at the end of the call.

By having an event for Neighborhood Networks week, it allows people in your community to see what you are doing. It assists in your marketing efforts. It lets everybody know about the wonderful things that you are doing. Copies of the Event Planning Guide will be mailed to all centers in the next couple of weeks, but you can find a copy of the Event Planning Guide on the Web site in the later this week.

I'd also real quickly like to thank the centers that submitted essays for this year's essay contest. We received many entries, and are looking forward to reading them.

Real quickly, the Neighborhood Networks National Training Conference will be held August 8th through 10th this year with pre-conference sessions being on the 6th and 7th. The pre-conference sessions will have a comprehensive grantwriting session as well as a digital story telling session, which all have a limited number of participants. So we encourage you to register early if you anticipate coming to the conference for that.

Again, more information about the conference will be available in the invitational brochure which will be sent out to Neighborhood Networks centers in the next few weeks, but this resource as

well, will be available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site, this week. So please, keep an eye out for that. We will also be e-mailing links to the Web site, when both of these publications are available online.

The conference will be held in Washington D.C. at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask, and we hope to see everybody at the conference.

Michele Higgs: Thanks, Kristen. I'm looking forward to all of this myself, anyway, particularly the digital story telling. I had the opportunity to see one of those creations just recently and it was really something special, so I hope those of you who can, will participate.

Thanks everyone. I am going to ask Gwen to open up the lines now and see if we have any questions. Gwen?

Operator: Thank you. If you do have a question at this time, please press star one on your touch-tone phone. If you are using a speakerphone, please make sure your mute function is turned off to allow your signal to reach out equipment, once again, star one if you have a question.

And we'll go first to Dominic Domingo with Denver Housing.

Michele Higgs: Hello, Dominic; how are you?

Dominic Domingo: Fine, how are you?

Michele Higgs: Real good. Thank you. Your question?

Dominic Domingo: The question I have, I actually just took over our computer lab here at Benedict Park Place and Richmond Center. Before I actually took over this center, there was a lack of

involvement from the community as well as the residents. How do I go about getting those people back and then some?

Michele Higgs: I hear you laughing, Karen. Do you want to address that one?

Karen Voiss: OK. Well, you know, I have to tell you when we started at Aloha Park they had had a center off and on, and it hadn't been active and people told me, no one is going to come, your residents will not participate. So, a couple of things, first of all, food always works, having barbecues, inviting people over and getting your residents engaged.

What worked for us was having the computers there, and opening them up and making them available. The residents really wanted that access to e-mail and to homework, to other activities that they wanted to do on the computers.

Then, being consistent, I always tell my staff, if you throw an event and only three residents show up the first time, you've done a great job. It's building on that, and being consistent, and bringing them in, finding out what they want. So your demographics change, you may have a totally different group of people there right now than you had before. So you need to really connect with them and ask them what they would like to see.

Starting off with a barbecue, seeing who shows up, that gives you an opportunity. Again, it's all about relationships. So if you keep working at building on those relationships and asking questions, I think that helps. Then once your residents are back involved, that's where you are going to be able to build with your community partners, because you are going to have something to tell them.

In addition to that, if your residents are working in the community or they are involved in programs in the community, they may be able to provide connections with the other community partners

that you might not have thought of. So you're going to probably have to start from the ground up and really work with your residents to reengage them by asking them questions, making them feel important because they are important. The information they can provide is helpful. That's sort of what we, that's the direction I would go, and then I think I'd build on partnerships in the community.

Dominic Domingo: Great. Thank you.

Michele Higgs: I'm going to jump in real quick, because I think Karen you harkened back to something that VeTalle had mentioned earlier. If you want to get attention, give attention. I think you said that right there.

Gwen, do we have any other calls?

Operator: We do. We'll go next to Mercedes Estime with Housing Authority of Fort Pierce.

Michele Higgs: Hello.

Mercedes Estime: Hello.

Michele Higgs: Hi, there, how are you?

Mercedes Estime: Great, thank you. Thanks for having me.

Michele Higgs: Great.

