

Time Banking plan eyed to combat slump

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Plymouth-Canton Citizens for Diversity and Inclusion has initiated an effort to combat an economic slump by pooling resources of disabled people, local businesses, at-risk youth, retirees, food pantries, religious leaders and others willing to give help to get it.

Perhaps a single mother might offer a disabled woman a ride to the doctor's office and, in return, get a broken sink repaired by a licensed plumber.

Maybe a struggling student might get after-school help with math from a laid-off banker who needs help sprucing up a job resumé.

PCCDI has announced plans to bring Time Banking — a social change movement found in 22 countries on six continents — to western Wayne County, starting in Plymouth and Canton.

It's a way people can share their talents with others and get favors or services they need. It's also an effort that Anne Marie Graham-Hudak, who chairs PCCDI's strategic planning board, said can dismantle barriers and lead to better understanding among residents regardless of culture, religion, age, race and other differences that, at times, can divide rather than unite.

“We hope to get it kicked off in January,” Graham-Hudak said. “We hope to build friendships and get people to start working with each other.”

Organizers say the goal is to build an inclusive community of residents who help each other, especially during a tough economy that has left an increasing number of people in need for help they can't afford.

“Time Banking is a simple idea that has powerful ripple effects in building community connections,” said Kim Hodge, director of the Michigan Alliance of Time Banks. “The tool speaks very well to these economically challenged times we're in and is an exchange system that is similar to ‘pay it forward.’ There are so many people who are unemployed or hurting and who need to do something to feel valued and meet people in their community. We really need to rely on each other more right now.”

Graham-Hudak said the Web-based program will allow people to go through an application process, sign up and earn a “time dollar” for every hour they spend helping others in need. Then they can cash in their earnings for help with cooking, cleaning, piano lessons, house painting and other tasks.

Already, PCCDI has been awarded a grant of more than \$10,000 from the Michigan Disability Rights Coalition to defray costs for disabled residents, Graham-Hudak said. Other participants are asked to pay \$25 a year for an individual or \$45 for a family — a cost that, while needed to pay a coordinator, amounts to much less than out-of-pocket expenses for labor and tasks.

Graham-Hudak said PCCDI plans to collaborate with the Michigan Disability Rights Coalition, Michigan Alliance of Time Banks, a University of Michigan social worker graduate class and the Starkweather Education Center — an alternative and adult education facility — for the project.

Local organizers say Lathrup Village already has a Time Bank program that won the 2009 Michigan Municipal League Community Excellence Award.

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