

Jo-Co Skills Exchange

By **CHUCK RANKIN**
Of the Courier Staff

Up several flights of stairs and down a short hallway in the Wing Building in downtown Grants Pass, there's a small office where you may be able to trade firewood for legal advice or guitar lessons for dental work.

But trading rarely occurs there.

And the one-room office is staffed by only two people — a secretary and a director.

It isn't new, not even to Southern Oregon, but the Jo-Co Skills Exchange has brought a registered barter service to Grants Pass for the first time.

The idea, of course, is based on the oldest form of trade between people — turnips for tools, corn for medication.

Local members admit the success of trade is the result, at least in part, of the opportunity to dodge the tax man.

Others say they have lost or are losing faith in our current economic system primarily

because of its dependence on money.

Says local dentist and Jo-Co Skills Exchange member John Rognaas: "I have little faith in our present economy. I think it will crack up one of these days.

"If you have connections," he said, such as through a barter service, "you're probably going to make it. You are going to be able to get things you can't get otherwise."

Rognaas said he doesn't expect to benefit all that handsomely from his membership in the exchange.

"So far, it's mostly wishful thinking on my part. But it's fun to do something different."

The Jo-Co Skills Exchange has several goals but perhaps its most single-minded purpose "is to avoid exchanging money," according to its 20-year-old director, Steve VanHook.

"We're not trying to to undermine capitalism," VanHook said. "We're trying

to build a system where if money becomes hard to come by, people can still get services."

"I think we are in a time now where money is hard to come by," he said.

A local attorney who holds a board of directors position with the fledgling barter service said: "We have the artificial medium called money. Why should we let this medium get between people. Let them deal directly."

The attorney, who asked not to be identified pending the adoption of guidelines for advertising by lawyers, said bartering often opens opportunity for people to obtain services they ordinarily could not afford.

"Like the guy who doesn't qualify for legal aid but can't plow \$500 down for legal work either."

In his own case, the attorney probably would accept a cord or so of firewood — something he said he has accepted in the past.

Two types of exchange are



STEVE VANHOOK

available from Jo-Co Skills: direct exchange between members and credit logged in the form of time and hourly worth at the agency's office.

For a \$5 voluntary fee, an application is reviewed and a value affixed to a member's skill. If the applicant over-

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Encourages Barter Economy

estimates his skill value, VanHook said a review board may lower it.

"So far, people have been more than fair," VanHook said. "If anything they have under-rated themselves."

VanHook admitted that low-income people are prime candidates for Jo-Co Skills although he said "we're trying to appeal to all income and skill levels."

"But it does serve low-income people. It helps get them services they can't afford."

In fact, that's one of the agency's goals: "...to perhaps get people off welfare and give them an opportunity to do things they know how to do."

Rognaas said he thought the agency could serve both young and old, including fixed income citizens and "young people who aren't established yet."

Said the attorney: "Around here, I think it's going to catch on because people have a lot of unique skills." He cited the

"retired community" as an example.

VanHook said the exchange was only an idea suggested to him by his VISTA supervisor a month ago.

Now in its third week, the 40-member skills exchange still is researching facets of the business.

VanHook, who just returned from a trip last week to Eugene and Portland to view exchange operations in those communities, said: "We've been researching problems other exchanges have had to make sure it works here."

"There are no set ways to make it work, but there are set ways to make it fail."

One "sticky" potential problem, members and directors admit, is the Internal Revenue Service.

Jo-Co Skills has obtained non-profit status from the state and has applied for federal tax exemption.

Members say, however, that the agency's individual members probably will have

to deal with the IRS more often than will the exchange.

"There is a potential to use it as unrecorded income," said the attorney-member. "Sometimes people just agree to exchange. They have had increase in real worth, but they don't report it."

The Jo-Co Skills board of director added: "We're not going to police our members, but we're not going to help them either" in avoiding taxes.

The exchange advertises confidentiality for its members' dealings. Its attorney-member said he expects possible attempts by federal officials to obtain records, but he said he has advised the office not to keep records "any longer than necessary."

Rognaas said barter services "can give the IRS men a hell of a run around. Some people hope to escape paying taxes. If they do, then it's strictly between them and the IRS."

The attorney described Jo-

Co Skills as a "walking, living bulletin board." VanHook called it "a referral."

It indeed offers myriad opportunities.

Membership includes movers, mechanics, painters, a vinyl repairman, an English teacher, an offer for "metaphysical" discussion, farm tools, parrot training, guitar lessons, even workshop space.

The more varied the skills, VanHook said, the better.

Highly paid professional members admit their benefit is two-fold: the actual trade, and the exposure.

Said Rognaas "more contacts, more business." Added the lawyer, "One reason I became an attorney is because I have zero mechanical ability."

Rognaas said he believes success of the exchange will depend most on "how it catches on."

VanHook added: "It's going to take some time to build up trust in the system."

The Sunday Oregonian, January 23, 1983

Exchange makes skill as good as money

By BETTY GALLI

Correspondent, The Oregonian

GRANTS PASS — "One person trained a guy's parrot to talk, this was in exchange for having his floor repaired," said Steve Van Hook. "And a woman exchanged an olive green reclining chair to a musician to tape a song her daughter had written."

These are examples of the trading going on daily at the Josephine County Skills Exchange, a nonprofit group organized by Van Hook in 1978. He was working as a VISTA volunteer when he decided that a place where people could exchange skills and services would be a way to give people with low income a chance to become more self-sufficient.

In a small office in downtown Grants Pass, Van Hook with his assistant, Eva Johnson, match people who have skills or services to exchange.

The matching is at times a bit frustrating. There are 2,000 index cards in the files. "Suppose someone wants to exchange a donkey for carpenter work," said Van Hook. "We have over 100 carpenters on file. We have to go through all those to see if anyone is interested in a donkey." Grants Pass City Council voted to forward a request for a computer to the

Federal Block Grant Program, but the request was turned down.

Van Hook, a young man with bright red hair and a big smile, enthusiastically tells of "people dealing with each other on different levels than a cash basis." He goes on to say that many of the people making exchanges become friends. There is a spirit of mutual cooperation which is much more effective than every man for himself.

"We are receiving more referrals from government offices as they cut back on their budgets. We get referrals from the employment office, CETA, welfare and the police department. We get people here when they've been everywhere else. And you see the change in their faces from the time they walk in so down. Then they find that something they need, and it's not a handout — they're doing it on their own."

Van Hook's friendly, easygoing manner changes quickly to that of a spunky fighter when something threatens the skills exchange.