Mercedes Estime: I'm newly aboard with the housing authority, not only new to the program itself, but the site it also new in the community. The biggest challenge I am having, probably is even getting

people to take a look to even realize what is there. I've been at the site now for probably about a month. The building itself has not been used for quite some time. So people who were acquainted with it have long since passed on or moved out. So my challenge is, like I said, getting people to even open up their ears to even hear about the center itself, and to even have an opportunity to reach them, to even apply anything else. So my question would be how can I start initially getting them to gain their attention even?

Michele Higgs: It sounds like it's time for a party. A getting-to-know-you kind of thing, but I'm just throwing that out there. Does either of our speakers want to take that one?

VeTalle Fusilier: Sure. I'll comment first, but I'm sure Karen's got some, and if you would just go after me Karen, and actually, Karen would you like to go first, how about that?

Karen Voiss: No, you go. I want to hear what you, no, go for it.

VeTalle Fusilier: OK. Where are you again?

Mercedes Estime: I'm in Fort Pierce, Florida.

VeTalle Fusilier: That's what I thought. I think you should have a lemonade contest.

Mercedes Estime: Lemonade?

VeTalle Fusilier: Yes.

Mercedes Estime: OK.

VeTalle Fusilier: Because I think it's so easy to do, and with the warm weather coming, I think a lot of people will come by. I think if there's every opportunity to do every kind of lemonade fairly inexpensively. Most important, if I'm walking by and there's free lemonade and, just the old "cast-a-net" theory, once you get them in there with lemonade, then you can show them what the rest of the thing is.

Mercedes Estime: OK.

VeTalle Fusilier: But when you talk about getting attention, you give attention. So you give them something interesting, and then you also get to have the neighborhood lemonade champion; and that's another thing you can leverage. It could become an event that you could make seasonal with regard to recipes, so in the fall, the lemonade contest becomes, I don't know, an apple pie contest. But what you want is something that you can use repetitively to attract interest, and you do that, not necessarily by touting the assets that you hold and the advantages of being participatory, but simply by paying attention to the people that you want to get attention from.

Mercedes Estime: OK.

VeTalle Fusilier: The lemonade was just an idea because it's really inexpensive to do.

Mercedes Estime: Thank you.

Michele Higgs: Karen, did you want to add to that?

Karen Voiss: I mean, again for me, it's the same thing. It's grass roots. You know, if you've had a center that's been up and running, and is now not working, people know the building to be vacant. It's exactly what VeTalle was saying. You've got to get attention. It's going to be building one at a time and reaching out to people individually; and the lemonade idea is great. Then if you get

them there for something like that, find out what do they like to do. What would they want to see? Thinking about what happens in the community that's going to engage people, beyond just having the computer center there, or the learning center.

So you really need to think about who you are trying to attract. Are you trying to attract residents? Are you trying to attract other groups in the community? For me, I think getting your residents there, and involved, is going to be a key to actually reaching out to the rest of the greater community. Because your residents can actually help you reach out to that community, plus you've got some things going on. If you reach out to the greater community and then you are not able to perform, because you have not been able to connect with your residents, it makes it more difficult to go back to the larger community in the future.

Mercedes Estime: OK. Thank you. Also, I had one more question, if I may. I wanted to know, in reference to the conference in D.C., is the information is available online?

Kristen Stevenson: Not just yet, right now there's some basic information on the Web site, but in the next, probably within three days, you will be able to find the brochure which has just about all of the information that you will want and need to know about the conference. It has information about the sessions, logistical information, all that.

So just check back as soon as tomorrow and it could be...

Mercedes Estime: Online?

Kristen Stevenson: Exactly. www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org.

Mercedes Estime: And how do I check and assure that my company is listed as a part of or a member of, because I'm not quite sure whether or not...

Kristen Stevenson: Right. What you want to do on our Web, down the left-hand side, there's a link that says "find a center." Click on that and a map will pop up, click on your state and search for your Neighborhood Networks center there. If it's not there, or you need to make any changes, you can give us a call back at the information center, which is 888-312-2743.

