

NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS

**Moderator: Michele Higgs
October 23, EDT**

Operator: Good day everyone and welcome to the Neighborhood Networks monthly conference call.

Today's conference is being recorded.

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

Michele Higgs: Thank you, Kelcey. Welcome everyone to the Neighborhood Networks October conference call. I'm Michele Higgs and today I'm joined by Senior Technical Assistance Coordinator (TA coordinator) Dana Gumbs, Senior Project Coordinator Marisa Connaughton-Espino, and our Project Managers Katrina Scruggs and Abraham Odom. We are all members of the technical assistance team that works with you to address the needs of the various Neighborhood Networks centers around the country.

I thank all of you for joining us for this first call of the new fiscal year. Our topic for today is: "Technical Assistance --Tools for Success."

We are entering another exciting year of working with Neighborhood Networks centers to get things going and get things growing. One of the most powerful tools we utilize to help centers achieve their goals is onsite technical assistance. Onsite technical assistance helps centers examine what they have and helps them realize what they could have with a little help. The

process is not difficult for centers, but it does require a little attention and elbow grease to get on the radar screen.

In just a few days we will begin the process of selecting 50 Neighborhood Networks centers to receive a little extra attention through the application of onsite technical assistance. What we want to do today is help you understand what the onsite technical assistance process is all about and how you can receive such assistance for your center.

We will also remind you of the many corresponding resources available through Neighborhood Networks that can help you employ that little extra something to make your center stand out in your community. Neighborhood Networks centers are a valuable resource for the residents of your property. The service that onsite technical assistance experience can provide will help us to help you create a Neighborhood Networks center that is a useful contributor to the community and a true enrichment for the lives of your residents.

Since its inception in 1995, the Neighborhood Networks Initiative has grown from a network of computer technology centers to the locus for all kinds of meaningful activities and services to encourage residents to success and self-sustainability. But often centers have assets within reach that they cannot see or utilize because no one knows where to look. Onsite technical assistance provides eyes, ears, and skills that can help centers identify and locate opportunities for the mutual benefit of the center and the community where it is located.

For today, Marisa has arranged for two of our TA managers, Abraham and Katrina, and our Senior TA coordinator, that's Dana to talk with us about the process of onsite technical assistance. Also, thanks to one of our technical assistance coordinators, Cheryl Dixon, we will speak with Frances Leonard, who is the center director of Vandalia Terrace Apartments Computer Learning Center in Charleston, West Virginia. That's a center that has just completed

the onsite technical assistance process. We hope that after this call, callers will be prepared, no, eager, to nominate their centers for onsite technical assistance.

Before we get going, let me tell you, we are starting off this New Year by welcoming 19 new centers to the Neighborhood, and that's Neighborhood with a capital N. These centers are; Columbia House Neighborhood Networks Center in Washington, Hamilton House Apartments Computer Lab in Washington, Two Bridges Computer Center in New York, New Brunswick Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center in New Jersey, Barlinvis Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center in New Jersey, Homestead Place Neighborhood Networks Center in North Dakota, South Wind Senior Village in Oklahoma, Elmwood Manor Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center in Oklahoma, The Towers Neighborhood Networks Center also in Oklahoma, South Peoria Neighborhood House in Oklahoma, Disciple Village Computer Lab in Oklahoma, Mission Place Neighborhood Networks Center in Kansas, Vine Street Manor Neighborhood Networks Center in Missouri, Fairmount Plaza Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center in Missouri, Computer Center at Kingsway in Connecticut, Bauer Net Neighborhood Networks Center in Massachusetts, Pendleton Community Networking Center in Mississippi, Candlewick Commons Neighborhood Networks in Ohio, and Washington Heights Neighborhood Networks Center also in Massachusetts.

Sounds like Oklahoma was really doing it there, but we want to welcome all of these new centers to the Neighborhood.

Let's not forget about the Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool, also known as the START business plan. START helps you examine the capacity of your center and provides the foundation upon which you can organize your activities. It will help you assess the needs of your residents and determine what resources in the community can help you meet those needs. Finally, START is the key to developing partnerships because it is a true business plan that

strengthens the center's profile as a business and makes the center more attractive to potential partners.

If you have questions about the START business plan or resident surveys 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 Neighborhood Networks' Web site at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org.

Oh, and let me tell you about online networking through the Neighborhood Networks online message board. There you can share information among yourselves post news, and ask questions. Be aware that this is not a real-time resource yet, but 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 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." When you get there, follow the instructions and guidelines to learn how things work or select "enter online discussion." Go visit, check it out, post a message. I also want to remind listeners that a transcript of this call will be made available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site in about two weeks.

Now, we have a lot to share with you today. So I'm going to step aside and let our speakers begin. Marissa, would you like to introduce our first speaker?

Marisa Connaughton-Espino: Sure. Thanks, Michele. Our following two speakers have been with Neighborhood Networks for the past five years.

As mentioned already, Katrina Scruggs and Abraham Odom are the technical assistance project managers for Neighborhood Networks. They are responsible for providing leadership, oversight and management of the key activities related to providing technical assistance to Neighborhood

Networks centers. This service assists these centers with strengthening their operations and increasing their chances for sustainability.

Katrina?

Abraham Odom: Actually, Marissa, I'm going to speak first.

Marisa Connaughton-Espino: Oh, sorry.

