

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS....

it's about Time



A Plumas County Time Banking Village

A Service of



PLUMAS RURAL SERVICES

Serving People, Strengthening Families, Building Communities

www.plumasruralservices.org

586 Jackson Street, Quincy, CA 95971 530-283-3611 ext. *818

BUSINESS PLAN

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	Page 3
An Overview of Plumas County	Page 3
Plumas Rural Services	Page 4
Exploring Possibilities	Page 5
Why a Time Bank	Page 6
Program Development Phase	Page 6
A Program is Launched	Page 7
The First Year – an Overview	Page 7
Collaborating with Program Sponsors	Page 8
Service Development Years 2-4	Page 9
5 Year Growth and Accomplishments	Page 10
Types of Services	Page 11
How Services are Exchanged... ..	Page 12
Future Funding	Page 13
Long Term Goals & Objectives	Page 14
5 Year Fund Development Plan	Page 15
Other Alternatives	Page 16

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mission Statement

The mission of Community Connections is to connect people, strengthen families, and build communities through the exchange of services.

Vision

Every person in Plumas County, regardless of their age, race, income level, or educational background, will have the opportunity to create the kind of community culture where people are acknowledged for their skills and talents and can contribute to the service to others. In return, they will have access to an unlimited array of support, educational opportunities, and resources to meet their personal needs and interests. Each person doing what they can, when they can, will improve the quality of life for one and all.

Everybody Matters: The real wealth of our community is its people. Everyone has unique skills and talents that are valuable and has something to offer. Each talent and skill is appreciated and equally valued.

Giving is Receiving: Everyone has an opportunity to serve and in turn can accept service from others. 'You need me' becomes 'we need each other'.

Volunteers Make Communities Work: Sharing the responsibility of raising healthy children, strengthening families, supporting vital businesses and service organizations, and caring for our elders creates a connected community.

People Need People: We are all unique, but equal. Sometimes the greatest gift we can give others is to allow them to serve and to feel needed and appreciated.

AN OVERVIEW OF PLUMAS COUNTY

Plumas County is located in the northeastern portion of California nestled between the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountain Ranges. The 2,553 square miles include the incorporated city of Portola in the east, Quincy in the center, Chester/Lake Almanor to the west and approximately 75 small towns and populated communities scattered throughout heavily-treed National Forest Service area in between.

The population of the entire county is just under 19,000 people, with the majority (5,000) living in or near the county seat of Quincy. Approximately 24% of the residents are seniors age 65 or over, nearly twice the average for the state of California. The median income is \$45,358 with 13.9% living below the poverty line. With only 7.8 people per square mile, many homes are isolated and located miles from shopping, medical care, and services.

Plumas County is not racially or ethnically diverse. Roughly 87.5% of the total population is white, 3.2% are Native American, 8.3% are Hispanic, and less than 1% are African American. Just over 70% of all residents own their own homes, which is higher than the 56% for the state of California. Many

senior residents are considered 'snow birds' and only live in Plumas County during the mild summer and fall months.

The community of Quincy is located at approximately 3,400 feet, and Chester and Portola sit at 4500 and 4800 feet respectively. Many tourism and forest service jobs are seasonal and travel during the months of November – May can be dangerous due to snow and ice, making already isolated residents even more so.

The service infrastructure of Plumas County has suffered over the past 10 years and several communities are at risk of losing such basic needs as health clinics, hospitals, and schools due to reductions in funding. Since the majority of county services are based in Quincy, many residents have difficulty accessing those services or find it necessary to drive several hours in order to access services in larger neighboring counties.

Plumas County residents choose to live in this rural, mountain area for a variety of reasons – though most will say it is the beauty and the people that make them stay. The winters can be long and the services lacking, but most people are innovative, self-reliant types who collaborate with neighbors and friends to help with the most physically demanding and challenging aspects of day-to-day living.

PLUMAS RURAL SERVICES

Community Connections is a service of Plumas Rural Services (PRS). PRS is a community based, non-profit organization providing diverse services and opportunities for the well-being of local residents and families to improve their quality of life and self-sufficiency by promoting health, education, prevention and treatment.