Mercedes Estime: Three seven four two.

Michele Higgs: Two seven four three.

Mercedes Estime: OK. Thank you kindly.

Michele Higgs: OK. Thank you. Gwen, do we have anyone else on the line?

Operator: We do have four more questions remaining. We'll go next to Janet Sapp with Magic Johnson Computer Center.

Michele Higgs: Thank you. Hello?

Janet Sapp: Hello.

Michele Higgs: Hi.

Janet Sapp: Hi, how are you?

Michele Higgs: Good, thanks, your question.

Janet Sapp: My name is Janet, I'm the director and Tony is my instructor at the Magic Johnson Computer Center.

Michele Higgs: Go ahead.

Janet Sapp: We have a question. We are in the process of filing an application to become, to officially become a Neighborhood Networks center and what we wanted to know, would we still be eligible to do the 500-word essay and would we still be able to obtain a planning guide?

Kristen Stevenson: The essay contest deadline was April 30.

Janet Sapp: Not the essay. This is for the Neighborhood Networks Week. I'm sorry, maybe I didn't. There was an essay to try to get them to bring it to your center.

Michele Higgs: I think you've got us stumped. I'd have to do a little research.

Janet Sapp: I received an e-mail on that. Yes, we could have done an essay on why we think our center should be chosen for a visit. Since we're not officially a Neighborhood Networks center, I wanted to know if we would still be eligible.

Michele Higgs: OK. Well I think your question is just a tad off the topic of just special events. So what I'm going to do is take your information and respond to you offline, can I do that?

Janet Sapp: Sure, ma'am no problem.

Michele Higgs: Please let me have your name once more.

Janet Sapp: My name is Janet Sapp.

Michele Higgs: Janet Sapp.

Janet Sapp: Yes.

Michele Higgs: OK. Janet, I will get back to you right away with the response to your question.

Janet Sapp: OK. Would we still be able to obtain the planning guide, because we plan on using our center for Neighborhood Networks Week also.

Kristen Stevenson: Yes, definitely. That's available on the Web site for anybody.

Janet Sapp: OK. All right. Thank you.

Michele Higgs: OK. Thank you. I think we've got two minutes left. I understand we have a couple of questions still, and I apologize that we are not going to be able to address those questions today. I thank you all for calling in. I refer you to the message board, if you have a question that you'd like to get a response to, and once again, you could go to the Neighborhood Networks Web site which is www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org. Then you'd go to the right where the green sign says "helpful tools" and the message board link will be there. If you have a question and you'd like to get a response, you can post it there; we'll take it care of it.

Since we only have a little bit of time left, I am just going to tell you about next month's conference call and that's going to be Tuesday, June 12 at three o'clock p.m. and that's on the topic of "Keeping Your Computers and Peripherals Running: Technology Tools and Tips." I want to thank VeTalle Fusilier and Karen Voiss for joining us today, and Kristen Stevenson for speaking with us about the special events today. You have given us a lot of good information,

and I hope that folks will be able to use it. Now that the weather is finally spring, perhaps they will use it.

I want to remind everyone of the resources that are available through the Neighborhood Networks Initiative and aside from the Neighborhood Networks information line, which is 888-312-2743, you will find abundant resources and information on the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org. You heard about the two great events that are coming up soon which are Neighborhood Networks Week June 25 through 30, and the National Training Conference, which will be hosted in Washington D.C., August 8 through 10.

With the good information that you received today, I'm sure you are ready to start planning and researching and coordinating and getting all of this together, and making a spectacular event for Neighborhood Networks Week.

Don't forget to use the toll-free information line, if you have questions, and let us hear about your plans for your activity. If you have any questions, about any of the upcoming events, please ring the Neighborhood Networks information line toll-free at 888-312-2743 and the folks there can help you out. Thanks again to Karen, to Kristen and VeTalle. Thanks to all of you for joining us today. Take good care. We'll talk to you next time.

Operator: Thank you, everyone. That does conclude today's conference. You may now disconnect.

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