YWCA OF McKeesport, Pennsylvania (YWCA)

Seema Shah, Student Consultant
Kathy Petruska, Community Partner

Part 1. The Situation

Organization

The YWCA of McKeesport has been serving the Mon Valley since 1913. During the past 85 years, their programs and services have changed to meet the ever-changing needs of the community, but through it all they have been there to empower the women and girls of their community. The YWCA offers a variety of programs and services to meet the many needs of the population of the Mon Valley at various stages of life, including the Y-Teens program and the ENCORE program for older women.

Facilities

The YWCA of McKeesport is located in downtown McKeesport Pennsylvania at 410 Ninth Ave. McKeesport, PA in its own building. The first floor of the building contains all of the offices for the five full-time employees, including the conference room that houses the computer lab. The second floor is a large hall that connects to a large kitchen, and the third floor has small rooms that are used as meeting rooms for different organizations, such as Narcotics Anonymous. Each member of the staff has her own computer and there are two computers available for the members in the computer lab.

Programs

There are several programs available for women, men, and children at the YWCA.
These include:

- The Tenth Ward Youth Enrichment Activities – This after-school center includes homework assistance, healthy snacks, arts and crafts, games, and conflict resolution activities
- Transitional Housing – The YWCA owns surrounding houses as well as eight new town houses they use to provide housing for women attempting to establish an independent lifestyle after dealing with a personal addiction or the addiction of a partner.
- ENCORE Plus – The YWCA uses this program to promote awareness, particularly to women 50 and older, of the dangers of various cancers specific to women through educational information.

Staff

There are five full-time employees at the YWCA. Kathy Petruska is the Executive Director of the YWCA; she oversees all programs. Joy is the director of the Y-Teen program, which involves the summer camp program for the children. Bernie is the director of the ENCORE program whose purpose is to educate older women on the importance of checking for cancers. Margaret is the bookkeeper for the YWCA. She keeps track of all purchases made as well as all technical paperwork. Dorothy is the assistant who keeps track of all appointments as well as tracking all phone messages.

Technical Environment

Each employee of the YWCA has her own personal computer and printer. The computer lab has two new computers as well as a printer that is shared between the two. Of the employees, only Kathy Petruska's computer has Internet access. Kathy's Internet access is through a 56K modem and uses one of the YWCA's phone lines in order to access the Internet. The new computers have the capability of sharing the external modem, which the YWCA has purchased.

Technology Management

Currently there is no staff member who is employed to handle technical problems. Kathy Petruska handles all problems that occur or calls for outside help when necessary. When there is a problem, Kathy attempts to solve it and if this does not work, she calls an outside consultant to come in and handle the problem. Kathy does have an average knowledge of computers and so far she has been able to handle all problems.

Part 2. Problems and Opportunities

Public Access to Computers

The purpose of the YWCA is to serve the needs of the women and children of the community. One of the problems facing this group was a lack of public access to computers. Because computers have become so important in today's world, it is important and useful for the members to have access to computers for either Internet access or general computer usage.

Providing a place for public access for computers for its members will help the YWCA serve its members better by providing them with a place for public access. In addition, the YWCA can implement the use of these computers in various aspects of their different programs in order to increase the use of the computers as well as further educate their members on computer usage.

The YWCA was interested in creating their own computer center for availability to all members of the YWCA and in particular the members residing in the assisted housing. I worked with Kathy to create the new computer lab which offered shared modem use of a 56K modem between the two computers as well as shared access to the color printer.

Technical Management

The YWCA did not have any form of technical management and felt it was important to keep track of problems as well as other information about the computers. All information about the computers was kept track of by Margaret the bookkeeper, and if she was not there, no one could access this information. In addition, because problems are not recorded, the history of the technical equipment cannot be given to others who come to help.

Tracking the problems encountered would help solve the problem if it occurred again. It would also ensure that attempted solutions that had not worked would not be retried. If another consultant arrived to try and solve the problem, he could be given a complete history of different problems encountered with the equipment as well as what solutions worked and which did not.

Kathy and I agreed that the best way to solve this problem would be to create a central area that the staff could access for information about past computer problems as well as for the information needed when calling technical support for problems. We created a binder that contained all pertinent information about

each of the computers in the YWCA, including all employee computers and printers. We also contained problem forms that could be used to write out each of the problems encountered.

