

## Local community group offers new way to beat the credit crunch

It may be the 13th, but Friday could prove to be a lucky day for members of local community group the Skills Exchange, based at the Partnership Council charity on Gregory Boulevard, Hyson Green, Nottingham.

The Skills Exchange is inviting NHS funded Change of Heart Health Trainers to speak to its members about the benefits of exercise, and what exercise facilities and classes there are available locally. The event is part of a month-long focus on exercise launched by the Skills Exchange to help its members get fitter.

The Skills Exchange is only a year old but already has 100 members, including individuals and organisations. Members 'swap skills' by volunteering to help other members and earn 'Time Credits' in return. These 'Time Credits' can then be used to buy volunteer help of their own.

### **Helen Rigby, who runs the Skills Exchange, explains:**

*"We've seen some fantastic 'skills swaps' over the last year, so now we want to encourage even more people to join the Skills Exchange. Because members can pay for help by volunteering their time, rather than with money, the Skills Exchange offers a great way for people to budget and save money, especially with the credit crunch affecting many of us."*

To help promote the Skills Exchange, the group has launched a year-long calendar of events for 2009, designed to showcase the amazing range of skills available via the Skills Exchange.

Skills available include gardening, decorating, cooking, baking, costume-making, sewing, professional childcare, sports coaching, guitar tuition, hairdressing and financial advice.

### **Helen continues:**

*"It's great having so many professionally skilled members of course, but the whole idea of the Skills Exchange is that everyone has skills to offer. For example, our members are currently helping to deliver leaflets on behalf of Noel Street Leisure Centre. In return for their time those members will earn 'Time Credits' that they can use to pay for help with odd jobs for instance, or even a treat such as a new haircut or a massage."*

As part of the group's February exercise drive, Skills Exchange member Noel Street Leisure Centre is offering members free day passes to use its gym facilities. In addition, another organisational member, the charity Age Concern, is offering Skills Exchange members the chance to get involved in guided walks around the local area and dancing classes.

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## Future Skills Exchange activities

The Skills Exchange's March focus will be on gardening. The group has several members who are gardening professionals, as well as keen amateur gardeners. These members will be on hand to give their help and advice, plus members can also hire free gardening tools from the Skills Exchange. The group will also be holding community gardening events throughout March.

In April, the Skills Exchange is running an art workshop in association with group member, the Lakeside Arts Centre. The event will be suitable for everyone, including those who haven't done anything artistic since being at school!

Future events will include cooking workshops, theatre visits and environmental events. Watch this space for more news coming soon!

**To find out more about the Skills Exchange including how you can join please contact Helen Rigby on 0115 970 8200 or email [helen@partnershipcouncil.co.uk](mailto:helen@partnershipcouncil.co.uk)**

**Alternatively, visit the Partnership Council website [www.partnershipcouncil.co.uk](http://www.partnershipcouncil.co.uk) or the Skills Exchange blog <http://skills2exchange.wordpress.com>**