

NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS

Moderator: Michele Higgs
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3:00 pm EDT

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

Today's conference is being recorded.

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

Michele Higgs: Thank you, Melanie. Welcome to the May Neighborhood Networks conference call, which is entitled, The Art of Multitasking: Making the Most of Your Time.

I'm Michele Higgs and I'm joined today by our speakers, Karen Heppler, Neighborhood Networks coordinator with Goodale and Barbieri in Spokane, Washington; and LaKeisha Jackson, executive director of the Pathway to the Future Learning Center in Indianapolis, Indiana. Assisting me on the call is Cheryl Dixon, technical assistance coordinator.

Often, Neighborhood Networks center directors juggle multiple roles. They are the center director, the property manager, the computer instructor, the chief cook, and bottle washer, too. Managing all of these roles takes energy, talent, and help. Folks in this position should not rely on their memories to store many tasks, because memories can prove faulty when overloaded.

Today our speakers are going to help you with the challenge of managing your time by sharing methods for handling their multiple roles.

Before we commence with the call, I would like to tell you about the excitement at our recent Regional Technical Assistance Workshop (RTAW) in Dallas, Texas. Thanks to all of you who joined us. And a hearty “congratulations” to the centers that were on hand to receive plaques acknowledging their efforts.

They are: Casa de Mañana Learning Center in Corpus Christi, Texas; Eloise Callaway Community Learning Center in New Braunfels, Texas; Samuel Place Learning Center in Corpus Christi, Texas; Harrison Manor Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center in Harlingen, Texas; Clyde Fincher Community Learning Center, also in Harlingen, Texas; Metro Kids Konnection at Cleveland Arms Apartments in Jacksonville, Florida; North Hills Manor Neighborhood Networks Center in Meridian, Mississippi; V.E. Washington Neighborhood Network Center in Lake Charles, Louisiana; Pathway to the Future Learning Center in Indianapolis, Indiana; High Pointe I and II Neighborhood Networks Center in Rochester, Minnesota; Vista Verde Community Learning Center in San Antonio, Texas; and Bryant Manor Computer Learning Center in Seattle, Washington.

One center received a plaque for attaining Model Center Classification. That center was Bayview Community Learning Center in San Francisco, California.

Thanks to all of you, again, for your efforts. Congratulations.

Now let's review the resources available to you through Neighborhood Networks to help you guide your centers to success.

First, there's the Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool, known as the START business plan.

START is your online resource for organizing your center's activities and tracking the achievements of specific goals.

But did you know that as center staff completes the START business plan, they can focus on the annual assessment and evaluation to review their progress and commence the center's ascent through the Center Classification process? Completing the assessment and evaluation and having it approved by the HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinator elevates your center to Certified Center Classification and starts your center on the path to Model Center Classification. Then you, too, can have a beautiful plaque to display in your center that will proclaim your superior work to all who visit.

START is easy to access and update. Just go to the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org and click on the link for the START business plan, to the left of the home page, to begin. Visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site to learn how to advance through the Neighborhood Networks Center Classification process, or contact the Neighborhood Networks staff on the toll-free information line at 888-312-2743 for further information and assistance.

Also on the Web site you'll find out what's current with Neighborhood Networks, and learn about funding opportunities, the upcoming RTAW in Philadelphia and Neighborhood Networks Week activities, and other special events.

Also, a transcript of this call will be available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site in about two weeks. Look for it in the conference call archives at the bottom of the home page.

Remember, for questions about the START business plan or other Neighborhood Networks topics you can call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line at 888-312-2743. Also try

online networking with your peers using the Neighborhood Networks online message board. Visit the site and view the strings that have been posted already. You'll find lots of information and some great ideas there.

This is not a real-time resource but when you post your information you can revisit the board in a day or so to see what kinds of responses you receive. Just go to the Neighborhood Networks home page and click on the Neighborhood Networks online networking link to the right, under the green banner, labeled "Helpful Tools."

Now, with today's call, we hope you think about the ways you manage or mismanage your time. Do you find yourself in a time tangle trying to do too much for too many all at once? Let me tell you a little more about our speakers.

Karen Heppler is the Neighborhood Networks coordinator for the Goodale and Barbieri Company. She oversees technology centers for seven properties around eastern Washington State and she is the president of the Neighborhood Networks Technology Access Consortium, or NNTAC.

