



NETWORK

Neighborhood Networks

News



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 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development • Office of Multifamily



Technology: Delivering a Promise, a Solution, and an Opportunity

“**D**elivering Technology Access to America’s Communities.” It is more than just a catchy tagline that appears on Neighborhood Networks publications. It is a promise to residents of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Federal Housing Administration (FHA)-insured and -assisted housing communities to provide the resources they need to succeed in today’s technology-driven world. It is a solution for center staff who strive to offer more of the programs and services residents need and want. And, it is an opportunity for all who are willing to embrace it and use it to their best advantage.

Good for Residents and Center Staff

Technology forms the foundation of the Neighborhood Networks Initiative, benefiting not only residents, but also center staff. With technology, residents can obtain the vital skills they need to compete in today’s job market. Technology enables residents to apply for jobs, access a wealth of information, achieve greater academic success, communicate more easily, and become more engaged in community, national, and world issues.

Center staff also reap the rewards of technology. Technology helps them perform their jobs with greater efficiency, convenience, and success. With technology, center staff can remain current on issues, communicate more easily, access vital information, and engage in a variety of professional development activities. Center staff can also use technology to promote the programs and services offered at their center, as well as showcase their success, both of which are critical to sustaining a center.

Resources and Recaps

This issue of *Network News* features some of the technological resources offered by HUD and how centers can put these tools to use for them. The first article, *Web-Based Resources Allow Stakeholders to Receive and Share Information*, describes two techno-tools that deliver training to center staff and residents’ desktops and enable centers to create an online presence. *Workshops Deliver on Promise of Being ‘New and Improved’* recaps the 2009 Neighborhood Networks Regional Technical Assistance Workshops (RTAWs) held in Dallas, Texas, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with a spotlight on the technology-focused sessions. The final article, *Neighborhood Networks Week 2009 Offers Centers Outreach and Community Unity Opportunities* is a wrap-up of Neighborhood Networks Week 2009. The article highlights some center-hosted local events, as well as the national, HUD-Webcasted events that enabled center staff and residents around the nation to participate in the weeklong observance.

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DELIVERING TECHNOLOGY ACCESS TO AMERICA’S COMMUNITIES

Web-Based Resources Allow Stakeholders to Receive and Share Information

Twenty-seven years ago, “Internet” was not even a part of most people’s vocabulary. Today, the Internet is in our homes, at our jobs, and in our schools. We log on to it via our laptops, cell phones, and handheld devices in coffee houses, bookstores, and our cars. The Internet has become a vital part of our lives, and its prominence continues to grow with each passing day.

By “delivering technology access to America’s communities,” Neighborhood Networks is providing an opportunity for residents of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Federal Housing Administration (FHA)-insured and -assisted housing communities to reap the benefits of the Internet. However, the Initiative’s commitment to technology access does not end with connecting residents to the Internet. Neighborhood Networks has created Web-based resources that offer more training opportunities, and enable centers to establish a presence in the global Web community.

Training without the Travel

Today’s struggling economy has led to a growth in Web-based training. Online training sessions save companies the costs associated with hosting a conference, and participants the time and money spent traveling. Recognizing the value of Web-based training, Neighborhood Networks launched the Interactive Virtual Learning Courses (IVLCs), a series of seven, no-cost online trainings for center staff and residents, on June 15, 2009.

“The IVLCs provide an engaging and supportive learning environment,” said Neighborhood Networks Director Delores Pruden. “They deliver relevant information that improves center sustainability and increases resident self-sufficiency, and offer participants the opportunity to question and practice what they learned. Each IVLC is taught by a subject-matter expert who discusses key topics that help center staff and residents achieve their goals.”

An Interactive Learning Platform

A key feature of the IVLCs is its interactive element using Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro as the online delivery platform and learning management system. With Adobe, IVLC instructors can capture screen recordings, create interactive simulations, and track learners’ progress. IVLCs consist of audio and video presentations, quizzes and evaluations, and content designed specifically to support stakeholder needs.

