

2025 + 2026 Eau Claire Repair Fairs

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“So, when is the next one?”

Overall, the first two Eau Claire Repair Fairs were smashing successes and reached the goals we intended to achieve. We connected with the community over repair, fixed some stuff, and taught our neighbors how to fix their own stuff. One of the most common pieces of feedback we heard at the events were “this is awesome, we need to do more of these.” This was amazing to hear and fulfilling to know events like the Repair Fair directly align with the needs of our community.



Both Year 1 and Year 2 were hosted in UW-Eau Claire campus buildings, which offered unique benefits and challenges. In 2025, buoyed by our support from WiLS, we operated the event on our own with library staff, a student organization, and community volunteers. In 2026, we were asked to partner with a new, massive community event, Eau Claire Earth Fest, which brought in an even larger audience and greater attendance.

Here's how Year 1 and Year 2 went by numbers:

2025 EC Repair Fair - Saturday, April 26th , 10 am - 3pm

- 111 attendees
- 11 university staff and faculty volunteers, 5 library student employees
- 6 student volunteers, 9 community volunteers
- 7 took kits to giveaway, 25 entries into the drawing
- 52 cardboard sewing templates
- ~150 cardboard character cutouts
- 1 very happy event planning team

2026 EC Repair Fair – Saturday, April 18th, 10am - 4pm

- ~275 attendees
- 6 university staff and faculty volunteers, 2 library student employees
- 3 community volunteers
- 5 tool kits to giveaway, 30 entries into the drawing
- ~40 cardboard sewing templates
- ~100 cardboard character cutouts
- 1 very happy event planning team

----- General Things We Learned -----

Experts

Something we learned very quickly is that many people do not consider themselves experts, even people who are repair professionals as their main occupation. It is pretty tricky to convince people that they are skilled enough for what we are looking for, and organizers realized it would be helpful to reach out to vendors and experts earlier. After the initial contact, if you can get someone to respond, it can take a bit of persuasion and gentle prodding to get folks to agree. But once they were at the event itself and experienced working with attendees, many of the experts asked about future events and how they could get involved.

Some of the talents and skills we had on hand:

- Sewing / invisible mending – clothes, housewares, and stuffed animals
- Darning and visible mending, including an iron on patch station
- Lamp rewiring
- 3D printing and scanning – creating replacement parts, including game board pieces
- Soldering and basic electronics repair
- Upcycling and creative reuse
- Introduction to knitting

Location and Space

For Year 1, we had a massive ballroom with ample space for all our activities, volunteers, and experts. There was room to move about the tables and areas, and sound was never an issue. We also had access to digital screens in the ballroom that allowed us to display advertisements and thank you notices as a rotating slide show throughout the event. However, its location on the 3rd floor of our student union was a barrier to community members who were not as familiar with the space. Many assumed the event was only for campus community members, which is a misconception we tried to educate people on for year 2.



For Year 2, we had a very different space set up that was roughly a tenth of what we had during year 1. This forced us to invite fewer experts, skip the Craft Supplies Swap, and other considerations to fit in the allotted space. There were other options that physically had more room, but very limited access to outlets. Since many of our experts rely on having access to electricity, those needs were prioritized when selecting the location within the Earth Fest event. The main vendor fair for the event was on a large basketball court, and then the EC

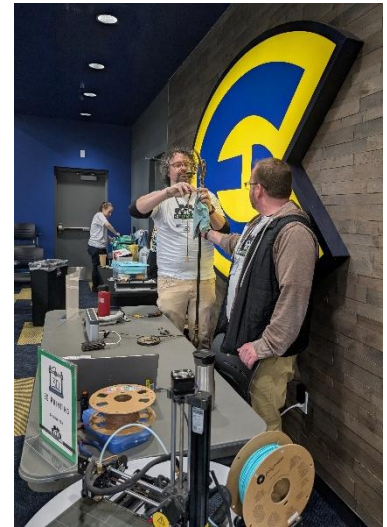
Repair Fair was situated on the 2nd floor in a fan deck area that overlooked the courts. We were located next to the room where panels and presentations were being held, so traffic to the area was fairly steady throughout the day.

Audience

For both events, the intention was to connect with the widest possible audience of community members. We created activities for all ages and abilities to give attendees the chance to interact and learn with topics they felt passionate about. For Year 1, our location in the heart of campus was a bit of a negative for community members outside of our campus. The continued perception that on campus events are only for students and faculty persists. But for Year 2, even though we were in a different UW-Eau Claire space, its location off campus made it a much bigger draw and easier to access.



When speaking with event volunteers after Year 2, the feedback on the locations our attendees traveled from was surprising. Many attendees were from Eau Claire or Chippewa Falls, but we had a large number of folks coming in from out of town. Bloomer, Cadot, Osseo and other towns about 30+ minutes away were commonly mentioned by attendees. This was great to see and really helped staff recognize that this type of event is a large draw and worth the drive for our fellow community members.



Post Event Debrief

After hosting this event twice and thinking about the interactions we had with our attendees, the planning team has some bigger philosophical questions to consider before moving forward with Year 3. How many people are coming to learn and repair, versus coming in for entertainment? Many attendees seemed excited about the event concept but were there for more informational or observational participation.

What is the point of the event? To connect? To teach concrete skills? A little of both? Focused on one, over the other? This question will help the planning team decide what to focus on and prioritize at future events. If space allows, a schedule of workshops with the ability to sign up was floated as an idea to draw attendees looking to build skills. The all-ages activities and vendor fair, especially with the breath of eco-minded businesses as we saw at Earth Fest, was a great way to keep the event open to everyone and supportive of different attendees.

