

Repair Café Means No



▲ Clock Doc Paul Vanar with clock owner and fellow volunteer Sheila Brown-SanCartier. Many volunteers bring items for repair.

Need to Throw Away

BY MARTHA MCGLOIN | PHOTOS PROVIDED BY GEORGIAN BLUFFS CLIMATE ACTION TEAM

Martha McGloin, right, with the fixer for the sweater.



On the second Saturday of each month, Owen Sound North Grey Union Public Library comes to life as people line up clutching broken vacuum cleaners, CD players, vintage lamps, cuckoo clocks, leaky stuffies, jackets with broken zippers and much more. Set up and armed with sewing machines, solder guns, circuit testers and baskets of threads, zippers and three-pronged plugs, more than a dozen Repair Café volunteer fixers, for free, take on the challenge of fixing whatever comes their way. Volunteer greeters sign in patrons and direct them to the proper fixers while baristas set out coffee and cookies.

Each of these patrons has a story. In some cases, it's a treasure passed down through the family. It could be a vacuum cleaner that has served a family for 30 years, an 8-track tape player discovered by grandchildren playing in the basement or the family cat's favorite toy that needs its stuffing restored. Patrons also bring items rescued from the curb – a winter jacket left on a fence was donated to a local charity after receiving a new zipper. A battery-operated miniature car that was put out as garbage was rescued by an observant mother, carried in to the Repair Café and driven away to become a special birthday present for a young boy. Another patron in the process of downsizing, not wanting to add a broken air fryer to landfill, brought it to the Repair Café so that it could be donated in working order.

The Clock Doc

Volunteer fixers have stories of their own. Paul Vanar, also known as The Clock Doc, recounts how friendly chats with a professional watchmaker led him to start picking up broken clocks from thrift shops, taking them apart to fix and then returning them to the thrift shop in working order. The Clock Doc fixes an average of four clocks at each Café. Fixer Steve reports that his confidence and success as a fixer stems from his hobby of monitoring Kijiji for broken equipment that he can disassemble and return to working order, often using online sources to find missing parts as well as possible fixes. Joanne Veerman is a retired family studies teacher who brings her mother's overflowing basket

It has been extremely rewarding to see the project be so successful.



▲ David Sereda with a new zipper in his jacket, with fixer Annette and his wife Mary.



▲ Repair Café reached its first anniversary on March 8.

of yarns and threads to help find the perfect material and colour match for sweater and socks. Patrons are sometimes sent out to buy a zipper or small piece of hardware.

Evident in its name, the Georgian Bluffs Climate Action Team (GBCAT) identifies actions that address climate issues and build engagement with people beyond its core membership. Hearing reports from activists in nearby Thornbury, GBCAT invited organizers of the Thornbury Repair Café to make a presentation to GBCAT members. That presentation led to repeated visits to the Thornbury Repair Café as well as research into Repair Café International and contact with Repair Café

Toronto. As plans developed, so did the search for a venue. It soon became clear that the library in Owen Sound offered the ideal location and support system.

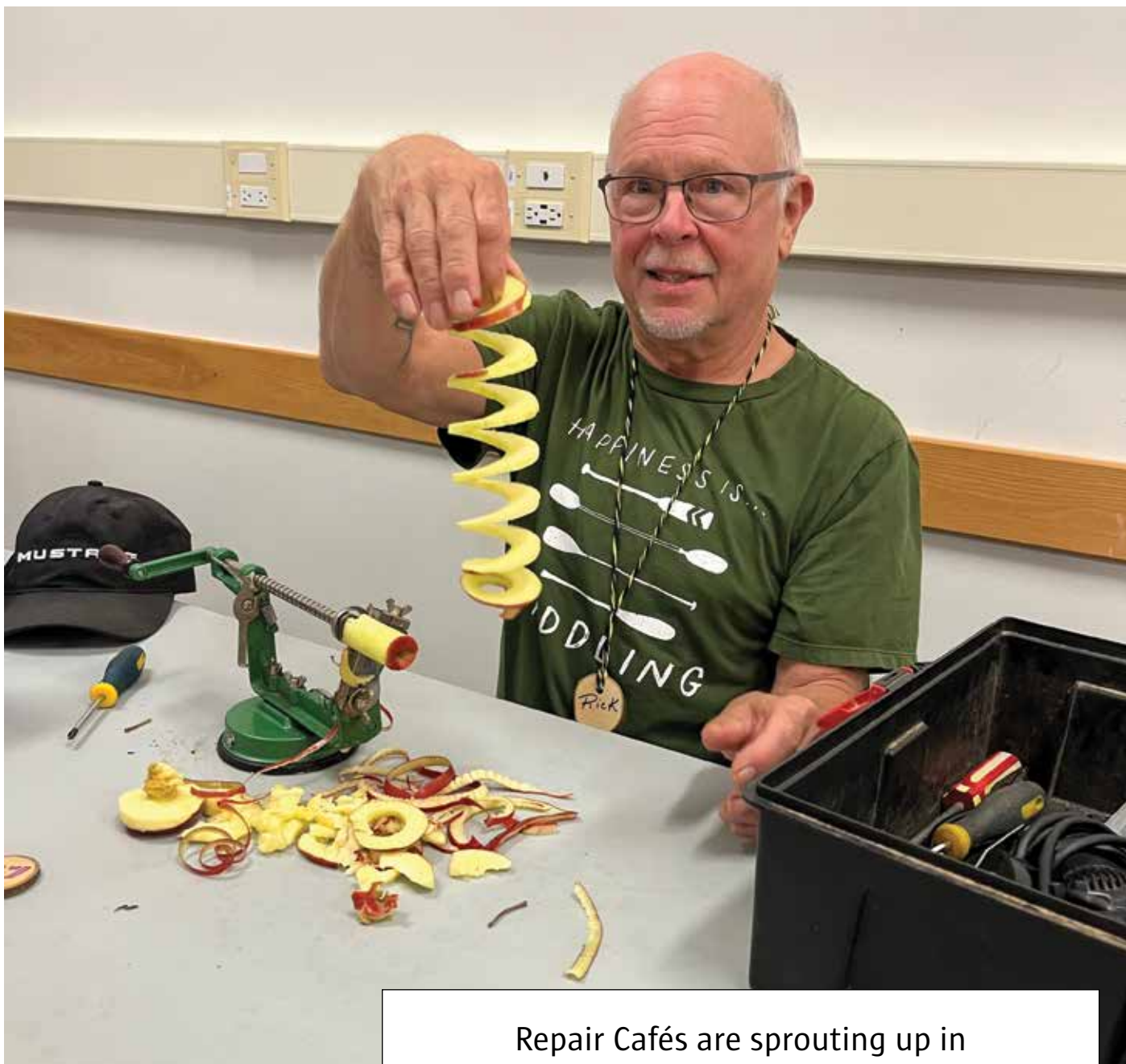
Tim Nicholls Harrison, CEO/Chief Librarian of the Owen Sound North Grey Union Public Library recalls, "The timing was perfect. Libraries across North America have recognized the importance of being involved in this work. We were so fortunate to have such commitment and energy from our local community members. It has been extremely rewarding to see the project be so successful."