Abraham Odom: That's OK. Good afternoon, everyone. As Marisa said, I'm Abraham Odom and I have been with Neighborhood Networks for about five years now. I must say that each year continues to amaze me because of what centers are doing in their communities. So I'm truly excited about another year beginning with Neighborhood Networks. Also, I just want to thank everyone who's been a part of Neighborhood Networks for all these years. We thank you so much and we ask that you continue to support the Initiative in sustaining centers and improving the quality of life for residents utilizing your Neighborhood Networks centers.

As Michele mentioned, today we're going to talk about technical assistance, something of which everyone working with Neighborhood Networks should be aware. I think it's because technical assistance is a resource that every Neighborhood Networks center across the country can access. Technical assistance provides the tools that help centers overcome barriers to sustainability and help identify resources for its residents.

So, how do we define technical assistance? We define it as the process that supports Neighborhood Networks centers or center staff in the development of programs and services. Technical assistance helps to build a center's capacity to operate efficiently, measure performance, establish partnerships, and create programs that lead to the employment and self-sufficiency of residents. What is involved in that process? This process involves assessing

Neighborhood Networks centers' operations to determine those areas of need. This involves constant communication with the center staff, property owners, managers and TA coordinators.

Now, there are two types of technical assistance that a center can receive from our office. That's onsite and remote technical assistance. I'll talk a little bit about onsite first and then we'll get into remote. Onsite technical assistance provides a more hands-on approach to assisting centers. This involves a lot of strategic planning, assessment, developing action plans, and actually conducting site visits to provide training on the various categories of technical assistance to help achieve the goals established early on by the TA staff and the center staff. Notice, I said TA center and the center staff. Before receiving onsite technical assistance it's important for a center to know that this is an important commitment. We want to make sure the center is receiving the best services possible and to ensure all goals are met. This process will involve weekly communication with our staff to ensure the quality of the services.

Now, Michele mentioned a little earlier about the 50 centers, but I'm going to touch on this again. For onsite technical assistance, 50 centers will receive these services. TA coordinators will have the opportunity to work onsite with center staff, property owners, managers, potential partners and other stakeholders to discuss how to improve programs and services at the center. This strategy will be based on several categories of technical assistance that will be identified through the assessment of that center. A center receiving onsite technical assistance will receive two site visits during this year. The first site visit is a three-day site visit, which is followed by a two-day site visit that normally happens anywhere from two to four months later. These site visits, I must say, are wonderful experiences. Our staff, really, really enjoys getting out and working with the center staff, property owners and managers, to provide an opportunity for Neighborhood Networks centers to take a close look at the impact of their services. This helps centers determine strengths and weaknesses to move forward with developing programs that meet the residents' needs.

I mentioned earlier that there are several categories of technical assistance that we provide, so I just want to take a quick minute to go through some of these core categories. First I'll talk about **partnership development**. We define partnership development as the process of identifying and building relationships with organizations that provide resources for the center or its residents. Through technical assistance, Neighborhood Networks centers can develop a variety of programs and services by partnering with local community organizations, businesses, or even local learning institutions. During onsite technical assistance, the technical assistance staff will train center staff on how to conduct asset mapping to identify resources that are aligned with your center's mission. Once an organization is identified, our staff will work with you to make contact, conduct partnership meetings, and formalize partnership agreements with these organizations that are located in your local community.

Workforce development. Workforce development is another category on which we place a lot of emphasis during this process. Technical assistance is provided in this area to help Neighborhood Networks centers develop employment or educational resources that will enable residents to become competitive in their local job market. Centers develop all sorts of programs to address workforce development needs, such as GED (General Education Development), ESL (English as a Second Language), resume writing, job search, job training, or workshops such as Dress for Success. So within this category we also emphasize developing partnerships with local employment agencies to help establish workforce development programs onsite. We feel it's very important that these programs are established on the property, which allows the residents to have easy access and also allows the tracking and evaluation of those programs to occur.

This leads me into the next category. **Tracking and evaluation** is one of our other core categories. It's a simple category but a very important part of technical assistance. With this category our technical assistance staff will work with the Neighborhood Networks centers to identify methods of tracking resident participation. This includes tracking the everyday usage by the residents and tracking the specific programs that are housed at the center. We help centers

realize that it is very important to assess the outcome of activities to assist in program development. Tracking and evaluation is also important for assisting with fund raising efforts, because funders want to know what are you doing and who you are serving.

Earlier, Michele talked a little bit about **START**, which stands for Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool. This, of course, is a very important category and we think that all centers should really focus on getting their START business plans either update or completed. START has been a part of Neighborhood Networks for quite a while now. Basically, START is an Internet-based business plan tool that serves as a framework for defining the center's missions, planning center operations, its demographics, budget, identifying stake holders, assessing programs and organizational development. So during onsite technical assistance, TA coordinators will have the opportunity to work hands on with center staff to make sure that their business plans are updated and completed in START.

Funding is another area of technical assistance where we work very closely with our center staff. Technical assistance provides several resources that help sustain Neighborhood Networks centers. These are in addition to funding opportunities located on the Neighborhood Networks Web site. Centers receiving onsite technical assistance can also receive assistance in identifying funding opportunities in their local community and on the state and national level. The TA staff will assist with identifying appropriate funding opportunities and provide guidance in the completion and submission of grant applications.