The IRS refused twice to give the exchange tax-exempt status. He appealed the case and with

much fanfare from the media and strong community support, he won.

The IRS case has stated that the exchange was not a charitable organization, as it operated for the private benefit of its members. The decision of the court was that the exchange was charitable because it gave people a way to meet economic needs without having to apply for welfare aid.

The 2,000 people enrolled at Skills Exchange make up about 10 percent of the community. It's a resource network involving doctors, dentists, artists and other diversified people all exchanging favors with each other.

"What I want to do," said Van Hook, "is aid people any way I can to become more self-sufficient and from working with low income people. I never encountered a more effective way (through skills exchange) for them to better themselves." Van Hook also has a larger dream. When he sees the cooperation, friendliness and good will generated between strangers when they get together to help each other, he thinks, "it works so well with people, maybe it could work with nations."

MONDAY, FEB. 5, 1979

Skills Exchange Looking for Tax Exemption

By MARGARET BRADFORD
Of the Courier Staff

The Internal Revenue Service may be trying to put the kibosh on an ancient and reviving form of trade, the barter system, or so thinks Steve Van Hook, director of the Josephine County Skills Exchange.

Van Hook recently applied for tax exemption for the non-profit barter referral service he organized last October, but was turned down under a new revenue ruling passed in April of 1978.

Although three other exchange groups in Oregon have exemption status, the Jo-Co Skills Exchange was denied, according to an IRS communique, because it "is operating primarily for private benefits of its members."

Van Hook disputes this definition of the exchange and says he is re-applying for exemption. That falling, Van Hook will file an appeal, he said.

Two types of exchange are provided through the barter service: direct exchange in which individuals deal directly with one another; and credit hour, exchange, in which skills are deposited or

withdrawn to an account. "Work now, draw skills as you need them," Van Hook says.

The Exchange is non-fund-raising on membership dues and various fund-raising events. Van Hook is a VISTA worker and the only cash transactions are for telephones and advertising. All other services are through trade, including the fourth floor office space in the Wing Building on Sixth Street, Van Hook said.

But the Exchange is desperately in need of some financing, Van Hook noted, and without tax exemption

status, "We can't get any grants, CETA funding or even a bulk mailing rate."

The 20-year-old director has, of late, been studying IRS law and thinks he may have found some. "I points to a dispute." The IRS says the Skills Exchange is not exempt as a social welfare organization. However, its definition of a charitable group closely parallels Van Hook's description of the exchange.

"To receive exemption an organization must," supply relief for the poor, distressed or underprivileged." The exchange, Van Hook explains, does just that.

For example, an out of work carpenter, who's wife needed dental work, traded his skills for a dentist's. "He could have gone to the welfare office, sat in line all day and gone through that whole degrading experience," Van Hook pointed out.

Furthermore, he says, membership is not required to use the exchange, but does entitle an individual to have their goods and services on file, access to advertising and use of the credit system. "No one is excluded because they have no money," Van Hook emphasized.

The IRS also says a charitable organization must advance education and lessen the burdens of government. Van Hook's barter system includes a learning exchange—teaching others through workshops, seminars and learning fairs—as well as literary and apprentice exchanges.

As for lessening government's burdens, "taking people out of the welfare office if they're unemployed, lessening the burdens of government," Van Hook states.

4/25/79

Skills Exchange Head To Challenge Ruling

In what promises to be a precedent-setting case, a local Grants Pass man will challenge an Internal Revenue Service ruling.

Steve Van Hook, the 20-year-old director of the Josephine County Skills Exchange, says he will appeal a revenue ruling that denies tax exemption status to the non-profit barter referral service.

Citing a revenue ruling passed in April of 1978, the IRS turned Van Hook down in January when he applied for tax exemption for the exchange. Although three other barter groups in Oregon have exemption status, the IRS claims that the Jo-Co Skills Exchange, "is operating primarily for private benefits of its members," instead of being a "charitable" organization.

Charitable, as defined by state law, means an organization must lessen the burdens of government; provide relief for the poor, distress and underprivileged; advance education or science; defend human and civil rights and eliminate prejudice and discrimination.

Van Hook says the skills exchange does qualify as a charitable organization and that the IRS is punishing a legitimate barter group for the abuses of big business. He notes that several large corporations, including 60 percent of the manufacturing companies listed on the New York Stock Exchange, use barter.

"Barter can be a big business enterprise," Van Hook says. "Anything can be perverted for one man's gain. There are big companies using exchange which is what the IRS is getting upset about."

The skills exchange is a non-funded organization, surviving on membership dues and fund-raising events. In need of some additional sources of income, the exchange is not eligible for grants or Comprehensive Employment and Training Act funding without the tax exemption status.

Van Hook says the Skills Exchange complies with the definition of charitable since it gives people an opportunity, "to satisfy their needs without going to the welfare office." The exchange also provides an apprentice program where people, young and old, can share their experiences, thereby cutting through prejudices and advancing education.

A tutoring program, in which exchange members learn to knit, spin wool and perform various other trades, also fulfills the criteria of advancing education.

Van Hook says he is consulting certified public accountants and seeking legal advice prior to his appeal of

the IRS ruling. Though the skills exchange is on a "limited budget," and unable to expend much for attorney's fees, Van Hook says it will take the IRS "head on."

A non-profit civil defense firm in Eugene, Bayern, Pease and Taylor, has offered to take the case, Van Hook said. The firm has previous experience with a similar case in which a barter group was denied tax exemption status.

That agency, Van Hook said, didn't challenge the ruling but circumvented the regulations by forming an educational association and instructing people on how to form a barter agency, using its own service as a model.

Swap Approved In Principle

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The U.S. Forest Service and the State of Oregon have agreed in principle to a proposal to exchange 1,300 acres of federal land for 2,600 acres of state land, the Forest Service said Tuesday.

The largest area in the proposed deal is a 2,200-acre addition to the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area, part of the Siuslaw National Forest in Douglas County.

Regional Forester R.E. Worthington said the state added 320 acres to an earlier proposal to make the plan acceptable to the federal government. The new acreage is located along the easterly portions of Carl G. Washburne Memorial State Park and Devil's Elbow State Park on the Oregon Coast.

Other acquisitions by the Forest Service include the Lava River Caves, now a state park south of Bend, and two small tracts within the boundary of the Winema National Forest in Klamath County. The lava caves would become part of the Deschutes National Forest under the

area near the Beaver Marsh Rest Area on U.S. 97 south of Chemult, land near Collier State Park north of Chiloquin, and area near the LaPine Recreation Area in Deschutes County, and two tracts at Heceta Head on the coast in Lane County.

