



CITY COUNCIL REPORT

April 15, 2009

TO: John Szerlag, Interim City Manager

FROM: John M. Lamerato, Assistant City Manager/Finance and Administration
Carol K. Anderson, Parks and Recreation Director

SUBJECT: Lathrup Village Time Bank

In follow-up to comments from Councilwoman Kerwin and Councilwoman Beltramini, I have researched the time bank program in Lathrup Village. This citizen driven program was begun approximately one year ago by Kim Hodge. Kim started this as a way to get to know her neighbors. She used information from TimeBanks USA to form the organization in Lathrup Village.

TimeBanks USA is a national organization that provides information, support, and resources to help start time-banks. Time banking is based on reciprocity. In fact, the mission of TimeBanks USA is "strengthening communities through reciprocity."

From its website, I found the following information about time banking:

"At its most basic level, Time banking is simply about spending an hour doing something for somebody in your community. That hour goes into the Time Bank as a Time Dollar. Then you have a Time dollar to spend on having someone doing something for you. It's a simple idea, but it has powerful ripple effects in building community connections.

With Time Banking, you will be working with a small group of committed individuals who are joined together for a common good. It connects you to the best in people because it creates a system that connects unmet needs with untapped resources. To see what happens each week when you are part of Time Bank is deeply fulfilling, especially if you are helping to make it run."

It is the hope of TimeBanks USA that time-banks create social change by changing the way the public sector addresses deep social problems our society faces. Those involved in Time Banks USA believe that there is a loss of human potential due to juvenile delinquency, drug use, difficulties earning a living, wage, a shortage of affordable housing and health care, the isolation and loneliness of senior citizens and so many other things. Time-banks offer a way out of these problems and a set of principles for addressing social challenges.

In Lathrup Village, there is no paid staff and no budget. Kim Hodge has spent 10-20 hours/week on this project since the start. According to Ms. Hodge, most time banks that have been sustained for a long period, have paid staff and a budget.

The Lathrup Village time bank is the only community time bank in Michigan.

When speaking to Ms. Hodge, she expressed the importance of people involved in the program to be passionate and inspired about the purpose of the program and that it takes time and effort to educate the community about how the program works and its value. Further, she stated that each time bank must decide its own mission and limitations. For example, in Lathrup village, there is no city financial support, no background checks conducted and no businesses, PTOs or other organizations involved. It truly is a neighbor to neighbor operation. Other time banks have hospitals, businesses and organizations involved.

The core values of time banking are:

- We are all assets.
- Some work is beyond price.
- Helping works better as a two-way street.
- We need each other.
- Respect demands accountability.

Programs such as SHARP, home chore, Troy People Concerned, etc. address some of the same things that time banks address however, there is no reciprocity involved. Most of these programs address a need when the person is unable to have the need addressed otherwise, usually due to financial limitations.

Certainly, a time-banking program could help create a sense of community in Troy. To start a time-bank the following would be needed:

- 1) A coordinator
- 2) A mission
- 3) Recruit and establishment of a core team:
 - a) Time bank Ambassador
 - b) Events coordinator
 - c) Web Master administrator
- 4) Recruitment of members
- 5) Software for member's time-bank

Should there be interest in forming a time bank in Troy, the city may be able to provide office space and other in-kind services to community members who wish to organize a program of this sort, however staff limitations and resources may prohibit the development of such a program being undertaken by City staff.