We want to talk a little bit about **outreach**. I think this is important because without the development of marketing strategies for Neighborhood Networks centers, residents, potential partners, funders, and other stakeholders just aren't aware of what your center is doing or trying to accomplish. This makes it difficult to develop partnerships and attract participants to your center. Therefore we use different outreach strategies to make sure the community is aware of what the center has to offer. Marketing strategies are especially important when planning special

events, which I hope many of you plan to do this year, especially during the Neighborhood Networks Week.

Now, there is a process for receiving onsite technical assistance, and I'm not going to get into that. Actually my colleague will get into that after I've finished discussing my next topic, which is actually remote technical assistance. As I mentioned earlier, there are two types of technical assistance. So I'll go into **remote technical assistance** now.

Of course there are a lot of learning centers that participate in Neighborhood Networks, but not all can receive onsite technical assistance each year. That's where remote technical assistance plays a huge part. We define remote technical assistance as the process of providing support to Neighborhood Networks centers through communication through telephone conversations or even e-mails. Remote technical assistance is provided primarily through our toll-free line which is 888-312-2743; and believe me, if you don't know this number by now you will know it by the end of the year, because Michele will make sure of that.

Remote technical assistance also provides centers and opportunity to improve programs and services just like onsite technical assistance. So through the toll-free line, centers have the opportunity to receive information on all Neighborhood Networks resources, such as: partnership development, workforce development, programs, funding resources, event planning, Center Classification, START, and so on. Many of you may already utilize the toll-free line to get assistance with completing your START business plan. So, on that note, if you have not completed your START business plan and need assistance, please contact us immediately. Our staff will be more than happy to help you with any questions you may have.

Although technical assistance is available to all Neighborhood Networks centers, all centers are not eligible for onsite technical assistance. Properties that are considered HUD-assisted multi-family operating Neighborhood Networks centers are eligible to receive both onsite and remote

technical assistance. Those properties that are designated as elderly or disabled can receive services through our toll-free line. If you're not sure of your property type, you can contact your property manager or call your local HUD office for that information.

I'd also like to add that while receiving remote or onsite technical assistance, we're going to put a lot of focus on completing the annual assessments and making sure centers are reviewing and using the Center Classification guides. If you're not familiar with the annual assessment, it is located in START and should be completed as a center has an approved business plan. Assessments should also be completed yearly. The Center Classification guidelines are located on the Neighborhood Networks Web site under "resources." Of course the Center Classification guidelines provide steps for moving centers towards Model status. The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure center sustainability. And, as always, to get more information on these resources, please visit our Web site at neighborhoodnetworks.org.

I hope this information has been helpful in explaining the difference in the kinds of technical assistance that we're going to be providing to our centers. Like I said, we're gearing up for another great year and would like for all of the centers out there that are eligible to please contact us regarding receiving these services.

Michele.

Michele Higgs: OK. Thanks, Abraham. That was terrific. I want to just check quickly to see if Frances Leonard has joined us. Frances, are you with us?

Frances Leonard: Yes, I am.

Michele Higgs: OK, terrific. We'll be with you in just one moment. Hang tight.

Frances Leonard: OK.

Michele Higgs: Katrina, you want to tell us about the nomination process for onsite technical assistance?

Katrina Scruggs: Sure. Thank you, Abraham, and thank you, Michele. Good afternoon, everyone. At this time I'd like to provide information to you about the nomination process for onsite technical assistance. Each year we choose 50 centers for which our TA coordinators will provide onsite technical assistance. At this time of year, we're actually gearing up for our nomination process. The nomination process is designed for Neighborhood Networks center staffs to nominate themselves to receive onsite technical assistance. The process begins each year in October and ends in December of that same year. In the next few weeks, you will be receiving nomination forms that will be faxed and e-mailed to your Neighborhood Networks center.

By the end of this month, you should expect to receive calls from TA staff following up with you to make sure that you have received those nomination forms and assisting you with the nomination process. If your center has not received a nomination form within the next few weeks, you should call the Neighborhood Networks toll-free line, 888-312-2743. You can also call the toll-free line if you need assistance completing that nomination form and a TA coordinator will be happy to assist you over the phone.

The deadline for submitting the nomination forms is mid-November. The nomination form comes with a letter and that letter will designate the exact deadline date for when that form is to be submitted. The nomination forms can be submitted via e-mail or fax or even regular mail. You may want to give the toll-free line a call to verify that we've received your form.

Abraham just went over the centers that are eligible to receive onsite technical assistance, but I still want to go over the criteria for those centers that are nominating themselves for onsite technical assistance. The first criteria is that the center's staff agree to complete and follow the

minimal expected outcomes. Abraham reviewed a couple of the TA categories, and those minimal expected outcomes are: to enter into at least one partnership agreement, and that falls under partnership development; to establish or extend a workforce development program, which falls under workforce development or expansion; to develop or enhance tracking and evaluation or reporting capabilities, which falls under tracking and evaluation; and to create or update the center's business plan in START, which falls under START business plan development.

The center should also have at least one computer, which is connected to the Internet. The center should also have a HUD-approved business plan. It could be a business plan that was created on paper, maybe not in START, but staff will help you get that business plan from a paper plan to entering it into the START database. The center should be located on a property, which is FHA-insured and assisted. The center also should have approval from the property management and owner to participate in the complete onsite technical assistance process. Some directors are also required to commit to weekly contact, as Abraham also mentioned earlier.