A Forest Service news release said the exchange would consolidate management areas and eliminate current property boundary lines and corners for both the state and federal government.

The federal agency also says the swap would result in reduced costs for surveys and would result in more efficient management of the land.

Worthington said the counties affected by the exchange would experience little change in the national forest timber sale receipts because the land to be traded contains only a small amount of marketable timber.

Daily Courier Aug 7, 1979

Barter, Exchange Taxable; Local Man to Challenge Rule

By MARGARET BRADFORD
Of the Courier Staff

Barter and exchange may result in taxable income, according to the Internal Revenue Service and a Grants Pass man will challenge that ruling.

Noting the increase nationally and locally in bartering or the exchange of goods and service, the IRS has issued a statement saying, "These non-cash transactions give rise to taxable income for both parties to the exchange, regardless of whether the exchange is made directly or through a bartering club."

The IRS says the amount of income which must be reported is determined by the fair market value of the goods or services received. "If services are rendered at a stipulated price, such price is presumed to be the fair market value."

Steve Van Hook, director of the Josephine County Skills Exchange, will challenge a related IRS ruling which denies the local barter group a tax-exempt status.

Van Hook will meet at 1 p. m. Tuesday with IRS appeals officer Glenn Kirkbride, who will review the Skills Exchange's appeal for exemption status. The IRS claims the Jo-Co Skills Exchange is operating primarily for private benefits of its members, and is not a charitable organization, as it claims.

Van Hook says the exchange does qualify as a charitable organization and the IRS is punishing a legitimate barter group for the abuses of big businesses. The Jo-Co Skills Exchange is a non-funded organization surviving on membership dues and fund-raising events.

The exchange is in need of some additional source of income, but without tax exemption status, is not eligible for grants or Comprehensive Employment and Training Act funding.

Van Hook says a lot of prominent, local individuals are supporting his appeal, many whom he says have been involved with bartering.

In preparing his appeal, Van Hook says he has been researching IRS laws and has noticed, "IRS laws that were working for the benefit of the average citizen are disappearing off the books."

He has looked up laws applying to tax exempt organization in the IRS code, "but when I went back (three months later) to re-read specific laws that I had copied down, they were gone. (IRS laws are kept in loose leaf notebooks. The research librarian told Van Hook that was because the laws are continually being revised.)

One law that "disappeared," Van Hook said, "stated that because an

organization advocates social or civic change, or presents opinion on controversial issues, it is not precluded from qualifying for tax exemption.

"I couldn't find it when I went back in again...it was gone."

Another law that vanished, he said, explained that "simply because an organization charged dues for usage didn't preclude it from tax exemption either — that was also removed from the books."

Van Hook cited a recent statement made by IRS spokesman Leon Levine, in the May 22 edition of "Esquire Fortnightly" magazine.

Speaking for the official position of the IRS, Levine replied to a question about how much underground economic activity the IRS believes is going on in the U.S.

"We're aware of what's going on, beyond that I don't know what to say. If you write a couple of ads for your next door neighbor and he gives you a case of booze, that's awfully hard for us to detect. Obviously we're not looking for more and more publicity about this subject."

However, IRS examiners have been recently instructed to inquire during an audit whether the taxpayer engaged in any bartering transactions during the year being examined.

Skills Exchange Ruled Tax Exempt

By MARGARET BRADFORD
Of the Courier Staff

The Josephine County Skills Exchange is a charitable organization and will receive tax exemption status, an Internal Revenue Service appeals officer determined Wednesday in Medford.

In a precedent-setting case, Jo-Co Skills Exchange director Steve Van Hook, launched and won an appeal against an IRS ruling which denied the non-profit barter referral service a tax exemption status.

The exemption status allows the skills exchange to apply for government grants, receive contributions which are tax deductible and be eligible for Comprehensive Employment and Training

Act employees.

The 20-year-old director filed for exemption status for the exchange last January and was turned down. Although three other barter groups in Oregon have exemption status, the IRS claimed the Jo-Co Skills Exchange was operating primarily for private benefits of its members instead of being a charitable organization.

Charitable, as defined by state law, means an organization must lessen the burdens of government, provide relief for the poor, distressed and underprivileged, advance education or science, defend human and civil rights and eliminate prejudice and discrimination.

The barter referral service matches members of the community who have skills or services to offer in exchange. It is a non-funded organization that receives its funding from membership dues and fundraising events. Van Hook, its only paid employee, is a member of Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) and receives a living allowance of \$280 a month.

Van Hook won his case before IRS appeals officer Glenn Kirkbride, who said the barter group will be granted tax exemption status based on its qualifications as a charitable organization.

"What really clinched it for us," Van Hook said, were letters of support from several other established charitable organizations in Grants Pass. "I think it's a win for Josephine County because Josephine County supported us," he said.

"We've set a precedent," Van Hook said. "Some organizations do form barter groups for tax evasion purposes," Van Hook said, "so it will depend on the structure of the group and if the organization is in fact, working for charitable purposes."

Van Hook was able to prove that although the exchange charges membership dues, its barter referral services are also available to non-members. More importantly, Van Hook said the Skills Exchange complied with the definition of charitable because it gave people an opportunity to meet economic needs, without having to resort to welfare.

"I think we overwhelmed him (Kirkbride), with our activities as far as working with the elderly and low income people," Van Hook said. The exchange also meets the educational requirements, he said, because it provides an apprentice and a tutoring program for sharing experiences of young and old people, "thereby cutting through prejudices and advancing education," he says.

"It's not very often I see an injustice that I can do anything about," Van Hook said, "especially against a formidable adversary like the IRS."

The Frustration of Innovation

By Steve Van Hook

Like a spatula scrapes one last sandwich from an empty peanut butter jar, communities—in light of government service cuts—must prepare to spread all available resources as thin and far as pragmatically possible.

Although the government continually challenges the private sector to fill the voids left by budget slashes, the question remains: are our legislative and executive branches effectively recognizing and encouraging innovative programs sprouting fresh forms of assistance for economically disadvantaged people? If the particular tribulations inflicted on the Josephine County (Jo-Co) Skills Exchange are typical, I suspect not.

Jo-Co Skills Exchange is a nonprofit community resource sharing network of more than 1,000 people. Resource listings in over 750 different areas include exchange of skills, goods, living situations, tutoring, apprenticeships, garden spaces, carpooling, produce, and other resources. The Skills Exchange provides people in cash-poor predicaments with an opportunity to self-sufficiently meet their needs through mutual exchange.

