

NETWORK NEWS



**DELIVERING
TECHNOLOGY
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COMMUNITIES**

Fundraising: The Bucks Start Here

The art of fundraising is nothing new. Thousands of years ago, the Greeks and Romans launched the concept of fundraising, seeking donations from citizens to build amphitheatres, host public banquets, and hold Olympic-style athletic events. Over the ages, fundraising has grown to become a critical source of revenue for many not-for-profit organizations. Take for example the famous Girl Scout Cookie® Program that earns the Girl Scouts of the USA nearly \$700 million each year. Without this fundraising event, the organization would not be able to offer many of its leadership development programs. Like the Girl Scouts and other nonprofit entities, many Neighborhood Networks centers across the country rely on charitable contributions, both financial and in-kind, to launch and sustain many of their programs that help residents achieve greater self-sufficiency and access to technology.

Money Doesn't Grow on Trees

Even though picking money from a tree is not an option, there are many ways to secure funding. Some of these include:

- **Ask for it.** In 2006, Americans gave more than \$295 billion in charitable contributions, up from \$248 billion in 2004. Giving by the nation's nearly 2,600 corporate foundations also grew to a record \$3.6 billion. In addition, charitable foundations, such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that contributed more than \$4.5 billion to U.S. nonprofit organizations in 2006, also supported projects that make the

nation a better place to live. Centers may benefit from the generosity of Americans by launching a letter campaign that targets community members and businesses that share the vision and mission of Neighborhood Networks, or by applying for a grant.

- **Earn money by offering services.** Just like screaming members of high school athletic teams holding up brightly painted signs announcing a car wash to raise money for new uniforms, Neighborhood Networks centers may consider offering services for a fee. These services might include publication and business stationery creation and layout services.
- **Sell products to the community to generate income.** Like the Girl Scouts, centers can generate income by selling items made by residents, such as needlework pieces or handcrafts, or items made in the center's computer lab, such as cookbooks and digital artwork.

This issue of *Network News* describes the different ways centers can secure financial and in-kind donations and highlights how some centers across the nation are obtaining much-needed resources. *If You Write It, They Will Fund!* discusses the art of grant-writing and provides tips and tools that will help centers improve their chances of receiving grants. *Another Way, Another Dollar* showcases ways centers can generate their own revenue. And because money isn't everything, *In-kind Contributions: Ask and You Shall Receive* highlights the value of non-cash contributions. **NN**

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If You Write It, They Will Fund!

Consider this. You're a Neighborhood Networks center director with an idea for an afterschool program for at-risk youth. Or maybe you want to provide critical social services for senior residents or adult literacy courses. Or maybe you just want to enhance an existing center program. You meet with your staff, and together you formulate a plan of action. You develop curriculum, identify a venue, set dates and times, decide on a promotional campaign, even suggest facilitators and possible volunteers. You've crossed every *t* and dotted every *i*, all except one. You realize that what you really need to turn this great idea into a reality is funding.

Sound familiar to you? You're not alone. This scene, or similar ones, occurs often at Neighborhood Networks centers nationwide because that's what centers do, spend their time developing ideas and implementing programs to meet the critical needs of their residents.

There's good news for those centers seeking financial assistance. There are approximately 1,010,400 charitable organizations in the United States offering funds to help you help others. In 2006, Americans gave a record \$295 billion to their favorite causes and charities, and giving by foundations increased by 12 percent. What does that mean for Neighborhood Networks centers? There are a plethora of avenues through which you can access funds for your programs.

From Applicant to Recipient

As a center director you may be thinking, "These statistics are great, but what can I do to better my center's chances of receiving some of those funds? How can I move from applicant to recipient?" Great questions because there are funds that centers can access, but there are also hundreds of other organizations and individuals competing for those same funds.

What's a center to do? First, consider the top five reasons why donors give:

- They are asked or presented with a giving opportunity.
- They have compassion for those in need.
- They are affected by the cause.
- They personally believe in the cause.
- They want to give back to their community.

Knowing the reasons for giving, the first thing centers must do is seek out individuals, foundations, and

organizations that are sympathetic to their cause. A good place to start is with those funders who are close to home. If local organizations want to give back to their community, present them with a proposal that demonstrates a positive impact to the community; one that shows you are meeting a need they care about.