LaKeisha Jackson is the executive director and service coordinator of the Pathway to the Future Learning Center in Indianapolis, Indiana, a center that just received its award as a Certified Neighborhood Networks center. LaKeisha, too, is president of the consortium in her region, The Indiana Neighborhood Networks Consortium. As you can imagine, these two ladies have numerous plates spinning and they are going to help you understand how it's done.

I'm going to start the discussion with a question which I'll direct first to Karen. Karen, can you tell us a little bit about what your normal day looks like?

Karen Heppler: Yes. Anyone who works in our nonprofit world knows about multitasking. Regardless of what my job title is or your job title is, you can find your day filled with a variety of tasks that have nothing to do with your job description.

My duties for a day might include picking up donated bread from our local partner, preparing my reports for the property management company, planning events or programs for my seven properties, or even preparing food for the children at our afterschool program and, of course, always partnership building.

Multitasking is necessary for most of us but it can be really stressful and ineffective if you have too much of it. If you're going to help other people, you need to also take care of yourself because if we juggle too many things, we tend to drop them.

So one thing that I try to do is ask "how effective am I right now?"

Michele Higgs: LaKeisha, what would your response be to that one?

LaKeisha Jackson: I have three main points but before I do that I'll tell you little bit about what I do.

I manage the daily operations with a not-for-profit community center. While overseeing staff members and volunteers who manage the office's day-to-day tasks, I also facilitate the execution of planning projects for programs, activities, and special events. In addition, as the executive director, I'm the liaison between the board of directors and organization.

So my primary responsibilities include fundraising, training the staff, administration, and developing the fiscal budget monthly to reflect programmatic and qualitative data. Reports include the center's progress in finance, programming, fundraising, objectives and outcomes, and

also developing ongoing partnerships with businesses and not-for-profits that have similar missions as Pathways.

In addition, I sit on community boards throughout Indianapolis to build relationships that promote financial resource opportunities for the organization on both the local and national levels. I also attend conferences to enhance our company's goals and objectives.

Three things that I do describe my normal day: First, I greet my staff. Second, I check e-mails. I respond to them, follow up and take action steps, and I check them at least three times a day.

I conduct staff meetings; either morning or afternoon, and sometimes mini-staff meetings. These are 15-minute quick hitters, to discuss where we are, what needs to be done, what has been done, and can we reprioritize.

Then I'll conduct followup with our board of directors, HUD management, and other action items that I need to get completed for that day.

Michele Higgs: LaKeisha, while I'm listening to the myriad of things that you do, I'm going to return to you for this next question. What would you say is the first indicator that you've got too much on your plate, that you're getting overwhelmed? And secondly, to whom do you turn for help?

LaKeisha Jackson: Michele, the first indicators that I am overwhelmed are when my desk starts to pile up with paperwork and files. Two, when I close my office door for long periods of time, I'm looking for quiet time or uninterrupted time. Three, when I stop taking phone calls. I'll tell my assistant unless it's a particular person, which is usually a board member, HUD management, or funder; I'm not taking calls for the day. Also, when I realize that my calendar and task lists are too long with back-to-back meetings or due dates, I turn for help to my staff, my management company,

and the board of directors. What's good about us is we do have a board of directors so I can turn to them to help with some of the projects that overwhelm me.

Michele Higgs: Okay. That's helpful.

Karen, do you have a set point at which you know you've got too much going on?

Karen Heppler: Yes. When you asked me to participate in this call, everyone who knows me was laughing at the title. That's because, in addition to my duties for Neighborhood Networks, I'm in the process of moving my parents into a retirement community. I also belong to the Rotary Club. So I had about 16 balls in the air and I wasn't effectively handling any of them. So you just have to look at your priorities and say, "Okay. I've got to do this and I have to drop this." I have to constantly reevaluate what is important at the time.

Michele Higgs: Okay. I hope everyone is listening to this. Take your own temperature and reevaluate what is going on in your life so that you can know what's important. Karen, you made a couple of points about how you've managed to be effective and stay sane. Would you outline those for us?

Karen Heppler: You bet. I have a few points. The first one was to survey my center users. This is really important because you need to know the needs of your population. You know, you can put a great program into effect but if it's not needed, you waste your resources.

For example, we were opening a new center and we planned to offer a GED program for the residents. But after surveying the residents we realized that there was no interest in GED as most of the residents had already completed their high school education.