Since 1980, PRS has offered services, education, and support to achieve their mission. Their advocates and services reach out to everyone in the county to ensure that residents, families, and communities have the local resources, services, and opportunities necessary to be independent, healthy, and self-sufficient. This includes accessibility to good food, shelter, employment, social networks, and health services. Their diverse service programs include:

ALIVE (Adults for Learning and growing, Integration in the community, Vocations of choice, Enthusiasm for life) - A day program, independent living skills, and supported employment for adults with disabilities

CHAT (Child Abuse Treatment) – Therapeutic advocacy for child victims of abuse, trauma, or neglect

Child Care Payment Program – Financial assistance for qualifying families

Child Care Resource & Referral - Free referrals to licensed child care providers and support, recruitment, and training for providers

Community Connections – A Plumas County time bank promoting the exchange of services

Community Food Network - Works to promote regional food security and the ag system

Domestic Violence Services - Includes advocacy, counseling, and a safe shelter for victims

Family Child Care Home Education Network – Developmental screenings and educational enrichment for children 0-5 who are enrolled in the Child Care Payment Program

Family Empowerment Center - Provides information, training, support, and advocacy to parents and guardians of children and young adults with any disability

In-Home Respite - Relief for family members caring for those with disabilities or dependency

Mohawk Community Resource Center – Community space, activities, resources

Nurturing Parenting – 8-week parenting class offered in each community of Plumas County

Plumas Transit - A Plumas County-wide bus transit service

Respond to Youth - Counseling and advocacy for victims age 13-24 who have experienced dating violence, sexual assault, domestic violence, or stalking

WIC (Women, Infants & Children) - Vouchers for supplemental foods, nutrition education, and breast feeding support for low/moderate income families

EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES

The first Client Services Development Team meeting was February 16, 2006. Five PRS staff members and their Executive Director, Michele Piller met to explore the possibility of creating a new kind of service that was unique to the specific needs in a rural mountain community and one that would address the existing gaps in services with resources that were readily available.

They developed the following criteria for evaluating potential service models:

- Solution-focused and strengths-based rather than needs-driven
- Address issues specific to rural communities
- Serve every community member – all ages, races, income levels
- Utilize and build on the individual strengths, knowledge, and skills of the people being served
- Create a link between those receiving services and the greater community, including service organizations, businesses, and non-profits
- Connect people from various demographics and backgrounds in non-traditional ways
- Engage those receiving services in the actual service delivery
- Be innovative and unique in meeting individual needs

The team quickly realized what a daunting task they faced. Despite the diversity of existing service programs and service delivery models, none of them came close to meeting the identified criteria.

By May of 2006, the team had been introduced to the concept of Time Banking and started to explore the possibilities.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world...indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Meade

WHY A TIME BANK?

The concept of Time Banking was created in the 1980's by a lawyer named, Edgar Cahn, author of several books including, *Time Dollars* and *No More Throw Away People*. Time Banking is simply a means of exchange used to recognize and organize people and organizations around a common purpose, where time becomes the currency of exchange.

Time Banking is based on several core values:

- One hour of service always equals one time credit, regardless of the service provided/received
- Assets – Every human being has something to contribute
- Redefining Work – Some work is beyond price. Work has to be redefined to value whatever it takes to raise healthy children, build strong families, revitalize neighborhoods, make democracy work, advance social justice, and make the planet sustainable. That kind of work needs to be honored, recorded, and rewarded.
- Reciprocity – Helping works better as a two-way street. The question, “How can I help you?” needs to change so we ask, “How can we help each other build the world we both will live in?”
- Social Networks – We need each other. People can help each other reweave communities of support, strength and trust. Community is built upon sinking roots, building trust, and creating networks that are built on mutual respect and commitment.
- Respect – Respect demands accountability. The voices of all must be heard and heeded so as to promote social justices and compel accountability.

The team believed they had found a model where the core values could be adopted to develop a new kind of social service program, one that would meet all or most of the identified criteria.

