

Chester NY Repair Café

Saturday, October 25, 2025

Final Report



1786 Kings Highway • Chester, NY 10918

The Chester Conservation Advisory Council (CCAC) and Climate Smart Community (CSC) held their 3rd Repair Café (RC) on Saturday, October 25, 2025 at the Senior Center in the 4-hour period from 10am – 2pm.

A team of 27 volunteers joined together to provide this unique, free repair service. Sixteen (16) of the 27 volunteers are skilled “fixers” who volunteered their time and talent to be repair “coaches”.

Eleven (11) other volunteers including six CCAC members and 5 members of the Chester community supported the repair efforts with greeting, registering, taking photos and videos, creating posters and displays, engaging the public with conservation information and answering questions, preparing/serving refreshments and conducting exit interviews.

Sixty-four residents came to the front desk requesting 145 repairs.

Here are the final statistics for your review.

Newcomers to the Repair Café Concept

- Twenty-five (25) people attending this were “first-timers” to any repair café. In addition, it should be noted at least 5 other people saw the RC sign at the end of the driveway and came in to our event to find out what a Repair Café is all about. They said they would definitely bring items to the next RC.

- That’s over forty-five percent (45%) of attendees who had either never even heard of the repair café concept before this event and / or never attended one. So that’s another 30 people who now know about RC’s and plan on using this service in the future. Some of the positive comments received from residents at both the CCAC Information Table and at exit interviews are outlined later in this report.

Types / Numbers of Repairs

In preparation for upcoming holiday dinners, many knives were sharpened. Garden loppers and hedge clippers were tightened and sharpened for next year's growing season. One hundred forty-five (145) items were analyzed for repair and here is the summary by "category" based on repair tickets statistics:

- 76 Sharpening jobs (Knives / Scissors / Garden Tools)
- 7 Lamp repairs
- 27 Sewing repairs
- 1 Sewing Machine repair
- 7 Electrical / Mechanical repairs
- 16 Jewelry repairs
- 9 Glueing repairs
- 2 Computer / digital repairs

145 Total items repaired

Of the 145 items brought in, 137 were successfully repaired (95%).

Eight (8) items (5%) were not able to be repaired for assorted reasons including missing or needed parts, parts no longer available, bad circuit board, motor burned out, "too far gone" - broken beyond repair.

Bottom line, the Chester Repair Café succeeded in keeping 137 items from "landing" in a landfill.

Photos and Videos

The photos and videos taken during the RC event show how grateful and happy residents were in having their beloved broken items fixed. Many brought items they cherish or use daily and the Repair Café event gives them a chance to bring them back to life for free.

Behind every object brought back to life there is more than a fixed piece – there is a story that continues.

Click on the link/scan the QR Code below to see and hear the interaction and camaraderie among fixers, neighbors and volunteers and to see for yourself what a Repair Café is all about.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/15VoUvnXAeQlyM0yVujMP6jTYqSiaNL5g?usp=sharing>



Scan for photos and videos of
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Towns Represented

Chester residents represented over 70% of the attendees at the RC event.

Here is a breakdown of the towns represented at the 10/25/25 Repair Café from highest to lowest as follows:

Chester - 45; Goshen - 5; Sugar Loaf - 4; Monroe - 3; Warwick - 2; Blooming Grove - 1;
Woodbury - 1; Cornwall - 1; Rockhill - 1; Highland Mills - 1.

Advertising Efforts

When asked on the repair ticket how a person found out about the Chester RC, here are the specific written responses from highest to lowest:

Road signs - 14; Friends - 9; Chronicle - 7; Facebook - 7; CCAC member - 5;
Sign at end of Senior Center driveway - 5; Chester Senior Center Meeting - 4;
Previous attendee - 4; Chester Library flyer - 3; Joan Maxwell - 2;
Flyer at Registration Desk at September Warwick RC - 2; Surry Road sign - 1; Susannah - 1;
Town Hall sign - 1; Chester diner sign - 1; "On-line" - 1; Photo News - 1; Jane & Joan - 1;
Chester Post Office - 1;

Unsolicited Monetary Thank-Yous

We accepted \$116.00 in unsolicited donations from grateful residents who were happy the items they brought in were repaired and restored for future use.

The \$116.00 was turned in to Town Clerk Linda Zappala per accounting procedures.

CCAC Information Table

In addition to the repairs done at the event, E J Szulwach singlehandedly hosted our CCAC/CSC "Information Table" to engage the public about current projects and future plans.

In addition, he shared his World War II personal story being part of thousands of kids who answered the War Department's desperate call to schools throughout the United States to collect milkweed pods.

"The fluff of milkweed seed "umbrellas" was used in Mae West-type life jackets in place of kapok, which was in short supply."

Exit Interviews

Village of Chester CCAC Liaison BettyAnn conducted 27 interviews during the event as residents exited.

Question: How was this Repair Café?

Answers: perfect, great (5), local, a big success, wonderful (3), outstanding, amazing (2), liked it, very good (3), loved it (5), best repair café, good, excellent, terrific, as expected, it is always excellent

Question: What did you like best?

Answers: Volunteers (2), knife sharpening, experienced people, repair people very knowledgeable (3), nice community service, volunteer was persistent in finding the problem and making the repair, (2), atmosphere great, atmosphere uplifting, great experience (2), patience of "fixers", I got something repaired that I love, EZ, friendly atmosphere, the variety of repair people, spacious venue, the TLC with my item to be fixed, friendly skilled workers and swift repair, helpful, friendliness and eagerness of all the volunteers, kind people, Susannah was lovely, Lamp Larry fixed my lamp in less than 5 minutes, snacks, the fixer spent time and explained and coached during the entire repair.

Question: What can we do to improve the process for future RC events:

Answers: Nothing (16), nothing - so happy, nothing - great experience, "café" implies food, more advertising - like Monroe Matters, Goshen and other areas, more advertising - like a sheet at the registration desk or Info Table with all Repair Café locations and dates listed, need to have it more often.

Resident comments about the Chester Repair Café

Here are just some of the many comments we received about the 10/25/25 Repair Café:

"I'm happy these kinds of events go on in our community" - RC

"I really appreciate all you have done to make our environment a healthier atmosphere!" - LZ

"It is always such a pleasure to work with members of the Repair Cafe, the passion you all have to the event shows the commitment you have to the program. - MD

"It was a pleasure! Loved the cafe feel of the Repair Cafe and appreciate the combined efforts of all who make this event happen." - AF

"It is truly people like you that enrich our community." - LZ

In Conclusion

The Conservation Advisory Council is grateful to the many volunteer community organizations who, in addition to their own events, take time out of their busy schedules to assist with Chester's Repair Cafes: Kiwanis of Chester, Chester Historical Society, The Bellvale community, Sugar Loaf Mountain Herbs The Preservation Collective Warwick Repair Café

The Chester Repair Café is truly about community coming together to share time, skills and a commitment to repairing and keeping items out of landfills. Our thanks to all our repair and other volunteers who educate participants with each repair about the simple idea of people helping others fix rather than throw things away.