



# NEWS RELEASE

Elisha Sherman, Community Engagement Associate  
(860) 450-7400, ext. 7456 / [elisha.sherman@accessagency.org](mailto:elisha.sherman@accessagency.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 12, 2015

## Repair Café Returns in April

The Repair Café returns to Willimantic on Saturday, **April 18, 2015**, from **10:00am-2:00pm** at the **First Congregational Church's** Arnold Auditorium, 199 Valley Street, **Willimantic**. Skilled volunteers will be on hand to repair and teach these repair skills to people bringing in books, bicycles, electronics, electrical and mechanical items, clothing and small wooden furniture. Knife sharpening will not be a service offered at this particular Repair Café.

A Repair Café is a **free event** during which skilled volunteer are available to help make all possible repairs free of charge except for the cost of replacement parts. People visiting the Repair Café can bring their broken items from home that they can carry in. Books, lamps, hair dryers, clothes, bikes, toys, small furniture — if they are broken or need repair, bring them in.

The Repair Café concept began in Amsterdam in 2009 in order to encourage the repair and reuse of items otherwise destined for disposal. It has since spread internationally. We throw away vast amounts of stuff. Even things with almost nothing wrong, and which could get a new lease on life after a simple repair. The trouble is, lots of people have forgotten that they can make repairs themselves or they no longer know how. Knowing how to make repairs is a skill quickly lost. Society doesn't always show much appreciation for the people who still have this practical knowledge, and against their will they are often left standing on the sidelines. Repair Cafes are helping to change that by teaching repair skills and putting neighbors in touch with each other in a new way that celebrates the fact that a lot of knowledge and practical skills can be found and shared close to home.

Connecticut's first two Repair Cafes were held in September 2014 and January 2015. Most of the items were electrical, followed by clothing in need of mending or knives needing sharpening. With the second café there was a 20% increase in attendees and a 37% increase in items brought for repair.

The organizers of the Willimantic Repair Cafes include volunteers and employees of the Access Agency and Town of Mansfield. "We are a small organizing group dedicated to the idea of keeping products in use and out of the waste stream," states Mansfield Recycling Coordinator, Virginia Walton. John Murphy, one of the organizers from the Access Agency, points out that while repairs can save money and resources, and help minimize carbon dioxide emissions, "Above all, the Repair Café model aims at showing how much fun repairing things together can be, and how easy it often is."

Members of the community interested in volunteering to help with repairs or future Repair Café events are asked to contact Virginia Walton, Mansfield Recycling Coordinator, at (860) 429-3333, [waltonvd@mansfieldct.org](mailto:waltonvd@mansfieldct.org). Members of the Windham Area Hour Exchange who provide repair services at the event will earn "time dollars" for their efforts. Individuals handy at repair in the areas of sewing, furniture, electrical appliances, electronics, bicycles, knife sharpening, small engines, tools, ceramics, jewelry and more are welcome.

### Windham Area Hour Exchange

In October 2012, the Access Community Action Agency launched the Windham Area Hour Exchange, a time bank of individuals, businesses, and organizations focused on improving conditions for low-income community members. There are currently more than 180 members in the Hour Exchange who have exchanged over 2,000 hours of

services. For more information about the Windham Area Hour Exchange, contact John Murphy, Access Director of Volunteer Engagement at (860) 450-7400, ext. 7458, [john.murphy@accessagency](mailto:john.murphy@accessagency) or visit [www.accessagency.org](http://www.accessagency.org).



### **Access Community Action Agency**

The Access Community Action Agency serves Windham and Tolland Counties, CT. Founded in 1965, Access's mission is to create opportunities that empower people and communities to achieve and sustain economic stability. Access offers a number of community-based programs in support of this mission, including provision of supplemental food, emergency shelter, energy assistance, energy conservation services, job and life skills training, youth mentoring, group homes, senior housing and more for low-income families and individuals. For more information about Access' services, call (860) 450-7400 in the Willimantic area, (860) 412-1600 in the Danielson area, or visit [www.accessagency.org](http://www.accessagency.org).



### **Repair Café Foundation**

The Repair Café concept arose in Amsterdam, where the Repair Café Foundation has regularly been organizing gatherings since 2010. Since January 2011, the foundation has provided support to local groups in and outside the Netherlands wishing to start their own Repair Cafés, including the Repair Café on September 27 in Willimantic. For more information, visit [www.repaircafe.org](http://www.repaircafe.org).