If your center is selected to receive onsite technical assistance, a TA coordinator will contact you informing you that you've been selected. At this time, the TA coordinator will schedule the time to call and conduct a thorough assessment of the center; we assess the centers and provide an action plan describing how we're going to work with the center directors to achieve realistic goals for their centers. This assessment will help the TA coordinator and the center director determine other technical assistance categories for which the center may need assistance.

And that's it.

Michele Higgs: That's it. It sounds like a lot, but it's something that helps centers to realize their goals and become contributing members of the community.

Now, before we go on to questions, I did want to ask Frances Leonard to speak. Frances Leonard accepted the adventure of working on a computer center for the Vandalia Terrace Apartments in Charleston, West Virginia, after more than 28 years in corporate America. She was with Bell South. So she's been working for the last 10 years with the center at Vandalia. Hopefully she'll give us a window into the positive return that technical assistance can bring. Vandalia was selected to receive some attention this past year for onsite technical assistance, and they got quite a good return.

Frances, would you like to tell us what's been happening?

Frances Leonard: Oh, yes. Good afternoon. First of all I'd like to thank Cindy Bauer, who is my HUD Coordinator, for nominating the center for technical assistance, and Cheryl Dixon, for her expertise in helping me achieve some of the things that I had been trying to achieve for the last 10 years.

First of all, I was a little reluctant about the technical assistance. I have to say that and have to be truthful about that. But, after a visit from Cheryl, she came up with things that I had only thought about and had not known how to achieve. One of the things that she helped us achieve was student work studies. We are partners with two of the colleges here in Charleston, West Virginia Junior College and West Virginia State University. Can you hear me?

Michele Higgs: Yes, ma'am, we got it. There's a little bit of an echo. Are you speaking into a speakerphone?

Frances Leonard: Yes, I am. OK, let me pick it up. Can you hear me better now?

Michele Higgs: Oh, yes, that's great.

Frances Leonard: OK.

Michele Higgs: Thank you.

Frances Leonard: I was saying that we, with the help of (Cheryl), we have acquired two partnerships.

We actually got the MOU signed with West Virginia Junior College and West Virginia State University. I have acquired two work-study students. Without them, I would not be able to participate in this call because I have students in my center now that I would have to help with homework. But they're in there helping them now. That's one good thing.

We've achieved donations of computers. Well, we're in the process of getting computers donated to us by Dow Chemical. We have summer day camp here at Vandalia and we have the summer lunch program, which Cheryl was able to witness. We had about 25 kids to whom we served free lunches. With the donations of the lunches from the West Virginia State University land grant program, those kids were able to eat lunch and not go hungry during the summer. You never know when they're going to miss a meal. It was one of the things that Cheryl, or the technical assistance, helped me acquire.

Also, during the summer, the kids put on this "Vandalia Idol." Everybody likes "American Idol". So they wanted to come up with things that they could do during the day instead of just sitting around watching movies and playing a game. So what we did, Cheryl and I, we came up with things that they could do. They could recite poems, they could write poems. They could show their talent off, not just by, you know, singing or anything, but by writing, by performing and doing different things. The kids were really excited about it.

We have a partnership that's in the making with the Charleston workforce center to develop a workforce program for the teens and the adults on the property. We've, like I said, we've got a

grant proposal that's being submitted to Dow Chemical for the "Dow Promise" to obtain money for funding operations and more computer equipment and additional volunteers.

You talked about the START business plan. It is really mind-boggling when you go in there to look at it. It looks like a lot the START workbook. You think, "Oh, I'll never complete all this". But with Cheryl's help, I did complete my START business plan. And the tracking and evaluation; I had always tried to keep track of how many people use the computer center so that they didn't feel like they were just a part of the property. And there was a report that I had to give to my management company as to how many attendants I had and their purpose. So we developed, we enhanced the tracking and evaluation with the sign-in sheet to reflect activities of the residents and to do surveys and follow-up to find out if the center was giving them what they wanted, was offering them what they needed here on property.

One of the other things that Cheryl has helped, well, technical assistance, and I keep saying Cheryl because

Michele Higgs: Cheryl was technical assistance. Right?

Frances Leonard: Yes. I always had a bulletin board. I would get write-ups in the newspaper, or the ad bulletin about our property, but I never would post it. Cheryl said, those are things that you need to post and to let people who don't know anything about Vandalia. Cheryl said when you send out your material you let them know what Vandalia Terrace Apartments offer. So, she showed me ways to encourage both residents and the community to use the center. The computer center is located here on property, but we try to serve the entire community. We have a housing development that's down from us. So children come from there, too. We are the only center within walking distance that serves those that need access to a computer; they can come here and do it. We've posted the bulletin and we're making newsletters and

sending them to the various churches in the area. We got other children from different areas that come and participate at the computer center.

We send out photos and newsletters and we list projects that we were doing. During Easter and spring break we have Easter egg hunts for the children. It's a learning center, but it's an exciting place to visit. Children just don't look at it and say, "I don't want to go there; I've been in school all day." We try to offer something that's going to attract them; we give them snacks; we have different talent shows. These are some of the things that through technical assistance, I have been able to achieve. Like Michele said, I've been here for 10 years; this is the 10th year and we're going to have our 10th anniversary. We're going to have a big celebration. In these 10 years, I've achieved things that I only previously thought about achieving.