Resource sharing—though certainly transcending the limited connotations of the term—is commonly referred to as “barter.” Derived from a French root meaning “to swindle,” barter is a scare-word to concerned bureaucrats who fear that the government may not receive its due by way of tax-evasion on untraceable trading. Part of this fear is nurtured by assorted “barter clubs” of dubious intent which arrange subterranean economic exchanges amounting to millions of dollars of untaxed value every year. Though the differences between a nonprofit neighborhood network and their profit pursuing franchises seem blatant, these barter clubs, through misconceived association, have cast an undue stigma on our success at the Skills Exchange.

Government tentativeness towards barter has surfaced several times during the three years of Skills Exchange development. Our first few formative steps encountered an encumbrance: after repeated unsuccessful attempts to establish nonprofit incorporation for the Skills Exchange in our state, an inquiring attorney on our Board of Directors was told that a key official within the Corpor-

ation Commissioner’s office was somewhat apprehensive about “barter businesses.” An implied threat of investigation into that office’s criteria for incorporation finally expedited our request, but left us with a foreboding feeling of battles yet to come.

Though certification of incorporation issued us a birth certificate establishing the Skills Exchange as an entity eager to thrive, it of course did not mobilize tax-deductible contributions and foundation grants. Since we targeted our service towards low-income people, development of our program without some initial seed-subsidy seemed impossible. The Skills Exchange reaped rapid results in the community, but financially, our survival hinged on recognition of tax exemption by the Internal Revenue Service and our State Department of Revenue.

After our first application for recognition of exemption, the IRS informed us that our participants gained an economic advantage through the services of our program and, *ipso facto*, we were ineligible for tax exemption. It was encouraging to see that the IRS agreed we were of help to people; it did seem a shame, however, that we were penalized for it. Our State Department of Revenue stated that until a determination of exemption was granted us by the IRS, we would be unable to receive state nonprofit tax exempt status as well.

Our second application with the IRS for exemption recognition was rejected; each rejection stripped us of just a little more of the vital enthusiasm required for the initiation of any program. Though we struggled through our first year of operation without the green light of tax exemption and the subsequent funding opportunities (we subsisted on loans from the Skills Exchange director’s VISTA stipend, the generosity of our landlord, and the strained patience of Ma Bell), we managed to develop a healthy participation file, and to gain a good reputation for success in the community. By the time we appealed the adverse determination of the IRS, the Skills Exchange had the support of virtually every government and private nonprofit agency in the county, and abundant letters testifying to our impressive results.

The promotion of our project received a tremendous boost courtesy of the IRS—we benefited from numerous feature TV and

newspaper interviews, due to the human-interest appeal of IRS suppression. However, some irreparable damage had also been done. Aside from the considerable energy expended by our, eventually successful, IRS appeal, an unfortunate misconception was wedged in some people’s minds: If the Skills Exchange is really such a good program providing a worthwhile service, why was the IRS reluctant to let us perform? (Although some people have suggested the IRS feared us as too valuable of an example for creating social and economic alternatives.)

To counter any concerns, we have zealously maintained program integrity. Staff people are generally not allowed to participate in exchanges to avoid the appearance of position abuse or unfair advantage. Our books are always open, and we encourage questions about our finances. A full column in the weekly Skills Exchange newspaper series “Swap Talk” was even devoted to a cent-by-cent explanation of our receipts and expenditures.

Forming favorable public opinion for an unfamiliar, innovative service is like molding frozen clay, but government skepticism towards the benefits of resource sharing makes the effort even more difficult. One current obstacle is the dubious publicity the IRS is generating about its right to subpoena “barter club” records, and then audit participating members. A precedent has recently been established in a Maryland U.S. District Court providing the IRS with such a recourse. The IRS has yet to make a consistent distinction between the barter clubs’ mode of operation, and the function of nonprofit neighborhood trading networks. Until the differences are officially recognized, full community support for our sort of service is imperiled. The aura of fear the IRS has cast about barter, the doubts developed in people’s minds due to a less than enthusiastic government reception to our endeavor, and the general frustration of efforts encountered when dealing with government offices are all factors that have hindered effective organizing for us, and the efforts of similar programs across the country. A tragic effect of this government interference is that valuable services to low-income people have been hampered, or worse, never given a chance to develop.

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Van Hook's Comment, continued

A final example of our exacerbation occurred when some special funding was jeopardized by a local State Apprenticeship Board representative who questioned the legality of our use of the word "apprenticeship" in a Skills Exchange sponsored work/learn training program. We were completely within our rights—it was decided—but the decision came too late for the funding. It was encouraging to learn that government cannot yet confiscate words for exclusive use.

When one thinks of a "human service," one generally pictures the welfare offices, counseling programs, hand-out groups, "Christmas basket" service clubs. A resource sharing network is a human service in the fullest sense of the word, yet never seems to be considered as such.

The main characteristics of the services provided by resource networks as opposed to typical social services, are the following. (1) Resource networks are not exclusively for the poor. Nor can they be. To be a complete network of resources we need physicians, dentists, lawyers, veterinarians, optometrists, etc. High-cost but vital services are the first and most serious items to be severed from the lives of low-income people. (2) Since resource sharing networks provide no direct service other than "bulletin board" referrals placing needy people in positions where they can best serve themselves, operating costs are very economical. (I have had to deal with people who say, that since we operate on so little—our budget last fiscal year was under \$5,000—we can't possibly accomplish the results we claim.) (3) Our results are not subject to quantitative evaluation in the

common sense of the word. Resource sharing is an on-going process with results which elude dollar value assignment. You give a man a fish, and you can figure the intrinsic dollar value of the provided service. You teach a man to fish, and though a greater good has been accomplished, you hold no flag of fiscal forte to wave.

Resource sharing networks offer proven benefits to economically endangered communities because such networks represent the fullest utilization of available resources. Full community acceptance of sharing networks and local funding would be forthcoming, if we received genuine government recognition, approval, and support for the valuable results we have generated. Those of us involved in neighborhood-based resource sharing networks have little need for massive government subsidy. All we ask for is our own neighborhoods, a hassle-free environment in which to organize, and a semblance of appreciation.

One message of the Reagan administration is crystal clear: grassroots America must assume greater responsibility for her own *via* neighborhood volunteer groups and resource economizing. The decision has been made, the policy set, and the governing mechanics engineered. Now the question remains, does government intend to stand behind the rhetoric, or hide under it?