We found through our surveys that the greatest need was for food assistance. We have a lot of single family units at our property, mostly young moms, who needed assistance with food. So we

made a partnership with a local food bank that delivered items to our property once a month. During this delivery process they brought milk products, breads, and a variety of produce, such as potatoes, onions, carrots, and other items that really can stretch the budget. Also we had a partnership with a local gas station that was mutually beneficial for both partners. The gas station has a little mini mart inside. So once a week they would donate food items to our residents. The benefit to the station was that it could write the items off at full value. It helped us because our residents could use the cereal, crackers, entrées, and bread. Those connections really helped to supplement the budget. That filled our first piece; what do our centers need?

Then I needed to identify my goals. If I didn't have a clear idea of my goals, then I had no direction. So it's important to prioritize your goals and tasks. It's critical that everyone who is working with you knows the goals and understands them.

For example, we have four centers in Spokane and three centers located in the Tri-Cities area in Washington, which is three hours away. It is not cost effective to travel to each of those centers for planning sessions. So we have telephone conference calls with local corporate office people to discuss the programs with the centers in the outlying areas. That way we can share ideas and continually expand and improve our programs. By having people in different locations, we also learn from each other. That would be my second point.

Share your resources. Don't try to reinvent the wheel. If someone in your area is offering the same program, use resources that are already in place. For example, GED classes are offered in our area. So, we can refer our users to those local agencies.

Also, if you have a Neighborhood Networks Consortium in your area, consider joining. If there is no local consortium, you might consider joining with other centers to form a nonprofit consortium. I'm president of NNTAC, which stands for Neighborhood Networks Technology Access Consortium. We represent more than 20 technology centers in eastern Washington and northern

Idaho. We formed our nonprofit because we needed the power to receive in-kind donations and funding. In addition, because of our nonprofit status, we've been able to receive donated hardware from the National Park System, the St. Georges School, and the Washington Trust Bank. This has really helped to keep our centers operational on very small budgets.

Michele Higgs: I'm going to jump in here real quick, Karen, because I'm certain LaKeisha can speak to these points as well. I also want to bring in the question of technology as you're talking about holding telephone conferences to discuss programs. But LaKeisha, what would you say helps you effectively manage the many tasks that you have to perform?

LaKeisha Jackson: Well Karen made some great points. In addition, I would say plan well and effectively. Plan, plan, plan and put it in writing, whether it's on a calendar, whether you use bullet points, whether you create a whole plan; plan it and put it in writing so that you'll be able to assess the plan and follow timelines, goals, and objectives.

There's nothing worse than doing things, as Karen said, without some type of prioritization. To prioritize you need to plan. So put it in writing, assign a person to it, identify a follow-up deadline, and then share that information.

Also, get your partners involved. I like the saying, "Work smarter, not harder." Utilize local colleges and universities and outreach agencies, such as health departments and other organizations in the area with outreach programs.

They get federal funding to conduct afterschool training and tutoring programs both onsite and at satellite locations. We have a back-to-basics Boy Scouts afterschool program that visits onsite. Some of our outside computer training is conducted by partners. So let them do the work for you while you conduct followup to get the residents to attend.

Communicate your successes to the residents. When you communicate those goals and deadlines, you'll have an outcome. You'll be able to determine whether you achieved what you said you were going to do, which goes back to planning. Share your success with your residents, your property management company, your board if you have one, and HUD, in the form of a newsletter. The more you share your successes the more people get involved. Take stress off of your staff and you.

Michele Higgs: Excellent. Now I'm going to go to another question. LaKeisha, I'm going to start with you on this. How would you use technology to assist with your multitasking?

LaKeisha Jackson: One method I use is Google instant message. Google has a software system on their Google Web site, which you can sign up for through Gmail. I can Google message or instant message one of my staff members and they can respond. I also use text messaging via cell phone. If I'm in a meeting or I really need to get something to my staff or to management, I'll text them. I also use e-mail, which is a great tool. It's an effective form of communication. Many of our people, especially in our centers, use e-mail. It's a part of our day-to-day process. Also electronic calendars keep you updated as to center activities and future projects. I also use intercom communication. In addition, blogging is excellent if you want to get mass e-mails out or get information. We get a mass response from blogging.