Michele Higgs: Fantastic. Well, it sounds like you've done a lot of good work. Thanks so much for being with us.

Frances Leonard: Oh, you're welcome.

Michele Higgs: Now, don't go away, don't go away. What I would like to do is find out if we have any callers on the line. We've given you some of the steps for getting technical assistance. With Ms. Leonard we've learned what technical assistance can do for your centers. So Kelcey, if we could open up the lines and see if there's anyone there who wants to ask a question, please.

Operator: Oh, certainly, Ms. Higgs. Well, ladies and gentlemen, if you would like to ask a question, you can do that by pressing the star key followed by the digit one on your touch-tone telephone. Do keep in mind if you're joining on a speakerphone to make sure your mute function is turned off to allow your signal to reach our equipment. Once again, that is star one if you would like to ask a question. Ladies and gentlemen, again, that's star one for questions.

We'll go first to Brandy Ingram.

Brandy Ingram: Yes. This question is the workforce programs have a lot of computers are pretty much unusable. But as Ms. Leonard was saying, would that be some problem that you would help us to address? Would we have to go outside and get assistance through partnerships?

Abraham Odom: I'm sorry, what was your name again?

Brandy Ingram: Brandy Ingram.

Frances Leonard: Are you addressing that to me, Brandy? This is Frances Leonard.

Brandy Ingram: Actually I was using you as an example.

Frances Leonard: OK.

Brandy Ingram: You were gaining partnerships that were helping to provide computers for your center. I was wondering, we have a lot of computers that are unusable. Is that something that you would help us address or would that be something that we would have to get outside support from partnerships, like getting our computers fixed and things of that nature.

Frances Leonard: Michele, I can address this. Prior to a month ago I was in your same situation. I had a roomful of computers that were so outdated that an antique shop wouldn't want them. But during the summer we had people come in who were working with the management company. They saw the need for new computers; so, with that and with Cheryl's encouragement, they have gotten me six new computers. Plus, we're working on getting more because I still have kids sitting around waiting to use the computers. So yes, that's something that technical assistance helped me get.

Brandy Ingram: OK because that's one of our biggest issues with our afterschool tutoring program. And with the workforce development for the adults, we really don't have the computer capacity to do a lot of those programs.

Michele Higgs: Brandy, I'm also going to ask Abraham to address that question. Let me ask a question. Are you outdoors on a cell phone?

Brandy Ingram: No, actually our center is right near a Naval air base.

Michele Higgs: Oh, OK.

Brandy Ingram: I tried to block out as much as I possibly could, but it's very difficult.

Michele Higgs: OK. Well, let me ask Abraham to address that as well.

Abraham Odom: Well, Brandy, I just wanted to mention that one of the things that we do is we do get the property managers and owners involved in technical assistance because we like for them to get a full look at what we've assessed with the centers and their needs. Quite often property managers or owners will step in just like they did at Frances' center and they'll help meet some of those needs. Now, some of the other things we will do, we could help develop partnerships that will come in and actually work with you or donate equipment to get your center up and running. Now, I have a question. With the computers you have now, do you have Internet access?

Brandy Ingram: Yes. Yes, sir, we do have Internet access. But a lot of them just have gotten viruses and just won't work.

Abraham Odom: We've gotten creative and worked with the local colleges or even computer companies that will come in and fix the equipment or donate equipment to get your center up to par. So

there are several things that we can do through technical assistance to get your computers up and working. It just depends on what's available in your community in terms of resources.

Brandy Ingram: OK.

Michele Higgs: Thanks, Brandy.

Brandy Ingram: Thank you.

Michele Higgs: OK. Kelcey, anybody else out there?

Operator: We do have a few more questions. We'll now turn to Elaine Bennett.

Michele Higgs: Hi, Elaine.

Elaine Bennett: Hi, Michele.

Michele Higgs: How are you ?

Elaine Bennett: Hi, Abraham.

Abraham Odom: Hi, Elaine.

Elaine Bennett: Question for you.

Michele Higgs: Yes, ma'am.

Elaine Bennett: In the past there was a limit on the number of centers per state. Will there be a limit again this year as to the number of centers that we can recommend or who will be approved to receive technical assistance?

Abraham Odom: You mean for HUD Coordinators nominating centers?

Elaine Bennett: Right.

Abraham Odom: I don't know if there's ever been a limit on the number that you can actually request. If you submit a center and if we contact that center and they request assistance and they're eligible, that's how we base our selection process. It really doesn't depend on the number of centers you nominate in that region.

Elaine Bennett: OK. So if I nominate 10, as long as they are eligible, I can get 10?

Abraham Odom: Once we complete our assessment of those centers, if we feel that they are ready to receive the services and they're committed to doing the work, that's how we approach our selection process.

Elaine Bennett: OK. Thanks.

Michele Higgs: Thanks, Elaine.

Operator: We'll now move to Shari Sabath.

Michele Higgs: Hello, Shari.

Shari Sabath: Hi. I may have missed this earlier. So I apologize if I did. If I received technical assistance two years ago, am I eligible to apply again this year?

Abraham Odom: Yes. What center is this?

Shari Sabath: Kenyon Hodges Computer Learning Center in Trenton, New Jersey.

Abraham Odom: On '04, Or sorry, '05?

Shari Sabath: It wasn't this one. Maybe it was even longer ago than that.

Abraham Odom: I can follow up on that for you.