Steve Van Hook is Director of the Jo-Co Skills Exchange in Grants Pass, Oregon and a frequent contributor to Exchange Networks.

Resource Potpourri, continued

and provides a series of training components in progressive logical sequence. Its twenty-eight exercises will help you teach new staff and leaders how to identify issues, develop strategies, plan meetings, analyze power structures, build coalitions, coordinate fundraising events, understand board functions, and develop many other practical approaches related to neighborhood life. Exercises contain an introductory concept, learning goals, a suggested step-by-step training method, and supplemental materials, such as case studies and "how to" checklists. The book costs \$3.00 and can be ordered from: The National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs (NCUEA), 1523 "O" St. NW, Washington, DC 20005.

An excellent supplement to the NCUEA publication, *Strengthening Volunteer Initiatives is Displacement: How to Fight It*. This publication is a guidebook for dealing with abandonment, rent increases and real estate speculation, condominium conversions, government projects, arson, and a series of other causes. For a fee of \$10.00, it may be obtained from the following source: National Housing Law Project, 2150 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704.

Also now available is the book *Neighborhoods That Work: Sources for Viability in the Inner City*. This work examines the strategies used by the members of working class and low-income inner-city neighborhoods to improve their social environment. Written by Sandra Perlman Schoenberg and Patricia L. Rosenbaun, *Neighborhoods That Work* is published by the Rutgers University Press. For information on how to purchase a copy, write to: Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ.



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Jaycees Present Service Awards



CHARLES LA TOURETTE

Charles LaTourrette of the Josephine County Juvenile Department won the Distinguished Service Award, presented annually by the Grants Pass Jaycees for outstanding community service by a man aged of 21 to 36.

The award was presented by last year's winner, Jaycee President James Russell, Saturday at a banquet at Larry's La Casita.

Man of the Year honors went to Dick Boden, banker and member of the Grants Pass School Board.

The Woman of the Year is Mary Lowe, 1978 Oregon Mother of the Year finalist and key promoter of the Oregon Lung Association's Horse-a-thon.

Named Young Person of the Year, a new category this year, was Steve Van Hook of Jo-Co Skills Exchange.

The Senior Citizen of the Year title went to Jerry Acklen, member and former president of the Josephine County Diabetes Association.

Another new award, Religious Leader of the Year, went to the Rev. Harvey Oxner of Four-square Church.

Organizations honored, along with names of persons who picked up the awards, were REACT 2716, Ray Mills; United Fund, Vee Speer; Southern Oregon Resources Alliance, Anne Basker and Jack Boling; and Kiwanis Children's Dental Clinic, Dave Cannard.

Keynoting the banquet was Jack McMahan, manager of the Grants Pass and Josephine County Chamber of Commerce. He praised the service of the Jaycees, and urged residents to get involved in decisions about orderly growth in the area.

"Grants Pass must grow," he said, "or it will stagnate and eventually die."



DICK BODEN



STEVE VAN HOOK



HARVEY OXNER



MARY LOWE



JERRY ACKLEN



People in Barter

Four years ago, Steve Van Hook came to Grants Pass, Oregon, as a VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) volunteer. Little did he know he was about to put this sleepy southwest Oregon town on the map.

As a career, Van Hook had committed himself to bettering the lives of low-income individuals, especially the elderly. Frustrated with the inadequacy and inefficiency of existing government social aid programs, he felt the only way to effectively accomplish his goal would be to bring control of social welfare back to the people it was designed to help.

In August 1978 he founded the Jo-Co (Josephine County) Skills Exchange. The independent nonprofit organization is a barter referral service which matches people who have skills or services to exchange. It enables the cash poor, but talent rich, to better their lives and increase their self sufficiency.

"We call it resource sharing or resource pooling," says Van Hook. "It's actually more than simple barter. Our people exchange goods, skills, knowledge, energy, interests, and friendships." Jo-Co's list of services has several hundred items on it and includes everything from accounting to Xerox copies.

Participation in the program has grown to a staggering two thousand people, roughly ten percent of the community.

Jo-Co Fights the IRS

Renown came when Jo-Co applied for tax exempt status with the IRS. This was done to make them eligible for grants and to receive tax deductible contributions, two things which were considered critical for the survival of the organization. The IRS refused twice, and Van Hook appealed

in a case which brought statewide TV and newspaper attention. The citizens of Josephine County rose up in defense of Jo-Co. Letters of support poured in from individuals as well as other charitable organizations. In a precedent-setting case, after being told by lawyers and IRS officials that he didn't stand a chance, Van Hook won the appeal.

The IRS had argued that the exchange was operated for the private benefit of its members and, therefore, was not charitable. Van Hook countered that they complied with the definition of charitable because the exchange gave people the opportunity to meet economic needs without having to resort to welfare. "As a VISTA worker this was exactly the kind of thing I was supposed to be doing," claims Van Hook. "The government was fighting me to stop doing the very thing they were paying me to do!"

Cost-Effective Service

Van Hook is now a full-time employee of Jo-Co. Commenting on the success of his program, he claims their greatest achievement is their ability to deliver cost-effective service to the community. "For every one dollar spent at Jo-Co, approximately twenty-five dollars of service is delivered back to local residents," he boasts.

The Jo-Co Skills Exchange is prospering today and would like to help other communities start similar programs. For information on forming a nonprofit barter group, send \$1.00 and a SASE to P.O. Box 1673, Grants Pass, OR 97526.

Each month The Traders' Journal will spotlight interesting individuals who have made trading a way of life. Readers' suggestions are encouraged. If you or someone you recommend is featured, each will receive a free two-year subscription.

Skills Exchange Helps People Help Themselves

Steve Van Hook doesn't believe in handouts. "We help people help themselves," says the 24-year-old director of Jo-Co Skills Exchange, an independent, non-profit network that serves as a clearing house for bartering goods and skills.

The skills exchange serves as a clearing house for trades: A carpenter gets his son's tooth filled in exchange for fixing the dentist's fence — a tapestry is swapped for a water heater, or a cow for a car.

A student does some yard work for a retiree in exchange for training in professional or academic skills. A gardener trades some excess corn for carrots he didn't grow. Handyman work, babysitting, or maybe just companionship, are provided in exchange for room and board or trailer space.

Local carpooling or long-distance travel expenses are shared, or a gardener raises crops on the shares on a spare garden spot.

These are just a few examples from the more than 750 available categories — from accounting to yoga lessons — listed at the skills exchange.

Usually a few phone calls are all that are needed to make the match-ups.