Michele Higgs: Okay. So it's not just a pencil and paper anymore, right?

LaKeisha Jackson: No. We're beyond pencil and paper.

Michele Higgs: Karen, do you have a way of keeping up with what your tasks using today's technology?

Karen Heppler: Well again, we do a lot of telephone conferencing and use e-mails and cell phones because it's the way to make immediate contact.

Michele Higgs: Right.

Karen Heppler: That's the way we contact the outlying areas.

Michele Higgs: It sounds like you all have staff, but what would you do you have volunteers in your organization? How do you go about recruiting volunteers for your organization? I'll start with you, Karen.

Karen Heppler: Yes, I have some staff. I have one staff member who is part-time and works in the Tri-Cities area. Then I have an assistant that oversees the Spokane area. But again they're only there one day a week. We also use volunteers and work-study students.

Recruiting volunteers is the answer; Volunteers can be parents, high school or college students, residents of local senior organizations, or work-study students.

If you're a nonprofit, most colleges have a higher reimbursement rate for you if you have work-study students. Plus many colleges and local junior colleges or universities have both paid and unpaid internships available for the students. That's one way to look for help.

If you're looking for volunteers for a particular program, for example, if you are looking for assistance for an afterschool program, you can contact the education department at your local college for students that need to fulfill community service requirements. We have what's called service learning for those students that have to do so many hours of community service.

If you're planning programs for seniors, you might want to contact your local representatives for the office of the insurance commissioner. Every state has one and they'll come out and work with your centers regarding Medicare and insurance issues. Note that these people do not sell

insurance. They are representatives that assist you with issues against insurance companies, or if you need information on Medicare programs. These people are more than happy to come to your center and present that information.

To offer information at your centers regarding job assistance or training, contact your local workforce agency or one-stop. They'll send people to talk with you or your residents.

One of our centers is located next to Gonzaga University. We recently had six nutrition students that needed to complete 20 hours each of community service. Well, I don't have 20 hours to work with each individual. So what we did was we asked the students to create a presentation for residents that would cover healthy foods, keeping in mind that we're dealing with a low-income population.

The volunteer students worked together using e-mail and Internet technology. We conducted two short planning meetings. The remainder of the correspondence was completed through e-mail.

The students produced a booklet for our residents and gave a presentation. The booklet included how to read nutritional labels and how to prepare food to control both salt and sugar intake, because we also have a lot of people who are diabetic or have high blood pressure. They talked about preparing healthy, good tasting food. The booklet included recipes, price comparisons for local stores, and recipes for healthy cookies.

It was a great success with our residents, who asked a lot of questions. The students presented links for residents to find online information on particular subjects.

Michele Higgs: It looks like you tapped into a number of sources for volunteers and work-study students to help you in the center.

LaKeisha, where have you looked for assistance?

LaKeisha Jackson: I would say "ditto" to what Karen said. She really broke it down and that's what we do.

One additional thing is peer-to-peer mentoring and assistance in afterschool programs as well as at the computer lab. A lot of times residents who have never been on the computer must fill out their unemployment vouchers and post their resumes online. So we have a lot of volunteers who also utilize our center and will help other residents.

We also have a great youth group, with more than 300 school-age youth on our property. So our youth peer-to-peer mentors assist each other as well.

As far as what I look for when I recruit a volunteer, well, first I look for a passion to serve and help others. If they have that passion, you know they are a great fit.

Two, look at their past volunteer projects and experiences. That lets you know some of the things for which they have a passion or that they do really well.

Three is the flexibility of their schedule, which helps you determine for which programs and events they can volunteer. It can be daily, weekly, or for a particular event or program. If they're willing to volunteer, even if it is only for two hours a year, use them because frequently the time they volunteer increases.

Then there is word of mouth. You hear other people that say, "Hello, I heard so-and-so volunteered." "I would like to donate..." or "I can do this. I can provide this service." A lot of times volunteering becomes a lead for other resources.

I look at work experience and skills. What do they have? What are their talents? Talents reflect their passions, which translates into what they'd like to volunteer for.

Their skills help me determine the best place for them, whether it's the office, administrative work, filing non-confidential documents, answering the phone, monitoring the computer lab, or upgrading our tracking and attendance sheet.