Shari Sabath: I know it wasn't this year, it may have been last year or it may have been the year before.
It's all kind of blending together for me.

Katrina Scruggs: I believe that was last year. In '05-'06.

Shari Sabath: Possibly. Yes, probably '05-'06.

Abraham Odom: I can find out for you. I'm sorry, what's your name again?

Shari Sabath: Shari.

Abraham Odom: Shari. I can find out for you as soon as we get off this telephone call and I can give you a call. Could I have your phone number?

Shari Sabath: Sure. It's 609.

Abraham Odom: I'm sorry. That's OK.

Michele Higgs: The operator will have it.

Abraham Odom: OK

Shari Sabath: You have it. You don't need it.

Michele Higgs: That was Kenyon Hodges in Trenton, New Jersey.

Shari Sabath: In Trenton. Yes, it's just, you know, I did it two years ago. I got through that and there's more. There are new things.

Michele Higgs: OK. Always something. All right. Well, what we'll do is do a little research and get back to you.

Shari Sabath: Thank you.

Michele Higgs: All right. Thank you.

Operator: As a reminder to our audience, it is star one for questions. We'll now take a question from Deletrise Jones Curtis.

Michele Higgs: OK. Hello.

Deletrise Curtis: Hello. How you guys doing?

Michele Higgs: Good.

Deletrise Curtis: I'm in the metropolitan New Orleans area and there are no Neighborhood Networks centers down here. I've recently started getting the center together, probably looking to submit our business plan the first week of November. The owners are very active funding-wise. But I guess my question is this. Do you guys look at new Neighborhood Networks for consideration?

Katrina Scruggs: Yes, we do.

Abraham Odom: Absolutely.

Female: So definitely if you get your business plan in START and it gets approved during the nomination process, I would suggest that you go ahead and submit a nomination form and we certain follow up with you.

Deletrise Curtis: Awesome. Thank you.

Michele Higgs: OK.

Operator: And as a final reminder to the audience, it is star one for questions. Christen Branch please go ahead.

Christen Branch: Hello, good afternoon, everybody. I have just started this position a little bit more than a year ago. And as far as I know my center hasn't received anything as far as technical assistance. What would I need to do to apply for this and how I can get my center nominated?

Michele Higgs: Katrina?

Katrina Scruggs: This is Katrina. As I stated earlier, in about two weeks you should be receiving a nomination form either by e-mail or fax.

Christen Branch: OK.

Katrina Scruggs: If you don't receive a form, call our toll-free number. It's 888-312-2743. And let us know that you haven't received a nomination form and you're interested in applying for onsite technical assistance. We can either help you fill it out over the phone or you can send it back to us by using the e-mail or fax number that's listed on the nomination letter and form. We go from there as far as doing our pre-assessment, and a TA coordinator will call and speak with you about your center to determine your commitment and your eligibility. Can I ask what's, what is the name of your center and where are you located?

Christen Branch: I am in Corpus Christie, Texas. And the name of my center is (Case del Manana) learning center.

Katrina Scruggs: OK. We'll look out for your nomination form.

Christen Branch: OK, thank you.

Michele Higgs: Thank you.

Operator: Ms. Higgs, we have no further questions.

Michele Higgs: Oh, we don't. I can't imagine! All this good information out here . . . Well, what I'd like to do is be certain that we've gotten the details of what technical assistance is all about. Number one, it's all about getting your centers in shape to offer the best possible service for your residents. We look at work force development, we look at partnership, we look – and Abraham, I

might ask you about this – we look at asset mapping. That's a term that people seem to like a lot, but what that basically means is looking around your community and finding what resources there are in that can be of assistance in putting materials and programs together for your centers. May I also state that this is a *free* service. You don't have to pay anything. All you have to do is be committed to getting your center to be the best possible center it can be.

I'm going to stop now and ask Kelcey if we have any more questions on the line.

Operator: Ms. Higgs, we certainly do. We'll now hear from Francis Henry.

Michele Higgs: OK. Francis, hi.

Francis Henry: Hi. I was wondering, do we have to have our business plan in the START program already done or can you help us with that before we contact you or try to apply for the technical assistance?

Katrina Scruggs: At this time you can call the toll-free line and we do have representatives that assist you with getting your START business plan into the system, submitting it to the HUD Coordinator and working with the HUD Coordinators to get them approved. So I would suggest that you call the toll-free line. Do you need the number?

Francis Henry: No, ma'am, I have it.

Katrina Scruggs: Just making sure; but you can call that toll-free line and let them know that you need assistance with getting your START business plan in the system and they'll help you.

Francis Henry: OK.

Abraham Odom: I also have a question. This is Abraham. Are you currently a Neighborhood Networks center but your business plan is not in START?

Francis Henry: That's correct. Yes.

Abraham Odom: OK. As long as she has a business plan, even if it's paper.

Katrina Scruggs: Yes, you're eligible. You meet the criteria by having a paper business plan. It doesn't have to be in START. If you're already a Neighborhood Networks center and your business plan is just on paper, we help you with getting it in START. So you can still submit a nomination form.

Francis Henry: Oh, that's great because I am on paper. I know you've got that already. It's just not in the START program.

Abraham Odom: OK.

Michele Higgs: OK, you're in business. Kelcey, anyone else out there?

Operator: We certainly do, Ms. Higgs. We'll now hear from Cynthia Harris.