STEVE VAN HOOK

Van Hook says money is not the solution to community problems, and that much can be gained through "enlightened self-interest" without spending a penny.

"I have yet to meet somebody who can't offer something. I have yet to meet a worthless person," says Van Hook.

He thinks giving needy people food and lodging with no strings attached "strips them of self-worth, makes them dependent, and creates a welfare mentality."

"People walk around trying to plug umbilical cords into

People Who make a difference...

by Ruth Acklen



somebody," says Van Hook. "You need to point the direction. If they're going to walk, fine."

"That's the toughest part of my job. I see people who are really suffering and hurting, but they haven't taken the step to do something about it."

"By the time they come to our office, they have been to welfare, CETA, Information and Referral and the employment office — their self-esteem is low."

"After they have been stripped of any dignity, they're referred to us, and they find out that they have something to offer."

Van Hook says his function is "to put people in a position to help themselves and then back off."

"If they aren't willing to put forth the effort to improve their lot," Jo-Co Skills Exchange can't help them, says Van Hook.

A high school dropout in California at 16, Van Hook financed purchase of a houseboat with damages from a traffic accident in which he was involved. He narrowly escaped a marriage for which he says he was "far too young."

Still unmarried, he has lived here about seven years. Even though he left school so early, he says he's "not quite an illiterate," having studied at Santa Barbara City and Rogue Community colleges.

The idea for Jo-Co Skills Exchange came from his supervisor when he was a VISTA worker. He says he feels "very fortunate" to be in a position to get people together for their mutual benefit. "To be able to work in a job like that is a blessing," says Van Hook.

"These things (skills exchanges) are popping up everywhere. I've helped dozens of people in 14 states get started," he says. "Media coverage has been tremen-

dous. I did a talk show on NBC in Washington, D.C., and people were so excited about it (skills exchange). It's nice that people are beginning to appreciate this — it's the community service of the future."

On file at Jo-Co Skills Exchange are the names of more than 2,000 people who have contacted the service during its four years of existence.

"That's more than 10 percent of the entire community," Van Hook notes.

To get your name added to the list, telephone 478-0375, write Jo-Co Skills Exchange at 124 SW H St., or call at the office in person.

Since there's no follow-up, no firm figures are available about the success of the match-ups, but Van Hook hears from enough satisfied clients to be assured that the program is working, and that's his reward.

"People deal with each other," Van Hook says. "We look at ourselves as a bulletin board, but remain removed from the exchange process."

Van Hook says the skills exchange "operates on a very small budget — about \$5,500 a year — and generates \$25 worth of benefit for every dollar spent."

The exchange asks, but does not demand, a five percent

provide."

He credits much of the success of the program to the work of "faithful RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) Nellie Files," who does just what her name indicates.

"If we were to pay her for

what she does, she'd easily earn our full year's budget," says Van Hook.

"You really should be writing about her," the skills exchange director said. "She's someone who really makes a difference."

northwest

Skills Exchange breaks barriers

By ELAIN WISSE
Journal Special Writer

GRANTS PASS — Western State University's Skills Exchange is a fine example of community resources in a field as much as in an education. It has become a success story.

The more the 23-year-old Van Hook tells about barrier projects and how they work, the more it becomes clear that the Skills Exchange is a key to an alternate economy. "Full utilization of community resources has become more than a good idea. It has become a necessity," he said.

He said that other service organizations often refer clients to the Skills Exchange to try to solve problems that do not fit under their own frequent requests for services, but Van Hook said that station students tend not to be receptive to barrier in these cases.

"Though we are used to people trying to solve their own problems," he said. "The way that the Skills Exchange works well is in providing trades where the need is there. This, Van Hook writes the offer in his files and checks for an appropriate match. He can list the offer in his column, 'Swap Trade,' in a local paper potential resources and facilitate the exchange.

The Skills Exchange asks for a donation of approximately 3 percent of the value of the trade. Payment is voluntary, but participants realize that the exchange could not survive without support.

It was in 1973 when a decision was made to organize the Skills Exchange in Grants Pass. That year, in immediate recognition of the industry, the year by the Grants Pass forces.



SKILLS BROKER — Steve Van Hook tries close to the telephone to negotiate trades such as a bicycle for repairs on a roof. For tax purposes, Skills Exchange is regarded as a charitable organization.

The Skills Exchange Office operates on a barter system. In 1981, income and expenses were approximately \$100,000. A worker on a living allowance of \$280 per month. Recently, he said, he takes over a living allowance of \$100 a month. He said that the Skills Exchange is not overly concerned with % business. It concentrates on services for low-income people. Van Hook directly arranges 100 to 200 trades per month and averages 45 new participations per month.

Van Hook receives that widespread community support. He said that he has 100 groups that have formed all over the country. In the last 10 years, he pointed out, still, he said, he has seen a lot of people who have been helped by the exchange. It's an idea that is spreading.

They start building a membership and a list of people who are interested. It is a list that is growing. In 1978, there were all sorts of responses

A board of Directors composed of representatives of various occupational groups, and contract problems. Their most nearly crippling problem came up in 1979 when the Internal Revenue Service raised the limit on the exemption in August 1979. It was necessary to show that the exchange was a "charitable" organization.

Without the tax exemption, the Exchange would have been unable to pay the small grants to member foundations in Medford pay rent and phone bills and the Tucker Foundation in Portland provided \$2,000 in 1981. Van Hook said he is sure the office will live this season, or at soon as the Exchange has handling available.

The Skills Exchange answers phone calls between 8:30 and 5:00 p.m. (Van Hook himself, "keeps his own hours," and others either up or down the night on Fridays and Saturdays. One of his after-hours participants is writing descriptive articles for exchange service providers of the Skills Exchange. The share-cropper program matches available garden plots with people willing to cultivate them and general. "That could have been worthwhile field is going to mean a full freeway for us all winter," wrote one satisfied participant in the 1978 year.

Van Hook describes himself as a "barter as organizer, than a mediator." He said that he has a number of people who are interested in the exchange for a wide variety of reasons. Some are interested in the exchange for a wide variety of reasons.

Van Hook describes himself as a "barter as organizer, than a mediator." He said that he has a number of people who are interested in the exchange for a wide variety of reasons. Some are interested in the exchange for a wide variety of reasons.

Shaky start mars spring spraying

By DAVE BURNS

ASTORIA — The Oregon Department of Forestry's annual spring spraying got off to a shaky start in Clatsop County. At one site a delay of 3 miles from a house which was water from a nearby stream. The residents were warned of the possibility of stream contamination. At another site the herbicide application was delayed because of a problem with the application equipment. The spraying was delayed because of a problem with the application equipment.