Participating in the Neighborhood Networks IVLCs requires an Internet connection and Adobe Flash Player software. Adobe Flash Player is a cross-platform browser plug-in that delivers breakthrough Web experiences to over 98 percent of Internet users. Adobe Flash Player is available as a free download for Windows, Macintosh, and Linux platforms (including new support for Ubuntu 7 and 8) from <http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>. Each IVLC is presented live, recorded, and archived on the Neighborhood Networks Web site. Courses are offered weekly in 30-, 45-, or 60-minute sessions that run from two to 15 weeks. For a complete list of the IVLCs, visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org.

Web Site Creation: Building Online Communities

Two-thirds of Americans regularly use the Internet for e-mail, research, education, and entertainment. Therefore, it makes good business sense for a center to establish an online presence to reach these individuals.

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Web-Based Resources Allow Stakeholders to Receive and Share Information

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With a Web site, center staff can promote programs and services, increase awareness of the center, highlight successes, and maintain a reservoir of information. A Web site can also serve as a bridge to connect residents to local resources such as employment agencies, hospitals, colleges, universities, and banks.

Available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site (www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org), the easy-to-use Web site creation tool includes three design templates from which center staff can choose to create a Web site. Center staff can change template selection and information as often as they wish, and create as many Web pages as they like. Also, because Neighborhood Networks hosts the site on its server, centers pay no hosting fees.

A series of steps lead center staff through the Web site creation process. An easy-to-follow, step-by-step instructional guide is available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site.

The Dartmouth Square Apartments in Inkster, Michigan, used the Web site creation tool to launch its own Web site in 2008. “The Web site creation tool is an easy-to-use tool that compensated for our lack of technical knowledge,” said Sonya Manners, center director for Dartmouth Square Apartments. “For us, having a Web site is important. It is how we get the word out to residents about what we are doing here. As the Web site manager, I know it is important to keep it updated.”

Heather Hortman, center director for the Leo T. Krolak Computer and Education Center in Elmira, New York, wholeheartedly agrees. “I think the tool is great,” said Hortman. “It is extremely user friendly. At my center, it is important to keep up with technology trends. Now, residents can visit our Web site and check out our various links to find out what is going on. The Web site also keeps us all connected, and has strengthened our community. In fact, I have made our Web site the homepage on the center’s computers.”

The IVLC Curriculum for 2009

Courses for Residents

- **Career Preparation** teaches participants how to assess their skills and analyze the job market to identify opportunities. Tips on applying for jobs and building resumes, as well as interviewing and other soft skills for successful employment are provided. Weekly; two 45-minute sessions.
- **Financial Literacy** addresses common financial pitfalls, and reviews the dangers of predatory lending, debt-to-income ratios, strategies to improve creditworthiness, and the importance of saving and investing. Weekly; two one-hour sessions.

Courses for Center Staff

- **Budgeting** discusses the importance of streamlining financial plans that affect the center, residents, and property; and offers strategies that provide transparency for center budgets, address budget pitfalls, and serve as a benchmark for meeting budget goals. Weekly; three one-hour sessions.
- **Fundraising** highlights which organizations are giving to what causes and why, and helps participants develop a plan of action to guide future fundraising. Participants learn the key steps for prospecting donors, and discuss various fundraising tools. Weekly; four 30-minute sessions.
- **Grantwriting** provides an overview of grantwriting techniques, and addresses researching grant opportunities, preparing compelling narrative, and following up submissions. Participants practice writing grants and learn how to manage grants and maintain funder relationships. Weekly; four 30-minute sessions.
- **Strategic Partnership Development** teaches participants the importance of relationship building, provides techniques for leveraging resources, and helps participants develop a partnership development plan of action. Weekly; five 45-minute sessions.
- **Teach-the-Teacher** instructs participants how to design and conduct training for adult learners. The course discusses how to tailor programs to center users, and evaluate the motivations of adult learners. Participants receive tips on classroom management and learn the importance of emotional intelligence and how it relates to learning. Weekly; four 45-minute sessions.

See course schedule on the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org.

Workshops Deliver on Promise of Being 'New and Improved'

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) hosted two Neighborhood Networks Regional Technical Assistance Workshops (RTAWs) in 2009. More than 370 property owners and managers, residents, center staff, HUD staff, volunteers, and partners from around the country participated in the RTAWs that concluded July 15–17 at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The first RTAW was held April 29–May 1 at the Fairmont Hotel in Dallas, Texas.

