



2022 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study Competition Carnegie Mellon University

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Focus of Case study

CMU's Fix-it Fair Mending Workshop repaired items and taught attendees how to mend clothing; reducing waste by keeping these items out of the landfill.

Detailed description of campaign or effort:

Carnegie Mellon University's Fix-it Fair Mending Workshop was a collaboration between the CMU Green Practices program and the Staff Council Sustainability Committee to provide a means for reducing waste beyond the traditional ideas of recycling and composting. The workshop allowed the campus community to give new life to items destined for the landfill.

The event was staffed by amateur, volunteer repairers. We set up in a centrally located space on campus for three hours and invited the campus community to bring us clothing items to mend. Repairs were free to students, faculty, and staff and individuals could bring us as much as they wanted. While the focus was on repairing items, we were prepared to instruct attendees on how to make repairs themselves. Many attendees sat with us as we repaired their garments and learned mending basics to repair their own clothes in the future. One volunteer brought a collection of small sewing kits (from hotels, etc.) as a way to send attendees home with the tools to make their own repairs.

We repaired and adjusted ties, dresses, suit coats, sweaters, pants, bags, and more! Our repairers were busy for all three hours of the event and were able to repair everything we were brought! Attendees expressed gratitude that they didn't have to throw out the items and we hopefully inspired a few to make repairs themselves the next time something rips or doesn't quite fit!

Planning steps & timeline to implement:

- Two months before event
 - Recruited campus partners as volunteer repairers. Reached out to groups whose members may have sewing skills: theater department costume shop; campus organizations focused on topics such as sustainability, cosplay, service, and fashion; campus maker spaces; and faculty/staff sustainability groups.
 - Asked individuals to sign up if interested in volunteering as repairers.
 - Scheduled the workshop for a day the majority of volunteers were available. As most volunteers were faculty and staff, we decided to hold the Fix-it Fair Mending Workshop during regular business hours over an extended lunch period.
 - Reserved a room in a centrally located space, near dining locations since it was over lunch.
 - Wrote a 2-sentence description “blurb” of the event.
 - Added the Fix-it Fair Mending Workshop description to the CR2ZW calendar, website, and other general competition promotional materials.
- One month before event
 - The Fix-it Fair Mending Workshop was scheduled for the second month of CR2ZW, but prior to the start of the competition. That way the event was able to be included in all promotional materials distributed during the CR2ZW.
 - Created a supply list of basic mending materials and shared with volunteer repairers. For larger, reusable items, volunteers offered to share items they had. Examples include sewing machines, iron, ironing board, needles, and scissors. Consumables (thread, small sewing kits, patches, etc.) were either donated by volunteers who had extras in their personal supplies or funded by the Green Practices program.
 - Brainstormed a list of local menders (tailors, cobblers, etc.) to provide to attendees in case anyone had repairs beyond the skillset of our volunteers.
 - Finalized the design of the event-specific poster.
- Two weeks before the event
 - Sent out requests to various campus e-newsletters and digital bulletin board managers to display or share the event-specific poster and description.
 - Shopped for any consumables or reusables that volunteers were not able to supply.
 - Created signage with links to basic mending videos and the list of local menders. Sign included a QR code for access to these resources for attendees to view/read while waiting, in case we had a line at the event.
- One week before the event
 - Shared the event-specific information via socials, tagging all the groups we had contacted in the beginning of the process to share with their members.
 - Confirmed with volunteer repairers the time and place of the event.
 - Printed signs and gathered materials.
- Day of event
 - Arranged the room so that each volunteer repairer had a station and set up a central ironing and sewing machine station for all volunteers to use.
 - Set out signs with links to resources
 - Repaired items!

- After the event
 - Sent a thank you email to everyone who assisted.
 - Asked volunteer repairers for feedback on ways to improve for the next time.
 - Collected photos from all participants who took them.
 - Gathered reusables and remaining consumables purchased for the workshop and made a box to easily pull out for the next workshop. Made a list of consumables that need to be replenished before the next time we hold the workshop

Resources and stakeholders involved

ITEMS	SUPPORTED BY	COST
Volunteer Repairers	Volunteers recruited from: Green Practices program, Staff Council Sustainability Committee, and PACE (student org)	volunteered time: 1-3 hours
Reusables: sewing machines fabric scissors iron ironing board mending books darning mushroom steamer needles	Able to secure all items from Volunteers, except a few pairs of extra fabric scissors and extra needles were purchased to supplement.	\$5-25 & borrowed items
Consumables: iron on patches thread buttons yarn straight pins no sew hem tape fabric scraps small sewing kits	Some items were provided by volunteers who had extras they were willing to donate (thread, buttons, yarn, small sewing kits, fabric scraps). Remaining items purchased by the Green Practices program	under \$20 & donated items

Describe the Results of this campaign component

- a. General results
 - i. The event was advertised in many campus newsletters, getting the word out about waste reduction and the CR2ZW campaign. A few examples include the Staff Voice e-newsletter, residence education e-newsletter, and department-level e-newsletters, reaching audiences we don't usually get the attention of.
 - ii. The Provost had his suit coat mended by our volunteers.
- b. Specific measurable impact figures, if applicable
 - i. 25 people liked the Instagram post
 - ii. 15 people (students, faculty, and staff) attended the event
 - iii. Each individual brought 1-5 items; estimated that we fixed about 40 items

What would you do differently in the future?

- Recruiting student repairers may have helped get the word out to more students via word of mouth.
- The timing of the event worked best for volunteers but may not have been the best time for students, so next time we may offer the event later in the day.
- Additional repairers are always helpful, just in case a lot of people show up at once!
- Add repairers with different skills, to expand the variety of items that can be mended beyond just clothing to electronics, etc.

What advice would you give to another college that wanted to do a similar effort?

Use the skill sets and resources you have access to! Our volunteers were best at mending clothing, so that was our focus. If we had connected with engineering students or makerspace staff, we would have expanded our repairing options. Also, this can be a low-cost event if you find resources and borrow equipment from the campus community.

Photos and Graphics



Designed by a student from PACE student organization for social media.

Fix-it Fair

Mending Workshop

Tuesday, March 1st

11am-2:00pm

CUC Dowd Room

Do you have shirts missing buttons or pants that need to be hemmed? Don't throw them out... bring them to the Fix-it Fair! We'll have menders available to help you repair your items and make them good as new. Don't have anything needing repairing, but want to learn? Stop by to learn a few new mending skills.








Designed by Staff Council Sustainability Committee member for digital tv bulletin board



Volunteer Repairer showing off a repair
for a faculty member



Volunteer Repairer mending a
faculty member's item



Volunteer Repairer instructing a student how to use a sewing machine