

Local community project, the Skills Exchange, celebrates a year of success

Hyson Green-based community project, the Skills Exchange, is celebrating its first birthday with a party for local people at the Vine Community Centre in Hyson Green on Friday, 20th June from 6pm to 9pm.

The Skills Exchange, which was launched by local charity, the Partnership Council, a year ago, is a Time Bank project. Skills Exchange members earn 'Time Credits' instead of money, by volunteering their skills to help other local people. They can then use their 'Time Credits' to 'buy' help from other Skills Exchange members in return. Each hour spent volunteering is worth one 'Time Credit'.

There are Time Bank projects throughout the country, but the Skills Exchange differs from many of these because its members include organisations and community groups, as well as local residents. This mix of members has led to some great 'skills exchanges' or 'time swaps' over the year.

For example, Skills Exchange member, the Independent Street Carnival Troupe, performed free of charge at a recent Partnership Council event, whilst in return, the young dancers got help from other Skills Exchange members to design and make costumes.

The Skills Exchange currently has over 89 members, including 14 organisations. Members have got help with all kinds of things, from help and advice on organic gardening to free guitar lessons, dressmaking and childcare.

Helen Rigby, who heads up the Skills Exchange team at the Partnership Council, says:

"The idea of 'swapping' skills has really taken off and we've even helped people to realise long-held ambitions. For instance, one of our members, Vanessa, had wanted to learn to play the guitar for about 10 years, but things kept getting in the way. So we put her in touch with another Skills Exchange member, Angela, who was offering to give free guitar lessons."

Helen also believes that the Skills Exchange is helping to bring local people together. A recent survey of Skills Exchange members, by the Partnership Council, revealed that many members agree with her. One member, who would prefer not to be named, said:

"I have met a few new people through the Skills Exchange, which to me, is quite important as it helps me to get out and make new friends."

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Organisations who have joined the Skills Exchange include the Hyson Green Traders Association, the Vine Community Centre, Noel Street Leisure Centre, the Independent Street Carnival Troupe and the Nottingham Credit Union.

Anyone wishing to find out more about the Skills Exchange is welcome to go along to its birthday bash at The Vine Community Centre on Friday, 20th June at 6.00pm. The event will include a free barbecue as well as music and entertainment.

To find out more please contact:

**Helen Rigby at the Partnership Council on 0115 970 8200
or email helen@partnershipcouncil.co.uk**

The Skills Exchange also runs a breakfast morning for members, and those who are interested in joining, every Friday morning from 10.30-11.30 at 'The Stables', The Partnership Council, 47 Gregory Boulevard, Nottingham.

The Skills Exchange is funded by the European Regional Development Fund.