A six-member Advisory Board was created and a Program Coordinator was identified. Now the work would really begin.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT PHASE

An extensive research project of existing Time Banks in the United States already in operation and those in early development began. The Advisory Board reviewed business plans, brochures, membership forms, and policy & procedure manuals from a diverse sampling of Time Banks. It soon became evident that each Time Bank was unique in their use of the model, in their delivery, and in their engagement within their communities.

The Advisory Board researched specific issues including IRS regulations, liability insurance, background checking, and legal policies and procedures. By July of 2006, a program name, tagline, fonts, branding, membership forms, and brochures had all been developed and created.

For the next six months the Advisory Board focused on developing a Member Handbook, setting membership fees, creating marketing materials and PowerPoint presentations, and exploring potential funding options.

During this evaluation and research phase, many ideas for documenting time exchanges were developed, modified, and dropped. Concepts regarding program infrastructure were explored and decisions were made based on the perception of how Community Connections would function within

the community. However, soon after the project was officially launched, it became evident that many adjustments and changes were necessary based on the actuality of engaging the community. One advantage that was identified early on was the potential for engaging clients of existing PRS program services. The Advisory Board recognized the diverse population already being served by the various service offerings of PRS and agreed that Community Connections could serve as an entry point for community members who were not currently receiving services.

Providing opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities, families with small children, and those caring for senior citizens and dependent adults, to participate in service exchanges allowed them to receive additional support and engage in the community. Community Connections, by design, would be able to meet the individual needs that fell outside of particular program services and enhance the client's participation in meeting their own needs.

A PROGRAM IS LAUNCHED

In January 2007 the Community Connections program was launched. Membership rates were set at \$20 to join and \$5 to renew each year. The first program presentation was made to 30+ staff of Plumas Rural Services. Since the initial membership fee (which covered the cost of a background check) was waived, 99% of those who attended the presentation became Members! The program was opened to the general community in February and service exchanges started happening.

Adjustments and changes to marketing materials, forms, and data collection were continuously made as new issues were revealed and presented. Several new Advisory Board members were added and others moved on. The initial first year was filled with learning, compromising, readjusting, and learning some more.

One of the first major lessons learned that first year was the need to track program activity and service exchanges. The second major lesson was that the sustainability of this great idea called Community Connections would require collaboration with many organizations within Plumas County, additional staff, and funding.

THE FIRST YEAR – AN OVERVIEW

In addition to individual adult memberships, Community Connections created a junior membership for youth under the age of 18 (no membership fee), and group memberships (\$50 membership fee) for organizations who wanted to participate in service exchanges. At the end of 2008 there were a total of 64 Members (7 male and 57 female) 4 junior Members, and 7 group Members.

The total number of requests for service in that first year was 51. The average number of exchanges each month was 11 and the total number of hours exchanged was 314. With 73% of the membership participating in a service exchange, the vision had become a reality.

Community Connections created a monthly newsletter, and a web page, and refined the marketing materials and membership forms yet again. Presentations were made to anyone who would listen – individuals, groups, and organizations. Newspaper articles were written and service announcements were made on the local radio station. Member potlucks, swap meets, and workshops were created as

a means of engaging Members and sharing enthusiasm for this unique new way of connecting people within communities. The Program Coordinator and Advisory Board quickly learned their participation in community activities and events became the best way to share their vision and recruit new Members.

COLLABORATING WITH PROGRAM SPONSORS

The idea of engaging service organizations, businesses and non-profits resulted in the creation of a Sponsorship program. For \$100/year any organization could become a Sponsor of Community Connections. In exchange, a Sponsor could request Members to support their activities and events, post announcements in the 'Daily Announcements' email, and promote their program/services in the monthly newsletters.

It soon became evident that Sponsors also created a huge increase in the number of service opportunities for Members to choose from. The number of members, requests, service exchanges, and hours of service nearly doubled from 2008 to 2009. The addition of program Sponsors also created a reoccurring revenue source for Community Connections.