Another piece of advice for centers is: *don't go to a shoe store to buy groceries*. Before you submit a request for funding, make sure that the donor funds your program area and that they believe in what you're trying to do. It's always better if a funder sees you as a partner in helping them achieve their goals, as well as your own.

Many large corporations only give money to programs and organizations at which their employees volunteer. When recruiting volunteers, be sure to recruit employees from large local companies. Recent statistics show that 55 percent of Americans volunteer. Forty-two percent of those that volunteer said personal connections inspire them to

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If You Write It, They Will Fund! (continued from page 2)

volunteer, and 40 percent said that community involvement was their driving force for volunteering.

Once you've identified a potential funder, you must submit a grant proposal that can beat out your competitors, or at least get you funded. A grant proposal is the *written* version of your planning process and *planning* is key. Here are some tips for writing effective and competitive grant proposals:

- **Write clearly and concisely.** Succinctness is more important than volume.
- **Be thorough.** Ask yourself: *what have I forgotten?*
- **Be specific.** Are the deliverables clear? Can the funder easily understand what they are buying?
- **Follow the format.** Be a *responsive* applicant. Even if you believe there is a better way to organize the information, provide the information exactly as requested.
- **Use/create local data when possible.** Define "data" as information.
- **Address anticipated challenges.** Don't try to minimize them; describe how you will overcome them.
- **Identify others necessary to your success.** Who are the stakeholders? How will you involve them?
- **Use reader-friendly format.** A grid display versus a narrative may say it best.
- **Use good grammar.** Use the spellchecker function.
- **Bring something to the table.** Funders view themselves as partners.

- **Write the executive summary after writing the proposal.** It's easier to put together a summary once you have all of the pieces in place.
- **Make sure letters of support/ letters of authorization mean something.** They should state exactly what collaborators will do and how their expertise will contribute to the project.
- **Put yourself in the reader's place.** Would you know what the proposal was saying if you didn't write it? Would you want to fund this proposal?

Two Centers Make the Transition

- The LaGrave Learning Center in Grand Forks, North Dakota, is one of many Neighborhood Networks centers that has made the successful transition from applicant to recipient. In March 2007, the center received an \$850 Student North Dakota Education Association grant. The money is being used to assist with its afterschool program and purchase computer software and accessories. "With the money, we were able to purchase items such as bean bag chairs, new outdoor equipment, and plants," said Christina Hutchison, center director.

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Neighborhood Networks Funding Resources

Generating funds allows Neighborhood Networks centers to develop new programs and sustain existing ones. HUD provides several resources to help centers improve their grantwriting skills and compete for the millions of dollars available through grants, including:

- **Onsite and Remote Technical Assistance.** To help center staff and property managers improve services and strengthen program development, HUD offers remote and onsite technical assistance. Remote technical assistance resources include the Neighborhood Networks Information Center, conference calls, weekly updates, and new center outreach. Onsite technical assistance offers centers one-on-one guidance from a trained technical assistance coordinator to provide a deeper level of support.
- **Grantwriting Training Sessions.** Annually, HUD sponsors grantwriting training sessions for Neighborhood Networks center staff. These sessions are offered prior to conferences and/or Regional Technical Assistance Workshops (RTAWs).
- **TARGET: Technical Assistance Resource Guides and Educational Toolkit.** In section 7 of the toolkit, "Securing Funding," centers can learn about the multistep funding process.
- **Weekly Funding Opportunities.** Each week, HUD posts funding updates on the Neighborhood Networks Web site that describe the types of programs funded, eligibility requirements, and application deadlines.
- **Conference Calls.** Interactive monthly conference calls provide subject-matter expertise to Neighborhood Networks centers.

Another Way, Another Dollar

Every day, more Neighborhood Networks centers discover the benefits of hosting a local fundraising event. In addition to helping centers secure much-needed funding, community fundraisers offer centers a chance to showcase the programs and services they deliver, promote the vision and mission of Neighborhood Networks, and increase awareness of the center with community members, as well as potential partners and volunteers. Community fundraising events are also a way for centers to reconnect with partners and community members and remind them of the vital role the local Neighborhood Networks center plays in building a stronger, more productive community.