I also look for volunteers' needs. Sometimes volunteers are mandated to do community work, not through school but through the court system. A lot of times we will run a criminal background check or have them bring in documentation about their court ordered service. Use your youth as much as you can. Youth are a great resource. Even here in Indianapolis the United Way of Central Indiana has a program called Youth As Resources, YAR. We obtain many grants through them plus our youth write the grants and we help them submit them.

Karen Heppler: I'd like to add a follow up to how to select volunteers and how to determine their activities. I agree with what LaKeisha said. For me, the most important thing is to keep telling myself that I do not personally have to do everything.

I put my energies into what I do best. I'm very good at finding resources and building partnerships. I look for volunteers that have skills that are different than mine. I pick people who are experts in their field.

I contact nursing students that can assist seniors with controlling blood pressure and review their prescriptions with them. I pull resources about things I have no clue about.

You have parents at your site who may think they don't have skills that are helpful. But there are a lot of nice parents out there that love kids and have time and would like to help. I have parents

who like to read and they help with the tutoring program or afterschool program. It's nice for the children to see those parents and they're assisting as well.

Michele Higgs: All right. We're getting a lot of good information. You're both saying that you need to assess what your residents have to offer in terms of their skills and passions and how that could benefit in helping with the center's programs.

We've come to a point where I think it might be a good time to ask if we've got anyone on the line for questions.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, if you like to ask a question, you may do so by pressing star 1 on your touchtone telephone. Please keep in mind if you're using a speakerphone to make sure your mute function is turned off to allow your signal to reach our equipment. Once again, that is star 1 at this time.

We'll take our first question from Joyce Mortimer.

Joyce Mortimer: Hello. I have a question. Karen, back to when you first started, how did you begin to establish your multitasking routine? I know of center managers who are there by themselves. How do you begin to train, supervise, and evaluate potential volunteers when you've also got to empty the trash, keep the kids occupied and productive when they get out of school, work with the seniors in the morning, and also serve as the resident services coordinator?

Karen Heppler: Yes, I think the key is to not waste efforts on unneeded resources. Make sure you know the needs and prioritize them because no one can get everything done all at once. We have to have priorities and be able to say, "Okay. I have to do this right now. And this can be put off until later on." By looking at your needs and the activities that you have to complete, then you can identify the kinds of volunteers you need.

For instance, if you have to run an afterschool program, you better get some volunteers that can assist you because you've got to empty the trash and you don't have time to do the tutoring and everything else.

So that's how I do it. I identify my need, my goal, and my task; prioritize those, and then look at where I need to pull in the resources to assist me with those tasks.

LaKeisha Jackson: Joyce, can I add two things to that? We developed a resident advisory panel that helps complete a lot of those tasks. In addition, I agree with what Karen said that you should map out your services based on what your residents want.

So I hear that you're taking out the trash and running the afterschool program. I heard you're trying to accomplish several different things. There are organizations that do almost everything our centers need. You just have to identify them, make an initial phone call, and conduct a follow-up meeting to get those organizations to commit. Then I prepare a letter of agreement that this is what you agree to do, onsite, and this is the benefit or what we agree to offer in return.

I think everything Karen said is really great and add those two components. Write down what the needs are. Does a college or university provide these resources? If you don't know, Michele can put you in contact with someone that can help you identify those needs and where to go in your community to get those needs addressed.

Michele Higgs: Sounds good. Do we have anyone else on the line?

Operator: Not at this time. But once again, press star 1 to ask a question.

Operator: Next we'll go to Laska Golden.

Michele Higgs: Okay. Hello, Laska.

Laska Golden: Hello. I really enjoyed the panel and all the great suggestions that are being offered. Mine isn't so much a question as a new observation for myself. I've been at this job for almost two years now. I'm realizing that when I first started I had no idea of the learning curve. I tried to do everything at once, right out of the gate. I was really ambitious but it just can't be done.

I think that what Karen said is so true. You have to identify your strengths and go with those. Then find those who complement you, which is quite a formidable task sometimes. Find those who complement you and are willing to volunteer their time.

Michele Higgs: That's the key. Thank you so much. Is there anyone else on the line?

Operator: Not at this time.

Michele Higgs: Okay. I'm going to put this one to both of you. You mentioned this earlier, Karen, about prioritizing your tasks. I don't think we can talk enough about that. I guess you put out the first fire first. How would you define that again; prioritizing tasks?