The current list of program Sponsors represents the infrastructure of Plumas County:

Back Door Catering	Plumas County Museum
California Highway Patrol	Plumas County Public Health Agency
Chance Construction	Plumas County Red Cross
Chester-Lake Almanor Chamber of Commerce	Plumas County Tourism, Recreation & Hospitality Council
Community Multisport Events	Plumas Crisis Intervention & Resource Center
Community United Methodist Church	Plumas District Hospital Volunteers
Dawn Institute	Plumas-Sierra 4-H
Dramaworks	Plumas-Sierra County Fair
Eastern Plumas Chamber of Commerce	Plumas Unified School District
Feather River College	Quincy Chamber of Commerce
Feather River Land Trust	Quincy Community Hospital Auxiliary
Forget Me Not Thrift Store	Quincy Natural Foods Co-Op
Friends of Plumas County Animals	Quincy Parent Cooperative Organization (PCO)
Friends of Quincy Library	Ranchito Motel
Friends of Portola Library	Rotary Club of Portola
Greenville United Methodist Church	Rotary Club of Quincy
High Sierra Animal	Roundhouse Council
Indian Valley Chamber of Commerce	Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship
Indian Valley Recreation & Park District	Sierra Cascade Family Opportunities (HEAD START)
Main Street Artists	Sierra Farmstead
Mountain Circle Family Services	Sierra Hospice
Our Savior Lutheran Church	Soroptimist International of Quincy
PAWS (Plumas Animal Welfare Society)	Transition Quincy
Plumas Arts	US Forest Service, Mt. Hough Ranger District
Plumas Audubon Society	Women's Mountain Passages
Plumas Community Radio	Young's Market
Plumas Corporation	
Plumas County Animal Shelter	
Plumas County Mental Health	

SERVICE DEVELOPMENT – YEARS 2-4

For the first two years Community Connections was an unfunded program. The Program Coordinator who oversaw the development of Community Connections continued to conduct their regular full-time position responsibilities. However, in July of 2009 PRS submitted a proposal for funding to their local Child Abuse Prevention Council. The proposal highlighted how Community Connections could provide concrete support and potentially meet a variety of needs for families with children including; child care, transportation, household assistance, and vital community connection/support. The two-year grant was approved and the Program Coordinator was now assigned part-time to Community Connections.

Now the focus shifted to sustainability and long-term growth. The Advisory Board developed short and long-term goals that included marketing and outreach plans, member engagement, database management, and community collaborations. Memberships and Sponsorships grew and service exchanges exploded.

Program Year	Members	Sponsors	Requests	Exchanges	Service Hours
08-09	65	6	181	369	1093
09-10	127	25	355	824	2643
10-11	215	28	479	1212	3702
11-12	270	33	574	3019	8209

In June of 2011 PRS submitted a proposal to the Archstone Foundation to participate in their Creating Aging Friendly Communities through the Expansion of Villages project. The grant was \$100,000 for two-years. The proposal included expanding the existing Community Connections project into the outlying communities of Chester/Lake Almanor in the west and Graeagle/Portola in the eastern county. The focus would be on outreach to senior Members in each community and expansion of services to provide support that would allow seniors to live independently in their own homes.

In July 2011 an Archstone Foundation representative traveled to Plumas County for a site visit and tour of the rural area. Their report and recommendations resulted in notification in September that Community Connections was accepted into the project and the first convening would take place in October in Oakland, California.

During the first year of this project, the program Coordinator participated in 3 face-to-face convenings with the Archstone Foundation and the other 8 organizations participating in the project. She also participated in numerous telephone conferences, technical assistance webinars, and two national Village to Village conferences – one in Oakland, CA. and the other in Atlanta, GA. She was provided with guidance, feedback, and assistance from the participating organizations and from the professional staff at the Village to Village Network, NCB Capital Impact, and UC Berkeley who oversaw the data collection and results documentation for the project.

Membership grew, and the number of service exchanges and service hours nearly tripled between July 2011 and July 2012. Community Connections was thriving, though the existing fee structure and grant funding still only allowed for part-time staff committed to the project.