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Wonder (newspaper) woman sets sights on Iowa

The Chronicle on the Willamette and has changed the job of the reporter and

Eugene pledges cash for Olympic Congress

By DENNIS McCLARTY
Journal Staff Writer

A group of Eugene businessmen and civic leaders has pledged \$600,000 to the Eugene Olympic Congress. The Eugene Olympic Congress is expected to bring more than 4,000 tourists and up to \$8 million in business to Oregon and Portland. The Eugene Olympic Congress is expected to bring more than 4,000 tourists and up to \$8 million in business to Oregon and Portland.

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FARMING won't be easy for Sue and Jim Hallenbeck, who live near Merlin and have a quarter-acre parcel ready to plant. They are

among participants in the Skills Exchange sharecropping program who will trade space for labor. —Courier photo by Margaret Bradford.

Exchange Puts Idle Land to Use

By MARGARET BRADFORD
Of the Courier Staff

The Josephine County Skills Exchange is conducting a garden exchange, matching people who have garden plots with people who would like to "sharecrop."

"We have about a dozen places offered all over Josephine County and in Rogue River," said Steve Van Hook, director of the exchange. The plots vary from a small backyard garden to a five-acre parcel offered for someone interested in growing a field crop.

Sometimes the landowner offers to supply fertilizer, seed, mulch, and irrigation, rototillers and other gar-

dening implements, Van Hook said. The gardner or "sharecropper" supplies the labor. At harvest time, the two parties split the produce in what they agree to be a fair fashion.

"It is especially beneficial for people who have a garden space but don't have the time or energy to get out and plant, like seniors or married couples who both work," Van Hook said. The program also may be beneficial for people who live in apartments and mobile homes that don't have a garden space attached.

Recalling the World War II victory garden motto, "Eat what you can, and what your can't, can," Van Hook ad-

vocates preserving food from the plots.

Sue and Jim Hallenbeck, a Grants Pass couple whose live near Merlin, have a quarter-acre parcel ready to plant. Through the Skills Exchange,

they traded a car-top carrier for some tractor work.

The Hallenbecks will provide water, some garden tools and a small rototiller. They would like to see a garden or field crop planted on the property.

DAILY COURIER, Grants Pass, Oregon

THURSDAY, FEB. 26, 1981

Letters

Courier

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 16, 1981

Local Professionals Are in Exchange

Dear Editor,

In a recent letter to the editor of this paper, a "barter club" promoter rebuffed local merchants for their "unprogressive" attitude towards barter. Because of this, he notes, some Grants Pass residents are taking their business to Medford where "barter clubs" have received a warmer reception.

My experience as director of the Skills Exchange, a non-profit resource sharing network, has given me an entirely different perspective view of Grants Pass merchants. Among the 1,000-plus

people packing the Skills Exchange files, over 300 businesses and professionals are listed as participants in our program; including dentists, accountants, lawyers, craftsmen, contractors, Realtors and retailers. These traders have realized the benefits of barter to themselves and to our community suffering from a cash flow cutback.

In fact, Josephine County on the whole is gaining national recognition for its progressiveness and enlightenment towards the rewards for resource sharing. The Skills Exchange has been nationally acclaimed for program innovation.

A cooperative "Toy Lending Library" conceived in Grants

Pass is sparking far-reaching interest in other communities; cooperating growers have contributed to one another's agricultural success; a non-profit barter program in the Illinois Valley is gaining much support, and many groups and programs in our area are arranging exchanges of skills and commodities among their own participants.

Even our local governments and school districts are joining the trend by sharing resources and pooling purchasing power. The spirit of cooperation is flourishing here in our community, and other attentive communities across the country are echoing our accomplishments.

I believe the reason for lack of response to "barter clubs" in Grants Pass (there are currently three franchise outfits fighting for a foothold in our town) is that our merchants have realized the dubious nature of these clubs. ("Barter club" is actually a misnomer since these clubs do not deal in barter, but synthetic monetary systems based on the issuance of credits and chits of questionable unregulated value.) If Jackson County residents have been more receptive to these clubs, perhaps they should learn from their wiser counterparts here in Josephine.

STEVE VAN HOOK
Director
Jo-Co Skills Exchange

Review—Jan. 18, 1982—Page 9

SWAP TALK: Steve Van Hook

A little goes a long way

HERE IT COMES, THERE IT GOES: One of the most often asked questions of the Skills Exchange operation is where our money comes from.

First of all let me stress, we do not receive any government money.

None.

Granted, it is very difficult to run a non-profit program targeted at the limited-income sector and expect to make it go without government money; but the Skills Exchange—like other non-governmental local and national service groups—has managed thus far.

We were supported this past fiscal year on a budget of less than \$5000. Excluding the very valuable time provided by supportive volunteers and our faithful RSVP worker, Nelle Files, our budget is a mere fraction of those supporting similar programs providing a comparable service. This is something we are very proud of. The philosophy of the Skills Exchange is that all resources should be utilized to their fullest potential. We practice what we preach.

While developing our system of self-support, we have been subsidized by private foundations (the Carpenter Foundation and Tucker Trust) for a total

amount last year of \$3775. Donations and our 5% service charge on completed exchanges amounted to \$706.51 (thanks to increased participation and the generosity of Skills Exchange supporters, our donation receipts the first quarter of this fiscal year have more than doubled any previous quarter during our three years of operation).

Money received from fundraisers and other sources brought in \$490.61, allowing us a total fund of \$4972.12 to provide our service with last year.

Expenses, totaling \$4972.15 (and leaving us 3 cents in the hole as we started this fiscal year), were as follows: \$222.60 for postage; \$288.19 for printing; \$1050 spent on rent; \$764.47 for Ma Bell; office supplies required \$498.75; miscellaneous costs of travel, advertising, etc., amounted to \$350.16; and \$1797.98 was paid to myself for providing services as the Skills Exchange executive director.

EASY: Trade what you have, what you know, or what you do for what you need by participating in the different Skills Exchange programs. Call 479-0375 for further information; or write P.O. Box 1673, Grants Pass; or visit our office, 124 S.W. H Street. ■

Grants Pass
Daily **Courier**

TUESDAY, SEPT. 9, 1980

Letters



Work for Quality, Nor Quantity

Dear Sir,

A recent Courier article reported the findings of a three-year governmental study entitled, "Global 2000 Report to the President."