Karen Heppler: Okay. I also listed the items that I need to have completed. Like, LaKeisha, we keep track of what we need to accomplish. We work with a lot of groups.

For example, the mayor announced financial education week and we worked on that. We knew that we were going to be participating in financial education week.

So I scheduled myself for a couple of classes. I did not have to teach the classes. I had someone from Money Management International and Consumer Credit Counseling who actually

came and conducted the classes. I just needed to make sure that the flyers went out and that the parties that could benefit from those classes were made aware of them.

So, look at the big picture. Then say, "Okay, I only need to get this portion of this done, because so-and-so is doing that. And if I need to pull someone else in to do another portion, I can do that." You're breaking it into little puzzle pieces and it all comes together, but you don't have to do the whole puzzle.

Michele Higgs: LaKeisha, would you agree with that one?

LaKeisha Jackson: Yes, I would.

Michele Higgs: Break things off into manageable parts, do what you can do, and delegate the rest?

LaKeisha Jackson: Yes. I also prioritize my due dates, by their urgency, relevancy, and by the clients' and organizations' needs.

Michele Higgs: I know you mentioned when you're under the gun you only accept calls from certain people. So you determine which one you really need to talk to or which one you can put off till later.

LaKeisha Jackson: But I think due dates are very important as well as the urgency of the project or the task. Sometimes, depending on where the request is coming from or who it is going to also plays a part in it. But I agree with everything that Karen has said. I also revise my list daily and weekly. I do a task list called, "LaKeisha's To-Do List", and I date it with little bullet point boxes that let me check off what's done. Also, I put the time and date that the task was completed.

Because sometimes you will get people who will say "I didn't get that. I did not receive your e-mail. I did not get your letter in the mail. I never received an official request". I can go back and look at the sheets that track the information and say, "Okay, I sent it to you on this date at this time."

Remember to request written extensions on projects before they're due. If you have a project or a task that's due or a report to HUD or to the property management company and you're not going to make it on time, probably two days prior to the to the date it's due, ask for an extension. Write an e-mail to the recipient and say, "Hello. I have several things on my plate. I'm requesting an extension to my deadline or due date." Add the date that you want them to accept it by and don't leave it open-ended.

Michele Higgs: Thank you for these great ideas. And you've addressed the strategies for managing the overflow with just those points.

How do you handle the process of delegating? Is there one person in particular who gets to pass things out for you? Do you make those decisions, whose skill does what? How would you handle that? I'll put that to LaKeisha first.

LaKeisha Jackson: Let's see, how do I delegate? Well, I am fortunate to have an office coordinator/administrative assistant and I delegate a lot of things to her of an administrative nature. I also have staff. I have a full-time and part-time person. Our property is very large and we have a large population. But if it's something that's program- or youth-related I'll give it to that program person. And then I'll follow up.

So that's why I said planning is crucial and however you do followup, it is crucial to make sure that things are getting done. But I delegate to my staff and volunteers. Volunteers can accomplish a lot, especially if they have a passion or if they need to fill a void in their life. You

never know what they've gone through, or where they want to serve others because somebody has assisted them in some way.

So I delegate things to volunteers, depending on what they are, things like chaperoning field trips, monitoring the computer lab, helping with afterschool care, and office administrative stuff.

Then back to our board. There are many things I delegate to them. Sometimes the board wants the director to do everything, but many times the board has to take an active role in things, like fundraising.

Michele Higgs: Thank you. Karen?

Karen Heppler: Well, I say ditto also.

Michele Higgs: Okay.

Karen Heppler: At my property we have an assistant that oversees all of the Spokane properties and an assistant who oversees the Tri-Cities properties. They handle the day- to-day situations.

But I also have resident volunteers at my properties. I may be the one that orders supplies but they keep track of them for me. They shoot me an e-mail that says, "We need this or this." Then I quickly order what I need and it's there the next day.

I don't have to visit every site to know what is needed. I have people who can do that. You need to delegate some of the administrative things that take up time, but are not necessary for the operation. I think the biggest problem is thinking you have to do it all. You don't have to do it all and you have to keep telling yourself that there are very qualified people out there. Some of them have more skills in certain areas than you do so let them do it.

Michele Higgs: You both have said a lot about the importance of volunteering to your operation and helping you do what you do.

I'm going to ask again if we have anyone on the line for questions.

Operator: We'll go to Veronica Sanders.

