

ecoCaledon hosting free repair cafe on Earth Day]

Event will also feature a community cleanup

By Zachary Roman

Caledon residents are invited to get their broken items repaired for free this Earth Day.

On April 22, local non-profit ecoCaledon will host a repair cafe. ecoCaledon has hosted a few successful repair cafes in the past, and is hoping to spread the word and get even more people participating in this one.

It's going to be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Caledon Seniors Centre, and residents can come and get items like clothing, bikes, pottery, and small electronics repaired for free.

ecoCaledon's volunteer 'fixers' will not only help residents fix their items, but show residents how it's done, too. Repair cafes are all about reducing the waste sent to landfills and changing our society's 'throwaway' mindset.

The Citizen chatted with ecoCaledon members Lucrezia Chiappetta and Betty de Groot about the upcoming repair cafe, and how repairing things is an important part of the move towards a circular economy.

de Groot said there's nearly 10 fixers already lined up to participate in the event. One of these fixers is Chris Millar, who has been helping to organize the repair cafe as well. Millar's repair skill is in sewing.

'My mother taught me at a young age and it's a gift that's brought me many hours of happiness throughout my life,' said Millar. 'I look forward to the repair café; we have created a great little community among each other, it's a place to socialize with like-minded people who not only care about the environment but are truly happy to use their skills to help others. People are truly grateful when an item is fixed and their smiles show it.'

Chiappetta explained since the upcoming repair cafe is on Earth Day, ecoCaledon is planning a community cleanup as part of it. She said this way even if people don't have something they need repaired they can still come out and do something positive for the environment on Earth Day. de Groot noted that April is a great time for a cleanup as there's often lots of garbage hidden underneath the snow that only reveals itself once the snow is all melted.

The concept of repair cafes is spreading, said Chiappetta, and there's more and more communities starting their own.

The concept of repair cafes began in Amsterdam in 2009 and has since spread across the world. The first repair cafe to happen in Toronto happened in 2013.

ecoCaledon is hoping to spread the word that repair cafes are a great free service. de Groot said items you may not think can be fixed can be fixed ' she even had her air fryer fixed at a previous repair cafe. Other interesting items to be fixed at an ecoCaledon repair cafe include a label maker, a vacuum, and a music box. Anyone with questions about the repair cafe or what items can be fixed there can email info@ecocalledon.org.

'Community members offering services that they would normally get paid for, for free, is just a great way for us to help build community,' said Chiappetta.

According to the Government of Canada's environment and natural resources branch, in a circular economy, nothing is waste. 'The circular economy retains and recovers as much value as possible from resources by reusing, repairing, refurbishing, remanufacturing, repurposing, or recycling products and materials,' reads the government site. 'It's about using valuable resources wisely, thinking about waste as a resource instead of a cost, and finding innovative ways to better the environment and the

economy.?

Finding ways of reusing items is a key part of the circular economy, said de Groot. She said even if you can't use something yourself anymore, you can do something like donate it to Evolve, Caledon Community Services' fundraising thrift store. One time, someone brought a vacuum to the repair cafe to be repaired, then donated it. It was a perfect example of someone participating in the circular economy.

Chiappetta said the circular economy starts at the manufacturer level and that people need to advocate for higher-quality items that will last a long time, as well as for items that are made with sustainable materials ? including their packaging. She also said people need to use items for as long as they can, giving the example of cell phones. There's no need to get the latest iPhone if your current one still works, she said.

There's been an unfortunate trend of products not lasting as long as they used to, and it is something that de Groot and Chiappetta have noticed. As well, it's becoming harder to repair items and some are designed so they can't easily be repaired by the consumer.

?My mother-in-law has a refrigerator in her basement that's 40 years old? meanwhile, the refrigerator in the kitchen in the last 40 years has been replaced three times,? she said. ?That just goes to show you that yeah, items are not made the way they used to be.?

Chiappetta said she's hoping to see a trend towards higher-quality and sustainably-made items, as well as see people's right to be able to repair them respected.

?We need to keep things in the system for as long as possible,? said Chiappetta. She said the last step in the circular economy process is recycling. If an item has truly reached the end of its life cycle, it should be recycled if possible so it does not end up in a landfill needlessly.