After several strategic planning sessions, the decision was made by the Advisory Board that the membership fee would remain at \$20 to cover the cost of a background check for all new Members. While other Villages within California were charging \$100 - \$700+/year for their memberships, the Advisory Board felt it was very important to maintain the integrity of the initial vision that Community Connections be accessible to people of all ages and economic levels and chose not to follow suit. They did, however increase the annual renewal fee to \$10 due on October 1st of each year. It became evident that financial sustainability of Community Connections would require on-going applications for grants and foundation dollars, an increase of Sponsorships, and likely some fundraising activities.

Despite the limited funding, Community Connections continued to grow and was now a vital support system to individuals, and a variety of businesses and service organizations who regularly requested volunteer support for their personal needs, special events/activities, and in many cases, for their daily operations.

FIVE YEAR GROWTH & ACCOMPLISHMENTS



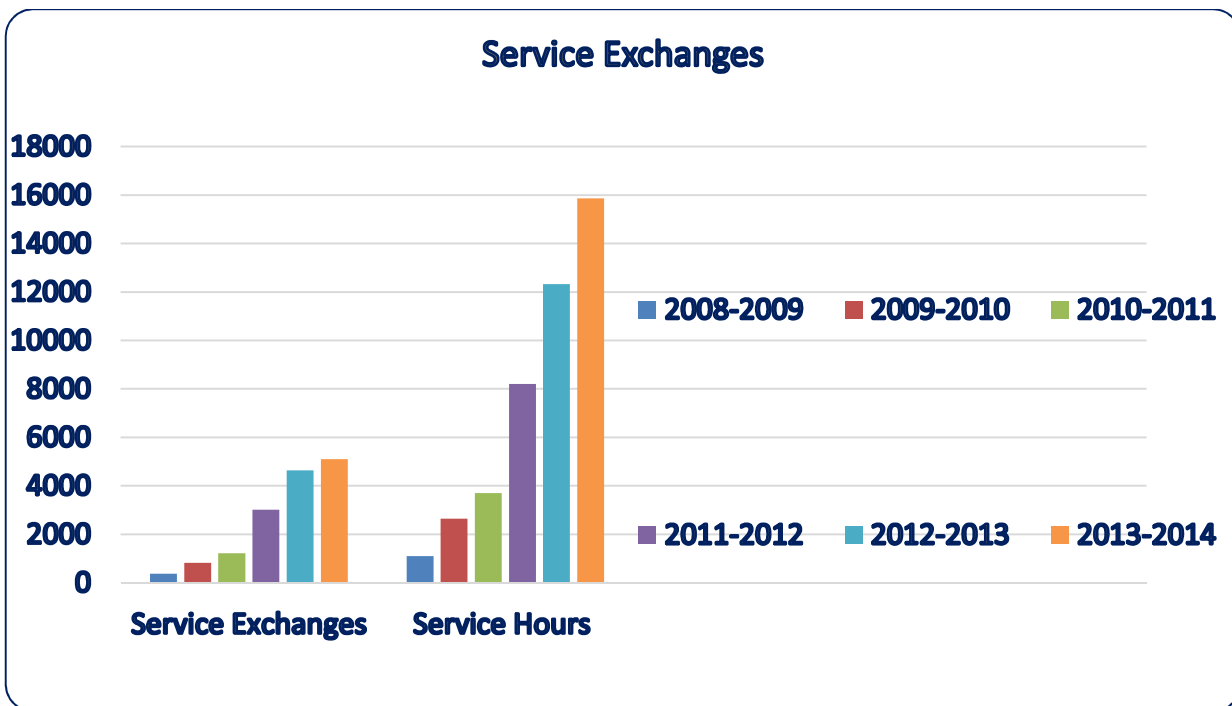
Community Connections is intended to be for everyone. With the membership now at 350+ Members/Sponsors, more than 1.5% of the entire population of Plumas County are participating. The youngest Member is 6 years-old and the oldest is 93.

By engaging the entire community, many service exchanges become intergenerational. Having a 3rd grader help an 88 year-old senior who lives alone take care of her cat, benefits both Members and allows valuable connections and relationships to develop.

Many senior Members indicate their greatest ‘need’ is to feel necessary and useful to their community. They enjoy the opportunity to remain active and involved in the community and they especially enjoy working with younger Members. One senior said, “I may be retired, but thanks to Community Connections, I’m still required!”