The 'new and improved' RTAWs were the result of a major revamping designed to help Neighborhood Networks center staff and stakeholders keep pace with technology and today's changing economic climate. The three-day professional development events, each of which was preceded by a two-day grantwriting session, delivered 20 general and concurrent sessions—14 of which had never been offered at an RTAW, as well as more networking opportunities.

Demonstrating HUD's Commitment

To demonstrate HUD's support and commitment to the Neighborhood Networks Initiative, several HUD officials participated in the RTAWs. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Multifamily Housing Programs Carol Galante joined Neighborhood Networks Director Delores Pruden to kick off the Philadelphia RTAW. During her address, Galante emphasized the importance of Neighborhood Networks and how the Initiative supports and complements President Obama's technology agenda. She encouraged center staff



Carol Galante, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Multifamily Housing Programs.

and stakeholders to continue their efforts and remain enthusiastic about this life-changing Initiative.

Philadelphia HUD Deputy Regional Director Brenda Laroche also participated in the opening ceremony of the Philadelphia RTAW. Laroche commended the efforts of all Neighborhood Networks center staff and stakeholders and wished continued success in the future.

Michael Backman, HUD's Fort Worth Multifamily Hub Director, joined Pruden for the opening session of the Dallas RTAW. He challenged participants to use the resources offered at the RTAW to achieve even greater results.



Michael Backman, HUD's Fort Worth Multifamily Hub Director.

Let the Learning Begin

After each RTAW's opening session, participants spent the next three days attending learning sessions and networking with their peers. Core RTAW sessions, those that are consistently requested by participants, such as partnership development, program planning, and fundraising, complemented a variety of new sessions, such as how to start a financial literacy program, teach more effectively, negotiate for results, secure funding in tough economic times, and assess the changing job market to identify growing employment sectors. The 2009 RTAWs also offered technology-focused sessions, such as cyber fundraising and podcasting that demonstrated how centers can put the power of technology to work for them and residents.

In addition to traditional classroom sessions, the 2009 RTAWs included inspiring moments, such as the resident-presented success stories that emphasized how Neighborhood Networks changes lives, and plenty of peer-to-peer networking opportunities, such as the popular Neighborhood Networks Discussion Groups. For these groups, participants were split into five discussion groups that met each day of the RTAW to discuss ideas for taking Neighborhood Networks centers and the Initiative to the "next level." Each group presented their ideas at the closing general session, which has become a highlight of the RTAW experience for many participants. Using a variety of methods, including video clips, skits, and thoughtful remarks, participants shared their lessons learned and inspired each other to continue to achieve results.

Taking Learning on the Road

Each 2009 RTAW concluded with a site visit to a nearby Neighborhood Networks center. Dallas RTAW participants

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From left to right, Neighborhood Networks Director Delores Pruden, Lago de Plata Learning Center Director B.T. Armstrong, Property Manager Terry Chapman, and Assistant Property Manager Betty Tinnon.

visited the Lago de Plata Learning Center in Corsicana, Texas. During the site visit, participants learned how the center fills a vital need in the community by providing educational and healthcare resources for residents. Terry Chapman of the Skyline Property Management Company described the center's partnerships with community organizations and how these partnerships enable the center to offer much-needed programs and services.

Technology-Focused Sessions

The 2009 RTAWs offered a variety of technology-focused sessions, including:

Technology Trends: A Look at the Future, which discussed how online games, virtual worlds, social media (e.g., YouTube), and social networks (e.g., Facebook) can be used to engage youth in a positive and meaningful way.

Podcasts: Placing Your Messages in the Hands of Your Constituents, which explained how podcasts can help center staff distribute information to constituents.

Cyber Fundraising: Take Your Fundraising Efforts to the Next Domain, which highlighted some online fundraising tools and Web sites that centers can access to secure funding for their center.

Playing 4 Keeps: Civic Engagement through Game Design, which described how centers can create a youth game-creation program that promotes global awareness, engaged citizenship, and 21st century learning skills.

"It was an honor to host the site visit and share with our colleagues how we offer programs that are making a difference in the lives of residents," said Chapman. "The sharing of information that took place between participants was really useful and motivating. But, perhaps the best part of the visit was receiving our plaque for achieving Certified classification. We worked hard to attain this, and we look forward to becoming a Model center some day."