Michele Higgs: Okay.

Veronica Sanders: I have a question and perhaps maybe a challenge. LaKeisha, what is one suggestion that you can give to a center staff person who is just starting out; perhaps feeling overwhelmed, and needs to get started with multitasking and staying organized? Because they are wearing multiple hats and perhaps they may not have a board of directors or an admin. Thank you.

LaKeisha Jackson: I would say take your calendar for the whole 12 months and write all the things that need to be done daily. Or you can do it by itemizing first.

Determine what your needs are, pull a calendar right off of Microsoft Word Plug-in with what needs to be done on those dates, and you'll have an overview right in front of you of what needs to be done.

In addition to that, I would just go on Microsoft Word or charts on Excel and type out a task list of assignments. If it's taking out trash, write it down, and then jot next to it the resources you think can help you do that.

But I would use the calendar plus type or write out all the tasks with a projected person to do the task. Or you can just write it out so you can see what your priorities are, what can wait, or what can be done on a weekly basis, a daily basis, monthly, quarterly, or just once a year.

Michele Higgs: Great! Karen, do you have any ideas on that one?

Karen Heppler: Yes. I've been in my position for eight years now. So I have grown in the position and I have a lot more resources than when I started. But when I started, I had two centers at the time and I had no resources. I had no staff. I was taking the place of someone who had been let go, so I had some people who were not too happy about me being there.

I think my number one priority was to get to know my residents, find out what their needs were, and what they wanted to see in their center. Because even though we are in this job, it's not our center. It's their center.

LaKeisha Jackson: Right.

Karen Heppler: And to keep in mind what their needs are and what they would like to see in their center and just be there and listen. Then again, I think it can't be said enough that you need to prioritize your time. Write down your needs, one at a time, and tackle those.

If you have to empty the trash, write it down. As I get older, if I don't write things down in my little notebook on my calendar, they fly in and out. You have to document how you're doing things, how you are doing follow through with them, and keep track of them. That will help you get in the habit of writing things down to identify and prioritize your jobs.

Michele Higgs: Sounds good. I did want to mention writing down everything makes it not so scary because there will be things that you could forget if you don't write them all down. And like you said, Karen, even taking out the trash. Then use the little check off boxes as you get things completed. It makes you feel good. It gives you sense of accomplishment that, "Yes, I took

out the trash today," and "I got this done. I got that done." It's very helpful and even though that is the most basic of technologies, pencil and paper, it is still very useful.

LaKeisha Jackson: And that calendar is very important because it gives you an overview at a glance. So there are no surprises and tasks do not sneak up on you.

Michele Higgs: Yes, yes. I think we've had some very good ideas today. We have a few minutes to go so what I'd like to do is thank you both for speaking with us today. Thank you, again, for joining us.

LaKeisha Jackson: You're welcome. Thank you for the invitation.

Karen Heppler: Thank you for allowing me to share some of the experiences with my fellow Neighborhood Networks people.

Michele Higgs: I'm sure everybody is happy because this has been a very informative call.

Now let me remind everybody that our second RTAW for this year will be in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on July 15 through July 17, with a pre-conference grantwriting session on Monday and Tuesday, July 13 and July 14. The RTAW is a way to recharge and reinvigorate your networking skills. This is one of the resources that are available to you through the Neighborhood Networks Initiative. You can register online now through July 6. Be aware that the last date to register for the hotel is June 17.

If you still have a question after this call you can post it to the Neighborhood Networks online message board where staff or your peers will see to it that your question gets attention. You can always call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line with questions at 888-312-2743 where you'll find more details and information, and you can check the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org.

Neighborhood Networks Week is coming August 3 through August 8, when we celebrate Neighborhood Networks centers all around the country. So plan an event, toot your horn, and join in the recognition.

Also, center users are invited to participate in the Neighborhood Networks Week essay contest and tell us why your center helps to make your community a better place to live. A brochure with details and applications will be available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site. All entries must be postmarked by June 1.

Our June 9th conference call, we will tackle proposal writing with “Little Successes Can Have Big Impact When Writing Proposals.”

Thanks to all of you for joining us today. Thanks again to Karen Heppler and LaKeisha Jackson for sharing your wisdom for beating the time tangle. Thanks again to all of you callers, and take good care. Talk to you next time.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen. That concludes today’s call. Thank you for your participation.

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