Part 3: Outcomes and Recommendations

Outcomes

Problem
The YWCA recognized that there was a lack of public access to computers in the community. Many families who live in the community do not have a computer in their home, and a place for public access to computers has become extremely important as computers have become so integrated in our everyday lives. The YWCA acquired two new Gateway PCs to create the beginnings of a computer lab for use by its members.

Outcomes & Increased Capacity:
1) Two new computers and a Hewlett-Packard Color Deskjet printer are now networked together. The computers share an external modem for access to the Internet via a dial-up account. All Microsoft Office products have been installed on the computers so the members have access to useful software such as Word and Excel. The two computers also share access to the Hewlett-Packard Deskjet color printer. They now have the beginnings of a fully functional computer lab.

2) Kathy has handled most other computer problems up until now and because she helped create this computer network from scratch she certainly has the ability to maintain one. Most importantly, Kathy's enthusiasm about the computer lab will help keep the lab maintained.

Sustainability:
There is always the risk of loss of sustainability in this case because currently Kathy is the only member of the staff who has the knowledge to maintain this network. It is vital for the computer lab's survival that each member of the staff learns all she can about the set up of the computer lab. However, Kathy's enthusiasm is contagious. She is very excited about implementing technology further within the YWCA organization. On her own she has begun to update the YWCA's web page as well as beginning to keep track of all YWCA events using an Excel spreadsheet. She is very enthusiastic and is beginning to see the benefits of using technology to expand the capacity of the YWCA.

Problem
The YWCA does not keep track of its technical problems and obtaining technical information concerning the computers, such as serial numbers and warranty information, is kept filed away. Unless Margaret, the bookkeeper, is there to retrieve it, no one knows where to find the information concerning the computers. This becomes a problem when attempting to ask others for help because no history of the product can be given. In addition, if a problem reoccurs, there is no way to recall how it was solved.

Outcomes and Evidences of Increased Capacity:
Kathy and I created a technical information binder to serve two important functions: 1) keeping track of problems that occur and 2) referencing information necessary for requesting help. Kathy decided on dividing the binder based on the manufacturers of the products, such as 3Com or Hewlett-Packard. In each section, we entered information needed, such as phone numbers, serial numbers, and web sites.

Kathy clearly knows what information should be included in this binder. While initially I told her what documents I felt would be necessary in the binder, she gathered all of these documents and more. Often when we were working she would realize a document was important and say that we should make a copy and place it in the binder. Once again, the major issues lies in making the staff aware of these things as well. They need to not only be made aware of what documents are important but also begin to figure it out on their own. If they don't know how to fix their own problems or where to look, then this binder is pointless. The point of the binder is to save time and create an easy place for everyone to access information concerning her technology.

Sustainability
Because all software and hardware purchases go through Kathy, all important documents will somehow get a copy into the binder because she knows to do this. In addition, the technical problems also go through Kathy so she will know to fill out forms as well as looking through the case histories for the products. This binder becomes useless though if it does not remain updated with the new problems as well as the new software and hardware purchases. The whole point of this binder is to have a central place where everyone can go to find answers or at least a place to start asking their questions.

Recommendations

Recommendation
Now that the YWCA has a computer lab for use by its members, it is important that it encourages its members to use it. Part of this entails providing opportunities for the members to use it and attempting to implement technology into its programs. To do this, the staff needs to become confident and creative users of computers and think creatively about how to integrate technology into their programs. Here are some suggestions:

Add web site developed as part of the Summer Camp:
One program that could benefit from use of technology is the YWCA's Summer Camp. The Summer Camp is a daily activity in which children from the area come to the YWCA and spend the day there doing different activities. Some of these activities include going on field trips as well as other in house activities.

I suggest the YWCA add a web page for these children who participate in the Summer Camp. Because the group of children participating in the camp is rather large as well as varying in age, choosing a few children who are older would probably be the best way to start out. Depending upon the number of children, we could either have the entire group work on the web page all summer or divide the children into groups and have each group be in charge of the page each week. The web page could post the pictures of the children at their activities as well as keep a daily journal of what the kids did that day.

Effects of Recommendation
- This would be the first real use of the computer lab by the members. It would also be a very interactive part of the YWCA web page and would bring a lot of traffic from both kids and parents. This will motivate the YWCA to continue to update and maintain its web page. In addition, the Summer Camp web page could be used as a tool to help promote the Summer Camp.
- This web page could be used to help market the YWCA to potential donors. If funders could see what the YWCA did with limited funds, they would most likely continue giving.