As in most small towns and rural communities, Community Connections Member volunteers have become the backbone that supports the infrastructure. Many organizations would close down if they did not receive support from volunteers within the community. One Community Connections Sponsor states, “We do what we do for the animals in Plumas County because we love the animals, but we have no funding and our love alone will not save them. We need the help from lots of volunteers to make sure every animal is safe and cared for.” Another Sponsor adds, “Funding streams come and go. Our ability to function stays strong and consistent because we depend on the dedication of volunteers to keep our doors open, not a grant that will end in two years.”

Along with the growth in membership over the past 4 years, there has been a vast increase in the number of services being exchanged. These services directly support the prevention of child abuse by providing concrete support to families with children; allow seniors who wish to live independently in their own homes to receive the support they need; and provides a network of support for children and college students who are learning that community service is something we all do together, not the punitive result of a court mandate. Together the service exchanges strengthen the community and enrich the lives of those both giving and receiving.



TYPES OF SERVICES

When Community Connections first started, the membership form was a lengthy 6 pages. It included several pages listing a variety of services ranging from arts & crafts to yard care for potential Members to check if the service was something they could provide. Each category also contained an additional space to indicate other unique services each Member might consider offering.

Within a few years it became evident there was no limit to the types of services that could be offered. Each Member had their own unique set of talents, skills, life experiences, and hobbies they were

willing to share with others. When the list of services reached more than 400, the membership form was reduced to a single two-sided page.

A Member or Sponsor can make a request for almost anything. The current rate of service requests that are filled is 77%. Of course some of requests are not filled because they are time-sensitive, require a licensed professional, or are not appropriate for a volunteer for a variety of reasons.

General Overview of Service Categories

Arts & Crafts

Business Support

Auto Care

Child Care

Companionship (seniors)

Computers

Cooking

Events

Gardening

Handyman

House Sitting

Household Management

Pet Care

Personal Care

Housekeeping

Recreation

Sewing

Transportation

Tutoring

Yard Care

HOW SERVICES ARE EXCHANGED

When Members are interested in receiving a service, they send an email or call the Program Coordinator with the details. Every afternoon a 'Daily Announcements' email is sent out listing all of the services being requested by Members and Sponsors. Each Member decides what is of interest to them and when they choose to be available by responding to the email...or not. Those Members who do not use or have access to email are assigned a caller to keep them informed of services being requested and special announcements.

When a Member responds to a request, a referral with contact information is made by the Program Coordinator to the requesting Member. The requesting Member coordinates the details and scheduling. When the service is complete, both the Member providing the service and the Member receiving report the amount of time exchanged and the Program Coordinator documents the exchange in the database.

For larger, labor-intensive projects, there are SWAT (Serving, Working, Achieving Together) teams of 3 or more Members who work together to accomplish a task. These tasks may include raking pine needles for fire safety, weed pulling, moving assistance, building projects, wood cutting/stacking, or even snow removal when necessary. Whatever the service, the greatest benefit is always the human connection that creates true community.

One Member expressed her gratitude by saying, "I don't know where I would be without Community Connections. I do know I wouldn't be able to live on my own now that my husband has passed away. I depend on the program for so many things, but mostly to keep me motivated to face each day knowing I'm not alone." Another Member added, "If Community Connections could be a part of every small town, there would be fewer people worrying about getting older and more kids learning how the 'old-fashioned' values of helping each other makes them proud of the place they call home."

Sometimes more than one Member will request instruction on how to do something; when this happens, a workshop is created. The amount of knowledge, wisdom, and 'know how' within the growing membership is truly amazing. Over the years a wide variety of workshops have been offered including: calligraphy, jewelry making, menu planning, crocheting, bread making, blueberry growing, back yard water harvesting, tool using, and the very popular, understanding Facebook and social media.

FUTURE FUNDING

Community Connections is designed to be accessible to people of all ages and economic levels. The success of the model in meeting needs, providing support to both individuals and organizations, and providing opportunities for community engagement has been proven. Unfortunately, Community Connections is unlikely to ever be a stand-alone, self-sustaining project.

