

The Lower Columbia Time Bank Celebrates 2 Years

and success in introducing a new concept in economy to the region

By Lynn Hadley



Photo: Dinah Urell

LCTB Steering committee members ham it up: (seated from left) Jennifer Rasmussen, Teresa Barnes, Caren Black, Christopher Paddon, Sheila Beveredge, and Joseph Stevenson.

THE OCCUPY Movement brought hope and promise from, and for, individuals coming together to form encampments and community, wanting to acknowledge how the other half, (which is actually the other 99%) of the country lives. Ideas and exchanges of alternative living were ripe.

Shelia Beveridge had learned what a time bank was in *The Oregonian* a few years before, and thought it was a good idea. The night of Occupy Astoria people were discussing things that might bring hope to the Lower Columbia River community. She introduced the time bank concept, people responded, and E-mail addresses were collected. Jennifer Rasmussen, involved in a group called Bread and Liberty, was asking for volunteers to participate in things like making community compost bins, with interest in creating some kind of local currency, and the time bank seeds fell on some well-fertilized ground and minds.

The concept of time banking originated with founder Edgar Cahn in the 1980s. Time banking is meant to honor the unique talents and skills that all community members have to share, regardless of age, education, or ethnic

background, like teaching language, art, or music, helping with yard work or minor repairs, or, simply, running errands. By valuing the community as a resource for all its members with something to contribute, the time bank builds a rich infrastructure in the form of a community skills and services directory to promote exchanges that work beyond a price. Work is redefined in a direct hour-for-hour exchange.

"I never witnessed community-in-action until I moved to Astoria. There is already a strong tradition [of helping], here...the time bank arose out of a direct need from the community, and sells itself."

- Teresa Barnes, Steering Committee Member

Time banking brings people together, and performs the a unique service by turning strangers into friends. Community members come together under the time bank umbrella to assist one another with essential tasks, such as what it takes to raise healthy children, build social structure, revitalize neighborhood connections, and make the planet a more caring and sustainable place to live.

In the Fall of 2011, the Lower Columbia Time Bank came together to find a time bank program that existed,

and could be employed as a template or mentor program. Having difficulty in locating a specific person to help with the set-up, they just dove into it, when committee members discovered the Southern Oregon Time Bank (www.sotb.org) of Ashland, Oregon. This existing time bank provided a model with affordable software to establish the time banking on-line database for posting needs and skills to be exchanged.

For many of the committee members, the prospect of a better world through greater community connections, factored prominently into the interest in creating a time bank. LCTB Founding member, Teresa Barnes saw the potential to develop a community give-and-take, sharing-based opportunity to function outside of a strictly monetary system, fitting perfectly into Astoria and the outer-lying communities.

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She has made use of LCTB to repair her lawnmower, and employs member services to keep the weeds in her garden at bay.

"Knowing that you can help each other out empowers a neighborhood".

Luckily, for the Lower Columbia Region, this philosophy was appropriated by the steering committee, who worked diligently to research and to bring the Lower Columbia Time Bank (LCTB) to the Northwestern Oregon and Southwestern Washington Coasts, initially launched to the region on March 20, 2012.

Joe LaPoint, Seaside resident and member of Lower Columbia Time Bank since its initiation in 2012, explains, "I've used the time bank for the last few years, and have been pleased with

the results. A time bank is a nice way to contribute to building a community, using the skills and abilities that you already have without money. I've been pleased to be a part of it. If you believe that community might be important, this is a fun way to offer some time and get involved."

Regardless of what you offer or use, time bank is all valued on an hour-for-hour basis. As an active member in the Lower Columbia Time Bank says La Pointe, "I've made service 'withdrawals' from LCTB website member offerings, and had experiences, such as

the kayaking in Seaside; taken a comprehensive edible and medicinal plant walk from a knowledgeable person in Astoria; learned how to make the most awesome homemade yogurt (possibly the best in the known universe). As a time bank provider I've changed oil in a car (member provided motor oil and filter, and I brought my own tools), chopped wood, made a plumbing fix, and helped put together exercise equipment."