- Part of the YWCA's mission is to create opportunities for its members. This program could teach children about web page management and really inspire in interest in technology amongst the kids.
- Because the YWCA already has a web page, it is not necessary to acquire one nor do they need a new editor because the computers already have it. In addition, because they know how to edit their web page, there is not too much more that needs to be learned.

Steps for Recommendation
- The YWCA could acquire a digital camera to take pictures of events as well as find a staff member from the Summer Camp willing to spend time with them and learn about web pages.
- In order to use this page to its full potential, the YWCA will have to become more familiar with editing web pages. We have just recently begun to become more involved with our web page again so to refresh our memory I would suggest reading more on Netscape Composer
- Because the ages of the children range from six to twelve, choose from the children who are ten and above. From there, organize the groups in whichever way is easiest. Depending upon the number of children, either have the entire group work on the web page all summer.

Resources
- http://www.techsoup.com
This page has a separate section entitled web building that could give the children some ideas about things to put on the page as well as helping the YWCA figure out new things to do with their own page.
> - Techsoup also has information about product donations so the YWCA might not even have to pay for the camera for the web page. I would also suggest going to local stores such as Best Buy to see if they would be interested in donating a camera for the camp.
- http://www.hardin.k12.ky.us/res_techn/TEC/digitalcamera/primary.htm
This web page has a description of different ways to use the camera within a classroom setting but describes things to do outdoors, which will be important for the summer time activities.
- http://www.techlearning.com/db_area/archives/WCE/archives/heese6.htm
This is another web page with descriptions of things to do. From that page, there are other links to various pages that give recommendations on activities for classroom web pages.
- http://html.miningco.com/compute/html/cs/composer/
This page provides a list of helpful tutorials in web page editing in Netscape Composer. The discuss regular text editing as well as image insertion, which will be important not only on this Summer Camp page but also for the YWCA's page. These tutorials are on an adult reading level and so would be better read by a staff member versus the students in the summer camp.

Benchmark Recommendation
One of the technology literacy benchmarks concerns technology sustainability. There is currently no technical section in the YWCA's budget. It is important for the YWCA to evaluate technology both within the office as well as their computer lab. Continuing to evaluate the role technology *could* play in both venues helps further the YWCA's mission of better serving the women and children of McKeesport. Part of this budget should be used to either hire a new employee or further train all staff members on dealing with technical issues that arise as well as further implementing technology within the organization.

Effects of Recommendation
- Budgeting for technology means that technology has become a priority for the YWCA (which it should be!).

- Hiring someone new will hopefully alleviate some of the technical problem management from Kathy. This also happens if the staff becomes more aware of dealing with technical problems on their own.

Steps for Recommendation
- The YWCA must continue to update its inventory of all computer software and hardware to keep track of what technology is being used by the members and what is not.
- The YWCA must budget for technology upgrades every two to three years.
- One of the key steps of this recommendation will be to know what tools will be useful to your members. While it might be nice to buy a Web Cam, if the members are not interested, then it is useless. To get an idea of what the members are interested in doing, ask them! Ask what they would like out of their computer lab and what more they want you guys to be able to do. They might even have good ideas of things the YWCA could use within the office.

Resources
- http://www.techsoup.com/articles.cfm?topicid=10&topic=Funding

This site has a several articles on writing proposals concerning technical funding as well as a list of several foundations interested in helping non-profit organizations further their use of technology.
- http://www.techsoup.org/articlepage.cfm?topicid=11&articleid=197

This article dictates the beginnings of starting a technology budget. It also gives approximations on financial assets needed for each of the computers in the office.
- http://www.npower.org/consulting/Budget.htm

This site contains software to help non-profits start budgeting for technology. It contains software to help in the planning of the budget as well as containing a spreadsheet to help detail your organization's support needs. In addition, the site www.npower.org is a great site for non-profits to look for information concerning technical issues. It contains links to different resources that could be of use as well as information about new technology that is useful for non-profits.

EXAMPLE

Problem Form

Name:

Date:

For the next few categories, please try to be specific.
Software / Hardware: (example: 3Com 56K LAN Modem)

Problem: (example: I cannot gain access to the Internet. The modem cannot complete the call when it is trying to log on to the Internet. I can hear the initial clicking of the modem trying to pick up the line but there is no dial tone.)

Methods to Solve: (example: I tried to reset the modem by pushing the reset button on the back of the modem. This did (not) work. I tried to restart the computer. This did (not) work.)
Please list everything you tried no matter how small it may seem.