The study, headed by the President's Council on Environmental Quality and the State Department, forewarns of mass poverty; malnutrition; overcrowding; food shortages; steady loss of croplands, forest, plant and animal species, and the further deterioration of the planet's water and atmosphere resources. The report concludes that civilization has perhaps 20 years to counteract such a worldwide disaster, and, if anything, that this is too optimistic of an estimate.

Clearly, we are doing something wrong.

Present day approaches to social development are not leading us up a road of enlightenment, but down a path of destruction. If one is to look over the horizon, one will see that certain miscon-

ceptions widely accepted are not only false, but deadly.

One popular miscarriage of truth is the familiar illusion of a pool of water stagnating without growth. We all know that without flow and change water will spoil, but if the inflow should exceed the limits nature intended, well, how long can you tread water?

A balloon will only hold so much weight before it will pressurize and pop. Growth must inevitably stop, the only question is when.

Will we suffer insufficient energy production (witness current woes)? Will hungry hordes grow even thinner without satisfactory food supplies (the numbers of starving around the world are increasing and the situation in poorer countries is bound to worsen as grain is transferred to distilleries to power autos)?

Will reserves of clean water dry up? Nature has many ways of limiting the excessive proliferation of any species, and man is no exception.

So, in light of the obviously over-extended civilization we've become, why is there still the idea that a solution

will stem from an insatiable desire for more growth?

Logic shows that as one gains, another must lose. For one country to expand, another must lose its independence.

For those who cling to the top, the base must grow stronger to push the top even higher.

Alas, what keeps us from realizing that a base can only support so much before everything crumbles? Is it the unspoken hope that we, ourselves, might someday reach that top in our struggle for greater gleaming glory?

New frontiers are far and few between. Limitless growth and greed are now antiquated relics we are no longer at liberty to relish. This is the heritage of the new generation.

Throughout all time, the human race has had the purpose (the need for "purpose" is a common denominator in all generations) of expansion. A new purpose must be found when growth (an

inevitability) is no longer possible. Instead of quantity, quality should become the new aim in life.

If we want world peace, we needn't subdue the masses, only feed them (and that only takes giving them the means to feed themselves). A curtailed war budget within all borders would supply the resources for much more than food for hungry bodies: it would give nourishment to thoughtful minds.

STEVE VAN HOOK
P. O. Box 1673

Ousted Barterer Says He

By KRIS BANVARD
Of the Courier Staff

An opponent of a parking lot proposed for downtown Grants Pass told the city council Wednesday that he was evicted for standing up for his rights.

Steve Van Hook, director of Jo-Co Skills Exchange, in the Wing building at Sixth and G Streets, says his landlord asked him to remove his business after he collected letters opposing the G-Street parking lot.

Van Hook's landlord, however, says he was kicked out for not paying rent.

Skills Exchange is an organization formed for people who may want to swap skills instead of pay for them. Van Hook is subsidized by the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), a federal agency.



STEVE VAN HOOK

Van Hook submitted 22 letters to the council from

downtown businesses that would have to pay for the lot. The council is to take final action Oct. 3 on whether to have the lot built on the site of the historic Grants Pass Hotel, which would have to be torn down.

The hotel is located on the south side of G Street between Sixth and Seventh Streets.

Van Hook's landlords, Henry and Barbara Stach, asked him to move out of the Wing Building "immediately," he said. Stach favors the parking lot.

Van Hook, 21, said he doesn't hold his eviction against the Stachs and that they probably felt forced to do it by other parking lot proponents.

Henry Stach, however, said that Van Hook was evicted

because "he hasn't paid his rent for about seven months." Instead of paying money for rent, Van Hook had a "barter agreement" to provide maintenance and other services to the Stachs. Stach said he has been trying to barter but that Van Hook is months behind on his end of the deal.

Stach said he resents Van Hook "trying to stir up a hornet's nest" of opposition to the parking lot. But the

THURSDAY, SEPT. 20, 1979

DAILY COURIER, Grants Pass, Oregon — B

'Stood Up for Rights'

eviction wasn't a result of the parking lot issue, he said.

Several other downtown merchants have said the 30-space parking lot is needed. The council continued the process of creating a local improvement district when it determined that a minority of the 69 businesses affected were opposed.

Van Hook said there would probably be more letters

coming.

Several merchants who are strongly opposed "didn't write because of fears," he said. "There are a few people with money interested in this parking lot and I see their support and power," Van Hook said.

Some of the businesses writing said the lot wouldn't attract enough business to justify the expense to them, he said. "Most simply don't want

to see the hotel torn down," Van Hook said.

He quoted one letter calling the parking lot idea "destruction of the past to satisfy the greedy."

Parking lot opponents have argued the the hotel is structurally sound and could be saved and converted to shops and office space. A real-estate salesman said he had an interested customer.

The hotel is owned by Jack

Brownell, of Brownell's Electric, who spoke in favor of the lot Sept. 5.

Downtown merchants would pay \$200,000 of the lot's \$240,000 cost, with the city chipping in the rest. The cost would be paid back over a period of years in annual installments according to business size.

Opponents have said the \$8,000 cost for each parking space is too expensive.

The council is scheduled to act Oct. 3 on whether to create a local improvement district to build the lot, and could reverse its earlier vote.

5/84

New Skills Exchange Manager Takes Over

Sherri O'Hare has replaced Steve Van Hook as program manager of the Josephine County Skills Exchange.

O'Hare worked with Van Hook for a few months before taking the new position May 1. She will get people together who wish to exchange goods or services, write grants, maintain bulletin boards in the area and put out a newsletter.

People who wish to make trades call or contact the office with information on what they want done and what they will offer in return. O'Hare matches the people up and gets them in contact.

The skills exchange is supported by grants from The Carpenter Foundation in Medford and the Tucker and Templeton foundations in Portland. Those who participate in an exchange also are asked to contribute five percent each of what they estimate the trade was worth.

For an exchange worth \$100, each participant would pay \$5 to the exchange, O'Hare said.

She has changed office hours to 12-4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and

11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. Old hours were 12-4 p.m. Monday through Friday. The phone number is 479-0375 and the office is located at 126 SW H St., Suite 2.

Van Hook was manager of the exchange for nearly six years. He resigned to begin studies of journalism and Russian at the University of Oregon, O'Hare said.

O'Hare, 30, was raised in Grants Pass and graduated from Grants Pass High School in 1971.

She has a bachelor's degree in zoology from Oregon State University, and has fished in Alaska and taught math and science for the Peace Corps in Africa.