



ST NEOTS TIMEBANK



As Secretary of Eynesbury Village Association (EVA) I became aware of Time banking and formed a small group of people to help set up a local Time Bank. 'Eynesbury and St Neots TimeBank' but due to its popularity and covering the surrounding areas as well : (Eynesbury, St Neots town, The Eatons, The Paxtons, The Offords, Croxton, Loves Farm and Papermill), a fast expanding area with a further 4,000 homes in the planning stage, with this in mind we renamed the TimeBank '**St Neots TimeBank**'

I started from scratch, gaining a lot of help and information from Time Bank UK and also from the Somershams Co-ordinator Emma (who has now moved away).

Within two months back in March 2012 we held our launch day on the Market Square. We listed details and handed out 50 registration forms.

Financially for Administrative expenses we needed support – this came from Luminus, the local Housing Association who has a very strong Community interest. They are continuing in full support of this project.

I worked for a few weeks recording details on Excel and Word before signing up for the Online Data Base - which has made us realise the advantages it provides: It saves time and takes a lot of the stress out of the General running.

Nearly 2 years later we have 60 active members and reaching over 600 hours of exchange work. We have teachers, IT specialists, Stress Councillor, reflexologist, professional plasterer and most general skills plus a gentleman who is the 'man that can' whatever it is! These members coming with a long list of available skills make it possible to also help other Time Banks - we have helped Cambourne Timebank on 3 occasions.

Feedback from all sources has been good and the community is waking up to the advantages. The most surprising thing to me has been that in a village full of apathy that people are offering to give help but not so willing to ask for help.

We have not yet reached numbers to compare with the larger Time Banks but I'm proud to say that voluntarily we have created a Time Bank that will go a long way towards a happier and friendly community. By voluntary, the TimeBank is to date completely voluntary including my position as co-ordinator. Raising funds has also been our responsibility. So far administration costs are covered by donations/grants from Luminus, CHS housing and Town Council and small personal donations.

The St Neots TimeBank has been recognized by local organisations such as the Cambridge rehabilitation Centre, Care network, Local GP's, the NHS, Headway, Illuminate and Adult Careers Service. Referrals have already shown the benefits we can offer:

A young man with severe vision impairment and consequently suffering extreme depression and turning towards drink was referred to TimeBank. We arranged visits and also arranged for him to attend a course with 'Illuminate' to increase his confidence. We arranged transport and invitations to local events. He is now a changed person and joins in with everyone and we have discovered his great sense of humour.



Members from Illuminate with
Georgina the Co-ordinator



We had referrals from Care Network Navigators elderly, lonely people that never see anyone and rarely speak to others. TimeBank again provided company and an exchange of telephone numbers means they will always have someone to speak to. They also have been taken to parties which they have thoroughly enjoyed.

We have a gentleman who suffers from Spine cerebellar ataxias, unable to do very much for himself and he was so lonely. We found an elderly lady that was willing to visit – they are now the best of



friends and he is finding life and his illness a lot easier to bear. We have since found that the lady too was also feeling very lonely after losing her husband – making two people that much happier. TimeBank has a ‘charity box’ account where I donate my hours as do some other members. This was how we managed to help this gentleman – his hours were covered.

We have also found that old fashioned bartering has crept into the TimeBank. After taking a lot of rubbish to the skip after clearing an over grown garden the TimeBanker was going to charge a small amount for the petrol used. However during conversation the lady mentioned her son was a trout fisherman.....and to cut a long story short my TimeBanker went home with a very large Trout!

A local sheltered housing Scheme had a problem that their residents could not sit out in the garden as their benches were in major need of some TLC. Six TimeBankers got together and renovated and re-painted 7 benches. In return the sheltered housing has offered the TimeBank their lounge for meetings.

We had a call from an elderly couple to take some furniture to the skip. It turned out to be a mattress still in its cellophane, 2 bedside cupboards with bedside lamp, plus a bedroom chair. With their permission TimeBank contacted a local organisation that provides assistance for young people between the ages of 16 and 25 to develop independent living skills. They had a couple soon to venture out on their own but they didn't have a bed – so the mattress was graciously accepted and the other items were used in the home making several people a bit happier.

In recognition of the good that TimeBank can do I have been invited to give talks, help create new TimeBanks and have represented TimeBank at the launch of Healthwatch, the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Peoples Programme, the local Voice Network Project for people with a disability and Welfare reform convention – I feel this has been a great achievement for a self-financing TimeBank.

We have now engaged the local Youth Locality Team where young students have shown a great interest in the advantages of learning skills, extra Tuition and of course voluntary work is a great help on a CV to get employment. We are also taking these benefits into the local Academy.

I believe that we have only touched the tip of the benefits with TimeBank as there are so many avenues it can travel, continuing to spread goodwill and creating happier

communities. I'm 68 years old and disabled (due to my back held together with metal) however by bringing my many years of voluntary work and experience to the table and hoping that I can continue, with the help of others, to run this TimeBank until it reaches greater heights.

The icing on the cake is being recognised by TimeBanking UK awarding St Neots TimeBank their Charter mark, at the moment only 3 in the country. To date I will be attending a meeting in London to gain the information needed to be recognised as a national trainer with TimeBanking UK for new TimeBank groups.

Georgina

Coordinator

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www.stneotstimebank.org.uk