As noted earlier, the first two years of Community Connections were unfunded. In 2009 the Plumas Children's Council (Child Abuse Prevention Council) designated nearly \$30,000 towards the project over two years and has continued this level of funding each year since.

The initial two-year Archstone project ended in September of 2013. However, Community Connections was selected to receive another \$50,000 to participate for a third year until September 2014.

PRS has a dedicated Program Resource Developer who constantly researches potential funding opportunities and submits several proposals on behalf of Community Connections each year. This year Community Connections has received the following grants, and additional submissions are pending:

Plumas Children's Council (focus on concrete support for families with children)	\$15,000
Strategies (focus on providing concrete support to families with children)	\$ 3,000
Sierra Health Foundation (focus on supporting seniors and youth engagement)	\$15,000
Plumas County Public Health (focus on support/engagement of seniors)	\$ 9,000

The Community Connections Program Coordinator is dedicated part-time to this project and relies on the support and participation of the Advisory Board Members and the dedicated volunteer services from participating Members to provide administrative support.

PRS is able to provide fiscal, and administrative oversight for the project, as well as dedicated office space and necessary supplies. The database consists of a simple Excel spreadsheet to document and track more than 45 metric indicators for reporting purposes so overhead is able to be kept to a minimum.

In addition, a variety of services and support are offered by program Sponsors, including; catering for the annual Member Appreciation Brunch, meeting/event space, radio advertising, reduced cost for printing marketing materials/banners, and advertising/outreach in several monthly newsletters.

Since its inception, Community Connections has not conducted any type of formal fundraising. This decision was made in-part because often Community Connections and its Members are participating or supporting the fundraising activities/events of their program Sponsors and recognize that there are

limited dollars to go around. However, the Advisory Board is now evaluating a variety of grass roots events and handmade products that may be available for purchase in the future to help off-set funding needs.

As Community Connections grows and becomes an integral component to the infrastructure of Plumas County, it is expected additional funding streams may become available. Working with county agencies such as Public Health, Mental Health, and potentially the District Attorney's Offender Realignment programs in the future, may facilitate more local funding in coming years.

LONG TERM GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Community Connections has demonstrated amazing growth in both Member/Sponsor recruitment and in the number of service hours exchanged over the past five years. However, the Program Coordinator and Advisory Board believe they have only scratched the surface of the potential to make a major impact in the future.

Because of the Program Coordinator's participation in the 3-year Archstone Foundation's project, the program had the opportunity be exposed to the Village movement on a national level. The Program Coordinator currently serves on the Advisory Council for the National Village to Village Network and intends to participate in the development of a California Coalition of Villages.

Community Connections was invited to present its unique, innovative model at conferences in Oakland and San Francisco, California; Phoenix, Arizona; St. Louis, Missouri; and Atlanta, Georgia. There is great interest in the strategies and success of Community Connections from organizations in the development phase of their own projects and the Program Coordinator has provided ideas and, suggestions, both in-person and via telephone conferences.

Some of the long-term goals for Community Connections include:

- Increase membership and greater participation of junior Members – change the paradigm of how 'community service' is perceived by youth in Plumas County
- Engage more families with children in service exchanges to provide concrete support and community engagement
- Increase the number of male memberships and their participation in exchanges
- Engage licensed professionals (i.e. plumbers, electricians, contractors, gardeners) in offering service exchanges
- Expand Community Connections into other surrounding rural communities in Northern California
- Establish a means for providing support for other counties wanting to create their own programs in their communities, potentially as a source of program revenue
- Establish collaborations with local Veteran's, senior, and recreation service organizations
- Implement cash discounts at local retailers for Community Connections Members – possibly using time credits as a recognizable means of currency
- Involve local community college interns in program development, outreach, and marketing
- Partner with service organizations (i.e. Elks, Lions, Rotary, and school parent groups) to increase participation in community service and recruitment/retention of Members

- Create hands-on workshops and repair cafes to provide instruction, guidance, and support towards sustainable living skills and program revenue
- Streamline data/statistical documentation for ease of reporting growth and participation
- Design a comprehensive database management system
- Develop a comprehensive Donor Program
- Complete a user-friendly Membership Guide including Policies & Procedures
- Complete a user-friendly Sponsorship Guide including Policies & Procedures

The ideas and possibilities for the future are endless. The greatest asset is, and will always be, the skills, talents, and participation from members of the community and the hard work, dedication and leadership from the staff and the Advisory Board. Together, this small group of people can accomplish much.