Original LCTB steering committee member, Joseph Stevenson, acknowledges the idea of a time bank as immediately appealing to most people.

"It's very much how we operate in our own social and family circles, but unless you're an outgoing, extroverted per-

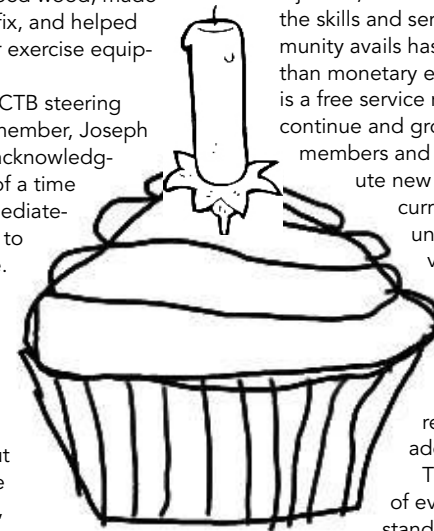
requests. So, while people may be reluctant to ask for help, they really want to be helpful."

Many of the original LCTB steering committee/founding members believe that a socioeconomic system that relies on competition, rather than cooperation to get things done, is always going to result in increased conflict, injustice, and inequality. Investing in the skills and services that one's community avails has far greater rewards than monetary exchange. The LCTB is a free service run by volunteers. To continue and grow, LCTB seeks more members and volunteers to contribute new ideas and energy. The

current membership (just under 200) whose use varies from; regularly, to enrolled, but never actually used, is encouraged to embrace this tremendous community resource, and recruit additional participants.

The first Wednesday of every month at 5pm, a standing LCTB orientation

continues at the Clatsop Community College Library. "Meet and Greet" gatherings for the members are planned to encourage members to



Lower Columbia Time Bank is Two!
Celebrate and stop by for a Cupcake.
Earn a FREE Hour, and learn about this unique community service.
Bring Your Friends too!
Sunday, March 16, 2-4pm!
At KALA, 1017 Marine Drive in Astoria

son, it can be difficult to accept help from strangers. The beauty of the time bank is that it expands our social circle, dramatically, and makes it easy to find help when we need it. The problem is that we have been conditioned not to engage with people we don't know unless it's in the context of a commercial transaction. A time bank provides a space to move through and experiment with this new way of offering and receiving help. It's almost always a good experience that paves the way for personal growth, not to mention, that we get an oil change, learn how to cook pad Thai, or get help writing a resumé, (for example). The most encouraging thing I know about LCTB is that we've always had at least twice as many offers as

get acquainted and facilitate exchange. Bring your friends. For more information, visit the Lower Columbia Time Bank Website, www.locotimebank.org, and celebrate success with the Lower Columbia Time Bank by attending the LCTB 2nd Birthday Party at KALA, March 16, 2-4pm, 1017 Marine Drive, Astoria.

****Birthday Party Info off of loco website-Columbia Time Bank is almost two years old already! We're celebrating with cupcakes at KALA on Sunday, March 16th from 2-4pm. Stop by, enjoy a cupcake, and earn a free hour! Bring your friends - it will be a great opportunity to get them involved!

Lower Columbia Time Bank Steering Committee

Teresa Barnes, LCTB Financial Officer; Jennifer Rasmussen, LCTB Secretary; Pearl Rasmussen, LCTB Membership Coordinator; Tallie Spiller, LCTB Outreach Director; Caren Black, LCTB Adviser (Titanic Lifeboat Academy); Christopher Paddon, LCTB Supporter (Titanic Lifeboat Academy Board Member); Nancy Spaan, LCTB Supporter (Titanic Lifeboat Academy); Joseph Stevenson, LCTB Supporter.