From the Traditional to the Virtual

When it comes to selecting a local fundraising event, there are plenty of options from which to choose. There are the traditional fundraisers, such as: bake sales, yard sales, used book sales, arts and crafts (and digital art) sales, raffles, and car washes. There are food-based events, such as: pancake breakfasts, summer barbecues, and gala dinners. There are also all sorts of “activity-athons,” such as walk-athons and dance-athons. Other fundraising events include: recycled can drives, and bingo nights and auctions that offer prizes donated by local community members and businesses.

As the Internet becomes more a part of everyday life, online fundraising is also growing in popularity.

Tactics for raising money through the Internet include incorporating a “Donate Now” button to an organization’s Web site and listing the organization with one of the many charity portals that drive traffic to nonprofit organizations’ Web sites and increase awareness of the organization with potential donors. In addition, centers can partner with a charity mall that pays a commission to nonprofit organizations when their members or supporters make online shopping purchases through a network of online stores.

Whatever the type of event that is hosted, it should capture the spirit of the center and highlight how the center is changing lives and strengthening the community. Donors are more likely to support a center if they clearly see the positive impact it has on all community members.

Centers Act Locally

Neighborhood Networks centers across the country are seeking support from their local community by hosting local fundraising events. Some money-making events organized by centers include:

- In Long Beach, California, the Northpointe Resource Center is enlisting the help of its local professional soccer team, the Los Angeles Galaxy, to raise funds that will be used to support the center’s afterschool program. Members of the team, which includes star player David Beckham, will run a soccer clinic and participate in a special dinner. The center will charge a fee to



Former San Diego Charger Mikhael Ricks with Summercrest residents and staff at a center fundraiser.

participate in the three- to four-hour clinic and ask local businesses to buy a table at the dinner. “The idea for the fundraiser came about after the Northpointe Resource Center’s sister center, the Summercrest Resource and Community Center, hosted a similar, non-fundraising event with former players from the San Diego Chargers pro football team,” said Madelyne Pfeiffer, vice president of Communities Advocating for Resident Empowerment (C.A.R.E.), a nonprofit spin-off of the Las Palmas Housing and Las Palmas Foundation that operates 12 Neighborhood Networks centers in California. “We had a great turnout for that event and realized we could use these types of events to raise money to cover operating costs and fund our programs and services.”

- At the Plough Towers Computer Learning Center in Memphis, Tennessee, Executive Director Rena Rosenberg takes advantage of the annual open house to seek support from the community. Each year, Rosenberg posts a


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“wish list” of all of the items that are needed to implement and sustain center programs in a prominent place during the open house. The fundraising tactic has been extremely effective, and Rosenberg reports that she typically gets everything for which she wishes.

- In Seguin, Texas, the Seguin/Yar Manor Learning Center raffled off a quilt that was sewn and donated by one of the residents. Center staff members and volunteers sold tickets at locations throughout the community, such as at Third Thursday, a monthly open house for downtown businesses sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, and in front of the local Wal-Mart store. “Tickets were \$5 each or three for \$10,” said Melody Kammerer, director of the Seguin/Yar Manor Learning Center. “We had a great time and made \$1,000 for the center. It was so successful, we’re doing

it again this year.” Kammerer also organized a spaghetti lunch that offered all-you-can-eat bread and salad. “People could either buy a ticket and enjoy lunch at the center,” said Kammerer, “or our volunteers would deliver the meal to them. A complete lunch was \$5.”

Across the country, Neighborhood Networks centers are hosting a variety of local fundraisers. The money generated by these events allows centers to expand their program offering and help residents achieve greater self-sufficiency and access to technology. 

Planning a Successful Fundraising Event

Centers can increase the success of their local fundraising event by taking a few simple steps:

- **Set a financial goal.** It is important to determine how much money is needed and how it will be used once it is raised.
- **Ask for help.** Hosting a fundraising event is a great deal of work. It may be beneficial to form a committee or several committees and clearly define roles and responsibilities for all those involved.
- **Create a plan that addresses every aspect of the event from planning to evaluation.** The plan should also include a realistic timeline and budget.
- **Select a date, time, and venue.** Pick a date well in advance (six months to a year depending on the scope of the event) to allow plenty of time for adequate planning. Be sure the date does not conflict with another event or holiday that may decrease participation. Also, select a time that is convenient for the largest number of donors and supporters to attend.
- **Publicize the event wherever and whenever possible.** Promotion tactics may include: working with the media to spread the word about the event, hanging posters and distributing flyers throughout the community, mailing invitations, and sending e-mail blasts.
- **Evaluate the success of the event.** Upon completion of the event, assess its success. Did the event bring in the anticipated income? Was participant feedback positive? What could have been done differently to improve future fundraising event success?



