

Neighborly ways

Lathrup Village residents give back to community

By Jennie Miller
C & G Staff Writer

LATHRUP VILLAGE — A year after its inception, the Lathrup Village Time Bank has racked up some hours, with neighbors helping neighbors left and right.

More than 60 residents have joined the movement that was spearheaded locally by Kim Hodge and modeled after a national organization that aims to strengthen communities through reciprocity — the sharing of skills and knowledge in exchange for services from others.

“It’s a huge success,” Hodge said, looking back on the last year since she first brought the idea before the Lathrup Village City Council. “You give an hour of service, you get an hour of service. You can mow someone’s lawn, pet sit for someone, take guitar lessons from another person, drive somebody to a doctor’s appointment.”

When residents sign up to participate in the Time Bank, they identify their skill sets and ways they would be willing to help others, and then spell out the ways they need assistance in their own life.

“There are a lot of people in Lathrup Village who are more givers than receivers,” Hodge said. “People are more apt to help than to ask for help from others.”

But she’s trying to lead by example.

“I’ve had so much stuff done just to get people to use it — I had three different master gardeners, one weeded my front yard, another taught me how to prune, and another helped me plant a couple hundred bulbs in the fall. I had someone help me sync my contacts on my iPhone, and I had a wireless printer that I didn’t know how to set up. I needed to redo my resume, and we had a woman cook for us three or four times. One 10-year-old boy offered to cook a spaghetti dinner for us — it was really good.”

In turn, Hodge has participated in numerous givebacks, including group efforts such as washing the windows of a home whose owner had recently had knee surgery.

“Our neighbor had built a deck last year and had all this leftover wood that was out and needed to be put into a Dumpster,” Hodge said. “In December, we decorated a woman’s Christmas tree outdoors. In January, a neighbor had sewage problems in his basement, and there was some jack-hammering done, and there was a lot of dust. We went and washed it down. Last week we painted someone’s basement. And coming up this summer, we’ll be painting the Children’s Garden structures.”

Cort Storer is one of those residents who prefers to give.

“I’m kind of a home handyman,” Storer said. “I noted that I can fix up more than I can screw up. I fixed a toilet, and painted a basement, and they’ve got me doing some deck work. I can give, (but) I’m not of that nature — I don’t take very well. I suppose I’ll probably need some help down the road.”

Since its inception, the Time Bank has become of interest to residents of neighboring communities, and Hodge is doing all she can to help spread the word so more people will be able to get involved.

“We’ve done a video, and we’re getting a Web site created,” Hodge said. “My goal right now is to find funding to help them spread this around Michigan.”

The idea behind the group is one that certainly comes in handy now that folks are battling a nationwide recession.

“This is a time when people are more economically challenged,” Hodge said. “This is a tool that can be used really well in this time of challenges, and it’s a time when we should be thinking about, how do we support each other, and it’s a valuable lesson to learn to take a look at how we spend our money and our time and the people we surround ourselves with. This is a perfect thing for the time.

“(When people are) out of work, you need a social network still, and to feel good about yourself. Doing things for others really gives you that outlet to regain your confidence. And you’re meeting people who may end up hiring you later. People always need stuff done.”

For more information about the Lathrup Village Time Bank and how to get involved, call Hodge at (248) 424-7455 or e-mail hodgekim@sbcglobal.net.

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