Michele Higgs: Hello, Cynthia.

Cynthia Harris: Hello.

Michele Higgs: How are you?

Cynthia Harris: I'm good. I don't really have a question. I just wanted to say thank you for my technical assistance. I've had both your remote technical assistance and onsite and have made a lot of

progress with both of them. David Percy was my telephone person and Cheryl Dixon was my onsite visit and so anybody who wants to apply for it should go ahead and apply, because you'll get the same service both with your remote assistance as well as with your onsite assistance.

Michele Higgs: Terrific. That's good to hear. We couldn't ask for a better commercial!

Abraham Odom: Thank you so much, Cynthia.

Cynthia Harris: All right.

Michele Higgs: Thank you.

Cynthia Harris: Bye, Abraham. Bye, all.

Operator: Moving on to Sarah Simmons.

Michele Higgs: All right, thank you.

Sarah Simmons: Hi. How are you? My name is Sarah Simmons.

Michele Higgs: Hi, Sarah.

Sarah Simmons: Hi. Is the business plan you're talking about the 501(c)(3) plan?

Abraham Odom: No.

Michele Higgs: No.

Sarah Simmons: That's not a part of the business plan.

Abraham Odom: Well, unless you use part of your business plan for the center as part of your 501(c)(3) application for whatever reason. If you have an operating Neighborhood Networks center, you should have a business plan somewhere on file. If you do not, you should check with the property owner, management company, or the HUD Coordinator in your area.

Sarah Simmons: OK. I haven't had the position that long. But our computer center opened September 18.

Abraham Odom: OK.

Sarah Simmons: We have a really good one; but I'm having problems with being organized as far as volunteer work. I have a lot of children coming. I have up to 25 children in the afterschool program, but I don't have a lot of help with the children. So me being the social service coordinator then doing the computer center, that's a lot of work. I have contacted the local college and a couple of people come over every now and then. So I have to work hard on that. I need some kind of organization or a START plan.

Katrina Scruggs: May I ask what the name of your center is?

Sarah Simmons: It's North Hills Manor.

Katrina Scruggs: I'm sorry.

Sarah Simmons: North Hills Manor Neighborhood Networks Center.

Michele Higgs: In what state?

Sarah Simmons: Mississippi. Meridian, Mississippi.

Michele Higgs: OK. Anyone else have a comment on that one?

Katrina Scruggs: Well, I just want you to know, some of your needs can be addressed through partnership development. We do have other technical assistance categories that address some of your needs as far as volunteers and developing a plan for organizing your daily tasks and your weekly tasks. So I would suggest that you submit a nomination form. Again, one of our TA coordinators can give you a call and discuss with you further some of your needs to determine if this is what you need as far as technical assistance.

Michele Higgs: Sarah are you still there?

Operator: I'm sorry; our next question is from Claudette Lockhart.

Michele Higgs: OK. Claudette, thank you.

Claudette Lockhart: Hi. I'd actually just like to make a comment. My center is in Seaside, California. I'm actually new to the position, about six months new. Our center is about six years old. Our former director retired some two months ago and I took the position. I'm just grateful and wanted to thank you all for the wealth of information I've received in just this short time being on the phone lines with you, especially concerning developing the center, getting it into shape and all that. Because everything was thrown in my hands and I kind of was new at everything even though I worked at the center as a teacher there. I didn't really get the hands on of the director. So I'm really appreciative for all this information. And really that's basically all I have to say.

Michele Higgs: OK. Well, good.

Katrina Scruggs: Claudette?

Claudette Lockhart: Yes.

Katrina Scruggs: You're at Delmonte Manor?

Claudette Lockhart: Is this Katrina?

Katrina Scruggs: Yes, it is.

Claudette Lockhart: Yes. You've been so helpful. I wanted to say that. I forgot that. I wanted to tell you how helpful you've been. You've spoken with me several times and you've been a great help to me and I really appreciate it.

Katrina Scruggs: You're the center director there now?

Claudette Lockhart: Yes, I am. Yes.

Katrina Scruggs: OK.

Claudette Lockhart: Yes. Thanks.

Katrina Scruggs: OK. So nice hearing from you.

Operator: Moving on to Iris Anderson.

Michele Higgs: OK, Iris.

Iris Anderson: Hi. How are you?

Michele Higgs: Good.

Iris Anderson: Wonderful. I guess I wanted to do the same thing that the last two callers did. I just want to say thank you. I accepted this responsibility of the relationship with Neighborhood Networks and working with our center. I'm in the process of updating our START plan. And, I mean, each time I've called --I remember the first name of the person who's helped me so much -- Luticia.

Abraham Odom: Yes.

Michele Higgs: Oh, Luticia!

Iris Anderson: Yes. At any rate, if that's any example of what we have in store for the onsite as well as the remote assistance, I'm looking forward to it.

Michele Higgs: Oh, great. That's wonderful. Thank you so much.

Iris Anderson: Yes.

Michele Higgs: Yes.

Iris Anderson: I just wanted to say thank you all.

Michele Higgs: Thank you. Thanks for calling.

Iris Anderson: Sure.

Operator: We'll now hear from Jerryl Bennett.

Michele Higgs: Hello, Jerryl.

Jerryl Bennett: Hey. How are you all?

Michele Higgs: I'm good.

Jerryl Bennett: The onsite technical assistance practitioners, are they assigned to different territories, unique territories?