The Philadelphia RTAW concluded with a site visit to the Montgomery Townhouses Neighborhood Networks Center, which recently achieved Model center classification. Interstate Realty Management Vice President for Social Services Olivette Beaton and Senior Neighborhood Networks Computer Facilitator Annie Foster welcomed the visitors. As a result of the center's partnership with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA's) Imagine Mars Program, the center was transformed into a Mars community by the center staff and young residents. Attendees learned about the center's partnership with NASA and heard presentations from youth participants who explained how they created their Mars community.



From left to right, Director of Social Services for Interstate Realty Management Company Olivette Beaton, Senior Neighborhood Networks Computer Facilitator at the Montgomery Townhouses Neighborhood Networks Center Annie Foster, and Director of Social Services for Interstate Realty Management Company Mario Lozano.

The resources and information showcased in this issue of *Network News* demonstrate how technology can be used by and maximized at Neighborhood Networks centers to better serve residents and enhance center operations. For more information on these resources, visit www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org.

Neighborhood Networks Week 2009 Offers Centers Outreach and Community Unity Opportunities

From August 3–8, Neighborhood Networks centers in 41 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands hosted or participated in a total of more than 500 local and national events in observance of Neighborhood Networks Week 2009. Local events provided center staff with the ideal opportunity to pay tribute to those who help make Neighborhood Networks a successful community-based Initiative, raise public awareness about center programs, and showcase the achievements of individuals living in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Federal Housing Administration (FHA)-insured and -assisted housing communities. National events, which were hosted by centers and Webcast by HUD, reminded all participants that they were part of a national Initiative.

In Communities Across America

Hundreds of centers across the country took advantage of the outreach opportunities provided by HUD's nationally observed Neighborhood Networks Week. A couple of successful local Neighborhood Networks Week 2009 events included:

- **Community Network Learning Center** in Huntsville, Alabama, hosted five activities in observance of Neighborhood Networks Week 2009. On August 3, a volunteer/partner appreciation luncheon kicked off the center's Neighborhood Networks Week festivities. An ice cream social, open house, family dinner, and outdoor family movie were held on the remaining



A father and son enjoy a cool treat during the Community Network Learning Center's ice cream social held during Neighborhood Networks Week 2009.

weekdays. "Events provided a wonderful opportunity to call attention to the services and programs of our center; thank our participants, partners, and volunteers for their support during the past year; and show off our Model center and 'toot our horns' a little about the successes we have experienced," explained Carolyn Harris, director of the Community Network Learning Center. "The events also enabled our partner agencies to see 'up-close' what they are a part of."

- Sister centers, **Essex Village Neighborhood Networks Center** and **Midlothian Village Neighborhood Networks Center** in Richmond, Virginia, enlisted the help of the Mid-Atlantic Digital Alliance Consortium (MADA) to host a full day of activities on August 5. The Essex Village Neighborhood Networks Center kicked off the day's events with energetic performances by young dancers and motivational speeches by individuals who shared life experiences that emphasized the importance of maintaining a positive focus when surrounded by negative influences. Other speakers included Sarah Richey-Johnson, HUD program manager for Neighborhood Networks, who shared the vision of the Initiative and encouraged residents and center staff to take advantage of the Interactive Virtual Learning Courses (IVLCs) to enhance skills, and Jewel E. Hairston of Virginia State University (VSU), who offered unique fruits grown at the 400-acre research center located on VSU property. The day's events concluded at the Midlothian Village Neighborhood Networks Center, which hosted youth-focused activities and invited community organizations to distribute information on



Virginia HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinator Jerryl Bennett (fourth from right) and HUD Program Manager Sarah Richey-Johnson (second from right) pose with the planners and presenters of the Neighborhood Networks Week 2009 events held at the Essex Village Neighborhood Networks Center.

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homeownership counseling, energy-efficiency assessments, and health screenings. Well-known motivational speaker, Kevin Robertson, delivered a poignant message titled, "Focus on Your Dreams." The event concluded with center staff, residents, and partners participating in the HUD-sponsored, national Get Connected Day Webinar (see below).