Other Repair Cafés

After experiencing the energy



▲ Fixer Murray Smith with Louise Jarvis.



▲ Fixer Rick Krisko tests the repaired apple corer.

Repair Cafés are sprouting up in many communities, including Meaford, St. Catharines, Dundas, Kitchener, Guelph, West Grey and Toronto.

at the Repair Café in Owen Sound, it's no surprise that more than 3,000 Repair Cafés have sprung up around the world since the first Repair Café opened in Amsterdam in 2009. Repair Cafés are sprouting up in many communities, including Meaford, St. Catharines, Dundas, Kitchener, Guelph, West Grey and Toronto. Some are on a regular schedule in the same location. Others function as pop-up events, sometimes featuring specialized repairs such as sewing, bicycle or electronic repairs.

The Right to Repair movement has grown from early concerns sparked by the auto industry around lack of information and available tools. Planned

obsolescence of many consumer goods coupled with manufacturers' control of information and tools needed to access and repair electronics, farm equipment and medical equipment has led to legislation in many countries, including Canada, that limits manufacturers' ability to control repair of their products.

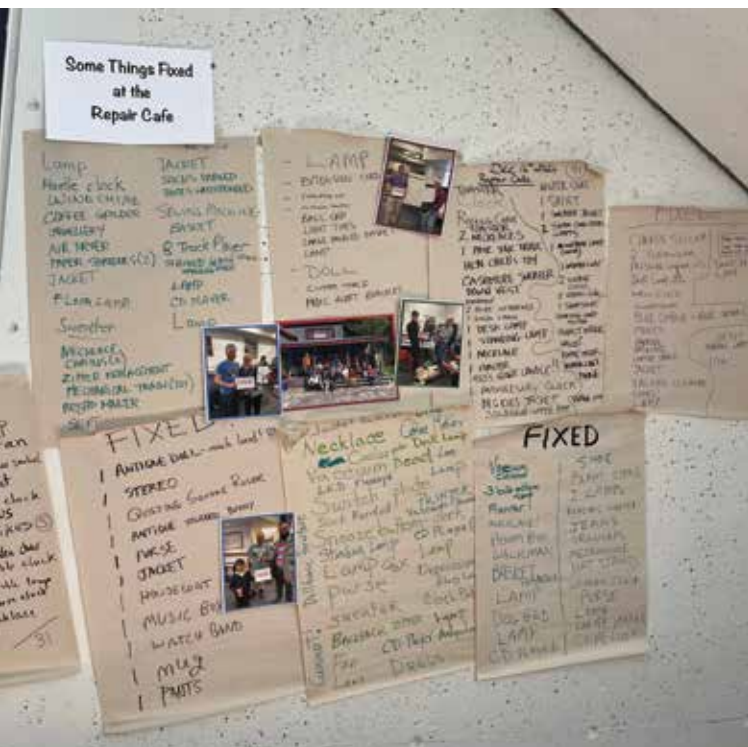
As legislation slowly catches up to demand, Repair Cafés continue to build momentum sharing stories,

solutions, laughter and even a few tears of relief, with a resounding chorus of "Throw It Away, No Way!" **NEV**

Martha McGloin is a member of the Georgian Bluffs Climate Action Team and a regular patron of the Repair Café. A retired elementary school teacher, she lives in the village of Oxenden on the lands known as Saugeen Ojibway Nation



▲ Phyllis Rowe, holding a lamp, attends every month with one or two items for repair.



▲ Close to 500 items were repaired in the first year of operation.

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