5 YEAR FUND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Since its inception Community Connections has striven to maintain very low membership fees, has relied almost solely on grant/foundation funding, and has made no fundraising efforts. It is clear, financial sustainability will require some difficult decisions and adjustments in the coming years.

Some of the fundraising/revenue generating concepts currently being considered and developed include:

- Increase the initial membership fee to \$25.00.
- Develop a one-time 'lifetime' membership renewal for Members who have been participating for the past three years. The proposed rate is \$100/Member.
- Increase the annual Sponsorship fee to \$200/annually.
- Create an annual 'request for donations' letter that is mailed to local businesses, service organizations, and community leaders. The request would highlight the vital support Community Connections provides for individuals and participating Sponsors.
- Identify an annual fundraising event specific to Community Connections.
- Develop a variety of handmade, local artisan products (created by Members) that can be sold to raise funds. The first product, currently under development is a 'scrunchie' reusable shopping bag with the CC logo.
- Develop a series of Member-facilitated educational workshops offered to the general public. The registration fees will range from \$10-\$25/per class.

Projected Revenue

Based on the numbers from the 2013-2014 fiscal year and current growth patterns, Community Connections can project an average of 10 new Members each month for a total of \$2,400 annually at the current rate of \$20. If the membership rate were raised to \$25, this number would increase to \$3,000 annually.

Based on the current new Sponsorship growth and renewal rate, Community Connections can project 2 new Sponsors/month for \$2,400 annually and \$5,000 in renewals for a total of \$7,400 annually at the current rate of \$100. If the Sponsorship rate were raised to \$200, this number would increase to \$14,800 annually – assuming the existing Sponsors continued to renew at the higher rate.

If the projected funds raised from membership/sponsorship fees totaled \$17,800, Community Connections would be required to raise an additional \$54,200 to meet the projected operating budget of \$72,000/year.

After analyzing the success rate of existing annual fundraising events conducted by local Chambers of Commerce, animal shelters, foster care agencies, art foundations, and school parent groups, it is unlikely Community Connections will garner more than \$2,000-\$3,000 in fundraising dollars for any single event. The amount of time required to facilitate such activities and events is often extensive, and when staff time is taken into account, often the actual revenue is minimal.

While it is evident Community Connections needs to take a proactive role in developing long-term financial sustainability, it is likely the program will always be dependent upon grants and foundations to cover operating expenses.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES

One of the other alternatives that is being explored is the possibility of reducing the staff time dedicated to the oversight of Community Connections to reduce the funding needed for sustainability. If this option were developed, it would be vital to have a strong Advisory Council to participate in the oversight, marketing, and daily operations, as well as a dedicated team of Member volunteers.

There are several possible outcomes of attempting to operate a program that serves 350+ Members with volunteers only, one of which is complete failure. Without the leadership, vision, planning, and 'face in the community' to represent the service as a whole, it is possible some of the existing growth and level of commitment from existing participants would diminish. However, it is also possible that minimal oversight on the part of staff and strong volunteer leadership could sustain the program and services could continue with little or no breakdown.

One major concern is the number of senior Members who have participated over the past five years or more and have 'banked' the time credits they have earned in hopes of using them as they age to receive services that will allow them to maintain their independence and live in their own homes. It is imperative that Community Connections strongly take into consideration the long-term viability of the time bank model to meet the expectations and needs of existing and new Members.

It would seem the most logical solution would be a combination of raising existing membership/sponsorship rates, while still maintaining affordability for everyone; developing fundraising strategies that are not excessively time consuming to implement; and streamlining the day-to-day operations to create procedures that could easily be facilitated by well-trained, dedicated volunteers with support and oversight from a paid staff person and active Advisory Board.