Seguin Manor Apartments Manager Nancie Gonzales, residents, resident board members, and volunteers visit Seguin’s Mayor Betty Ann Matthies (far right) in her office with a resident-made quilt that was raffled off to raise money for the Seguin/Yar Manor Learning Center.

In-kind Contributions: Ask and You Shall Receive

Many Neighborhood Networks centers are realizing that money isn't everything, especially when they can receive in-kind donations for needed products and services. There are scores of charitable organizations that donate refurbished computers to nonprofits, schools, people with disabilities, and technology programs that serve low-income communities. Also, each year hundreds of thousands of relatively new, perfectly usable computers, fax machines, and printers are replaced by businesses that are updating their equipment/supplies. Many of these items are donated to nonprofit organizations.

The Beneficiaries

Neighborhood Networks centers nationwide have been the beneficiaries of this type of giving. From computers, hardware, and software to fax machines, printers, and other equipment, centers are implementing and sustaining programs thanks to the in-kind donations they received from community members. One center even received a place to house their center.

- When the Spartanburg Terrace Resource Center in Spartanburg, South Carolina, lost its original space, staff members began searching for a place to house the computer center. After hearing about the center's predicament, the Spartanburg County School District Seven and Spartanburg County School District One each donated a portable classroom to create an instant, onsite computer center. Each classroom is approximately 700 to 800 square feet and can house up to 50 children.

Spartanburg County School District Seven also donated computers and furniture. Additionally, the center received file cabinets, tables, and typewriters from State Farm Insurance; a copier, conference table, paper, and pens from Save the Children; computers from PowerUp; and an eight-passenger minivan.

- At the Yapo Computer Learning Center in Pontiac, Michigan, a visit from Michigan State Representative Tim Melton led to a donation of much-needed computers. While touring the center, Representative Melton recognized a need for additional computers, and decided to do something about it. His office donated nine computers, more than doubling the center's computer resources.
- The Mount Zion A.M.E. Apartments Resource Center in Florence, South Carolina, is another beneficiary of donated computers. Poynor Adult and Community Education, which offers courses in adult basic education and general educational development (GED) preparation, donated six computers to the center to help it launch its GED program. These computers are loaded with GED software that enables residents to work on their GED requirements at the center at their own pace.

The Donors

While resources from community businesses make up the majority of in-kind donations to centers, there are many agencies that act as online technology portals through which centers can apply for and receive computers and other equipment.

These portals include:

- Microsoft Software Donation Program. One of the main objectives of this program is to make Microsoft products available to as many organizations as possible to ensure that technology needs are met. Requests for donations are not made directly to Microsoft, but to its partner TechSoup Stock. Organizations work directly with TechSoup Stock to request software and are charged a minimal administrative fee. Organizations can review and request products online, and customer service professionals are on call via the Web, e-mail, and telephone to answer any questions that might arise during the request or fulfillment processes.

For more information, visit www.techsoup.org/stock/microsoftprogram.asp?visit=1.

- The National Cristina Foundation targets its donations of used computer equipment to organizations that will use the equipment for purposes related to training, job development, educational programs, and other related projects that focus directly on improving the lives of people with disabilities, students at risk, and economically disadvantaged people. For more information visit www.cristina.org.

Having the necessary technology and resources that enable residents to achieve greater self-sufficiency and access to technology is important. In-kind donations can fill this need by enhancing a Neighborhood Networks center's ability to deliver technology access to residents of HUD-insured and -assisted properties. **NN**

Shirley Machonis Retires after Four Decades of Civil Service

For the past several years, Shirley Machonis has been a familiar and friendly face at Neighborhood Networks. As a member of the Initiative's headquarters staff, Machonis oversaw the development and production of publications and content for the Neighborhood Networks Web site and participated in the design and implementation of the Neighborhood Networks National Training Conference and Regional Technical Assistance Workshops (RTAWs).