Abraham Odom: Well, right now we're in the beginning stages of determining where the coordinators will be assigned. I think it just kind of depends on the feedback that we get from the centers during the nomination process. We certainly look at all opportunities. Whatever centers are eligible we will assign those areas.

Jerryl Bennett: Yes, I think traditionally you all have rotated those assignments and I was just curious how that works again this year.

Michele Higgs: Probably the same.

Jerryl Bennett: OK.

Michele Higgs: Thanks for calling in.

Jerryl Bennett: Thank you.

Abraham Odom: Thank you, Jerryl.

Michele Higgs: OK. Kelcey, have we anyone else on the line? We are getting down to the dregs of time here.

Operator: We are indeed, Ms Higgs. Would you like me to continue?

Michele Higgs: I will take one more call, please.

Operator: Excellent. Well, that will come from Mary Frances Byrd.

Michele Higgs: Mary Francis, how are you?

Mary Frances Byrd: I just wanted to say thank you.

Michele Higgs: Oh, my goodness.

Mary Frances Byrd: Every time I call I get help. And being elderly, you know, hey, I appreciate it very, very much. And I just wanted to thank you.

Michele Higgs: Well, thank you. Thank you so much.

Mary Frances Byrd: That's about it.

Michele Higgs: Well, I appreciate your calling in. We appreciate your calling in.

Katrina Scruggs: Hi, Mary Frances. Thanks for calling.

Michele Higgs: We've got Marisa in here today.

Mary Frances Byrd: Hi Marisa, how you doing.

Michele Higgs: Good, good. Thank you so much. Kelcey?

Operator: Yes, Ms. Higgs.

Michele Higgs: That was too easy. Let's try one more.

Operator: Certainly. We'll now turn to Gisela Acfalle.

Michele Higgs: OK.

Gisela Acfalle: Hi. Good morning.

Michele Higgs: Gisela, how are you?

Gisela Acfalle: Fine. Hi, my name is Gisela and I just received this position about two weeks ago. The former administrator wasn't able to tell me what this position does and everything. Basically what I'm trying to find out is how do I go about getting technical assistance to update our computers and provide programs for our children and adults, get software for them to learn about resumes and teach the kids about their math?

Michele Higgs: It sounds like you're looking for the whole ball of wax. Are you a Neighborhood Networks center at this point?

Gisela Acfalle: Yes, we are. We're with Waipahu Towers Cooperative Computer Learning Center.

Michele Higgs: Say that once again.

Gisela Acfalle: Waipahu Towers Cooperative Computer Learning Center.

Michele Higgs: Got you. OK. Do I want to answer this question or would you guys like to take it? What I was going to say is Katrina had mentioned before that we will be sending out information by fax and by e-mail to centers throughout the network with details about the process of onsite technical assistance. You'll have a letter that'll describe what's going on and you'll have a nomination form. We would suggest then that you go ahead and submit that nomination form, because it sounds like you would benefit from a lot of the different categories that we offer for technical assistance. So I would say keep your eyes open for that form. If I remember correctly, you had written in for information on how to get into this call. So I'm glad to hear that you were able to dial in.

Gisela Acfalle: (inaudible)

Michele Higgs: So if you just watch out and, you know, check your e-mail, you should have some information coming soon with regard to the onsite technical assistance. And if you don't get it, by all means call 888-312-2743 and request it.

Gisela Acfalle: OK.

Michele Higgs: We'll get it out to you, OK?

Gisela Acfalle: OK, thank you.

Michele Higgs: Thank you. Thanks so much. Kelcey.

Operator: Yes, Ms. Higgs.

Michele Higgs: I think that's it.

Operator: Certainly. Well, I'll turn it back to you if you have any closing remarks.

Michele Higgs: I do. I do. Let me go through this. It looks like we just have a couple of minutes left. So since we're at the bottom, I just want to remind you of the resources that are available to you through the Neighborhood Networks Initiative. Because of limitations on time, we don't always get to hear all of your questions. So if you have a question and you didn't get to air it during the call, you do have an outlet.

You can go to the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org and you can post your question on the Neighborhood Networks online message board and either our staff or your peers will see to it that your question gets attention. Of course you can always call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line with questions, and that's 888-312-2743. Now, there are abundant resources on the Web site and current information about what's going on with the Neighborhood Networks Initiative. Again, www.neighborhoodnetworks.org will get you there. In the coming months our calls will continue to focus on helping you to build the capacity of your centers. Just listen to what we have planned.

The topic for the November call is "Learning To Balance The Bucks: Approaches to Financial Literacy." It will focus on developing programs that enable residents to achieve financial stability. That call will take place on November 13 at 3 Eastern Standard Time. And let me remind you, we fall back to standard time in a few days. So don't forget to set your clock so you can keep up with us.

On December 11 the call will be "It Takes a Village: Connecting Centers to Community Resources" and will address establishing a positive community image for your center through marketing strategies. I'm just going to note those two calls, November and December. So save the date and mark your calendars.

Thank you so much to all of you callers for joining us today. Thanks again to Abraham, Katrina, Marisa, Frances, Cheryl and Dana. Thank you so much. Take good care, everyone, and we'll talk to you next time.

Operator: Thank you so much, Ms. Higgs. Ladies and gentlemen, that does conclude our conference call for today. Enjoy the rest of your day.

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