National Events in Which All Centers Could Participate

To complement the center-hosted local events, HUD sponsored a series of national, Web-based events that enabled all centers to participate in Neighborhood Networks Week 2009. National events included:

- **The Parkways Neighborhood Technology Resource Center** in Chicago, Illinois, hosted the Neighborhood Networks Week 2009 national kickoff event on August 3. The event recognized the achievements of the youth who participated in the Internet Community Arts Media Partnerships (iCamp) program offered at the Parkways **Neighborhood Technology Resource Center** and the Neighborhood Technology Resource Center, and spotlighted the centers' partnership with Afterschool Matters, a nonprofit organization that strives to expand out-of-school opportunities and provide job training for teens.



From left to right, Neighborhood Technology Resource Center Executive Director Nicol Turner-Lee, HUD Program Manager Chiara Law, HUD Project Manager Sylvia Davis, HUD Senior Project Manager George Gilmore, Neighborhood Networks Director Delores Pruden, and HUD Director of Project Management Veronica Coleman at the Neighborhood Networks Week 2009 kickoff event in Chicago, Illinois.

- **The Village at Lakeview Neighborhood Networks Center** in Edgewood, Maryland, observed Do It for You Day on August 4 by hosting a graduation ceremony for residents who completed the center's workforce development program and successfully passed the General Educational Development (GED) exam and/or obtained employment as a result.
- **Neighborhood Networks** hosted a Webinar on August 5 in observance of Get Connected Day. The one-hour Webinar taught center staff and stakeholders how to use the Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool (START) Web site creation tool available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site.
- **The Town and Country Family Learning Opportunity Center** in San Diego, California, hosted the Neighborhood Networks Week 2009 closing event on August 7. The event spotlighted the center's remarkable partnership with the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) and described how UCSD student "buddies" visit the center during the afterschool hours to serve as tutors to school-aged children. A panel of contributors described how the partnership was started and how centers can form similar partnerships with their local academic institutions.



HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinator Donald Freeman (left) speaks with Michael Cole of UCSD during the national closing event for Neighborhood Networks Week 2009.

Centers and stakeholders who were unable to participate in a Webcasted national event can view an archived copy of the event by visiting www.nnw2009.com. Photos of local events can be viewed in the Online Scrapbook located on the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org.

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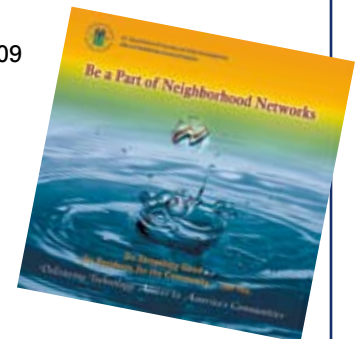
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And the Winners Are...

In May, the Neighborhood Networks informational brochure was the proud recipient of a 2009 Gold Hermes Creative Award. An international competition that honors the messengers and creators of traditional and emerging media, the Hermes Creative Awards are administered and judged by the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals (AMCP), an international organization that consists of several thousand marketing, communication, advertising, public relations, media production, Web, and free-lance professionals. This year, the AMCP received more than 3,700 entries from around the globe in the Hermes Creative Awards competition. The Neighborhood Networks brochure, *Be a Part of Neighborhood Networks: Do Something Good...for Residents, for the Community...for You*, was recognized for its quality, creativity, and resourcefulness.



Just a few days after the Neighborhood Networks brochure won a Gold Hermes Creative Award, the Neighborhood Networks exhibit won an Award of Distinction, or a silver Communicator statuette. The award is presented to communication products that exceed industry standards in quality and achievement. In 2009, the Communicator Awards received more than 9,000 entries from companies and agencies of all sizes, making it one of the largest award competitions of its kind in the world. The Communicator Awards are sanctioned and judged by the International Academy of the Visual Arts, an invitation-only body consisting of top-tier professionals from media, communications, advertising, creative, and marketing firms.



Neighborhood Networks center staff and stakeholders may request copies of Neighborhood Networks publications, including the informational brochure, fact sheets, and newsletters, for distribution at center events and in marketing/media packets. The Neighborhood Networks tabletop display is also available for loan. Contact the Neighborhood Networks Information Center at 888-312-2743 for more information. The hearing impaired may access the number via TTY by calling the Federal Information Relay Service at 800-877-8339.