"During her tenure with Neighborhood Networks, Shirley played a key role in giving a face and voice to the Initiative," said Neighborhood Networks Director Delores Pruden. "She also dedicated her time to making sure stakeholders had the

necessary resources to help residents achieve greater professional, academic, and personal success. Shirley's contributions, enthusiasm, and loyalty to Neighborhood Networks will be missed."

In August 2007, Machonis decided the time was right to retire, marking the end of a government career that she launched in 1967 as a clerk-typist for the Department of Defense. Over the last 40 years, Machonis has held administrative positions for the U.S. Marine Corps and National Labor Relations. Machonis eventually accepted a position at HUD, and worked her way up to the rank of housing program manager for the Neighborhood Networks Initiative. She remained a key member of the



After 40 years of government service, Shirley Machonis retired from HUD in August 2007.

Neighborhood Networks staff until her retirement.

For Machonis, retirement offers her time to reconnect with her personal interests. She will also continue to positively effect people's lives through her many volunteer efforts that include serving as a church administrator/coordinator and computer instructor. **NN**

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Later in 2007, the center won a \$1,500 Community Foundation grant to launch the Creating Strong Intelligence program which provides teenage mentoring and homework assistance to the community.

The LaGrave Learning Center also received a \$35,850 Americorp grant in October 2007 to increase education success for disadvantaged youth in the community. "We have Americorp members who provide academic enrichment for children in kindergarten through eighth grade," said Hutchison. "Our direct focus is the children on the property, but the members work with children throughout the community."

- Deborah Backus, executive director of the Castle Square

Technology Center in Boston, Massachusetts, secured grants totaling \$130,000 in 2006. With the money, Backus enhanced the center's technology, expanded its program offering, and provided professional development opportunities for the staff.

One of the largest awards secured by Backus was a \$45,000 grant from The Boston Foundation. This money was used to help build a wireless Internet for residents of Castle Square Apartments.

Backus sought funding a second time from The Boston Foundation, to launch the center's Peace on the Move summer program. This time, the center received a \$10,000 grant that enabled Backus to extend the center's summer operating hours and provide

residents access to its resources until 10 p.m. every night.

To help college-bound residents earn the scores they need to be competitive among college applicants, the center launched the Youth Education Initiative with a \$25,000 HUD Community Development Block Grant that it received from the city of Boston.

Finally, to ensure that staff members, volunteers, and board members have the leadership skills required to meet the needs of residents, Backus applied for and received a \$50,000 capacity-building grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Compassion Capital Fund. A portion of the money was used to further the youth program curriculum. **NN**

2008 Calendar of Events

Conference Calls

March 13—*Who's In Your Community? Serving All Your Residents*

April 8—*What Are They Doing? Constructive Activities for Young People*

May 13—*Event Planning: How Events Spread the News about Your Center*

June 10—*Organizational Development: Knowing Who You Are and What to Do*

July 8—*Using Tracking and Evaluation to Assure Your Center's High Level of Success*

August 12—*Apprenticeships: A New Way to Work*

September 9—*Volunteers Rock!*

Consortia Conference Calls

June 3—*Maintaining Nonprofit Tax-Exempt Status*

September 9—*Volunteer Recruitment Strategies*

Instructions on how to participate in conference calls are available on the calendar of events page found at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org

Conferences at Which Neighborhood Networks Will Be Exhibiting

March 19–21—*Nonprofit Technology Enterprise Network 2007 Nonprofit Technology Conference, New Orleans, LA*

May 4–7—*Council on Foundations Annual Conference, National Harbor, MD*

May 8—*Upstate Affordable Housing Conference, New York, NY*

June 1–3—*National Conference on Volunteering and Service, Atlanta, GA*

July 10–11—*Annual Affordable Housing Conference, Chicago, IL*

August 18–20—*Southeastern Affordable Housing Association (SAHMA) Regional Conference and Trade Show, Destin, FL*

Special Events

Spring 2008—*Regional Technical Assistance Workshops*

Summer 2008—*Neighborhood Networks Week*

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