----- Event Activities -----

Vendor Fair

For Year 1, our repair expert stations were mixed with other community volunteers to create a vendor fair atmosphere. With our smaller audience at Year 1, we noticed that even with fewer people attending, the space inspired longer, higher quality interactions between experts and attendees.



For Year 2, because our space was so limited, we had fewer ‘vendor’ booths overall. Earth Fest itself had a vendor fair as part of the greater event, which many of our vendors tabled at instead so the same information and resources were at both events.

For a larger audience at future events with different space offerings, we are considering scheduled workshops in combination with a walk-up fair type layout. Advertising specific workshops would help draw in attendees and give them an actionable idea to take away.

Craft Supplies Swap

We changed the name to the Craft Supplies Swap, to help with confusion. Some asked if we were looking for complete or near completed crafts, which are accepted! But primarily we are seeking supplies. Many attendees brought in items and we ended up with a good selection of donations to take back to the Bugold Makerspace and our year-round Craft Supplies Swap table.

When we opened the Bugold Makerspace in 2018, one of the first questions we got was “do you take donations of supplies.” While there are many things we can accept into the Makerspace, we quickly ran out of room for all the donations from such generous people around town. There were also donations we received of duplicate items or things we don’t typically keep in stock. Thus, the Craft (Supplies) Swap was born. Besides keeping useable goods out of the landfills, over time we realized that this service also helped students that face financial hardship. Many students in a variety of majors need consumable supplies like art supplies but may not have transportation to a store or the financial security to purchase materials. Now students can check the Swap table before they try to figure out how to purchase an item.

Unfortunately, due to space limitations, we did not bring the Craft Supplies Swap to our Year 2 event.

Kid's Activities

Our intent was to host the event for all ages, which meant we needed to create a range of activities. Attendees were told that children must be accompanied by an adult at all times, and this seemed to work well. Before advertising your event as all ages, check with your organization to see if you have any Youth Protection requirements for youth activities. Because we required parents or guardians to always stay with their children, we were able to claim exception from requirements like background checks for all volunteers and staff working the event.

We had a designated kids activities table for attendees to gather, and we were delighted to see learners of all ages engage with the space. We brought fine tip markers and colored pencils, as many of our projects required coloring tools that could handle small details. On the table we had repair-themed coloring pages, as well as our recycled cardboard crafts. We created a selection of sewing templates modeled that could be colored and then stitched using brightly colored shoelaces. This eliminated the need for needles of any kind and allowed for greater creative flexibility.



To create our cardboard character cut outs, we spray painted reclaimed cardboard with white paint and then used our Trotec laser engraver to etch away designs. We typically do Pokémon as this is a hit with people of all generations, but due to the success of the recent movie, we also added some Minecraft characters to the mix.

Tool Giveaway

Before advertising any type of raffle or drawing, check with your organization to see if there are any rules related to giveaways. We learned that donated items are fine to give to attendees, but items purchased with any funds, grant money or otherwise, would require extra steps. We reached out to local hardware stores about donating tools but didn't hear back from many of them. Luckily our event team eventually connected with a local business that had a selection of unused tool items from a previous buying season that they were looking to



rehome. For Year 1, we were able to get enough tools to create seven tool kits in 3 sizes – 2 small, 4 medium, and 1 large toolbox. This was a big draw for attendees, and many of the winners were students who mentioned that these were some of the first tools they’ve ever had. For Year 2, we returned to the same donor and were able to gather enough tools to create five small to medium sized kits. If we were unable to secure new tool donations, the event planning committee considered soliciting donations of secondhand tools or shopping local garage sales to source materials.

We had the tools at the Repair Fair to show attendees what they could win, but we decided against announcing the winners at the event and instead opted for ‘need not be present to win’ and pulling the names later. This allowed all of us to focus on the people we were assisting with repairs and not create a distraction. The other policy we enforced was not allowing people under 18 to enter the drawing. After conferring with the parents on our event planning team, we determined that it would be safer for a parent to win a prize and later share it with their child, than try to explain where someone’s kid randomly got a hammer and screwdriver.

Evaluation and Surveys

We knew we wanted a survey at the event itself as well as one for our vendors post-event. We decided to use LibWizard, which can do either surveys or forms. We created a QR code for the survey and placed those on posters around the event. We knew that attendees would be filling out the survey on their phone, so we opted for question types that would be easier to complete on a handheld device. None of the questions were required, to hopefully capture partial surveys if someone ran out of time. Unfortunately, we did not receive any submissions from attendees at the event, but we did post the survey to our social media pages with the event photo album to hopefully catch folks after the event. Be sure to check with your organization to see if you have any rules related to surveys and institutional review board (IRB) approvals. We managed to keep our survey very simple, and that avoided the need for IRB approval.



Thank you for taking our quick, 3-question survey. By electing to take this survey you will be contributing to the success of future Repair Fairs.

Your responses will remain anonymous.

Start



How would you rate your experience at the Repair Fair?

☐ Very good

☐ Good

☐ Acceptable

☐ Poor

☐ Very Poor

Please explain your choice:

What would you like to see at a future Repair Fair?

Any final thoughts or comments for the organizers:

[Back](#) [Submit](#)

-----EXPENSES-----

Marketing

For Year 1, we relied on paid boosted event ads through Facebook and Meta to help us spread the word about the event. We also created paper flyers that were hung around campus buildings and throughout the community.

For Year 2, because we were a part of EC Earth Fest, we were able to utilize their marketing materials and promotion to also promote our event. The Earth Fest planning team created a website and a Facebook event and added the event to local community calendars. We also had a team of UWEC student interns that helped us put up posters around town and connect with other students to talk about the event, either casually with friends or presenting at student organization meetings.

Staffing

For Year 1, we utilized a combination of UWEC staff, faculty, and student employees as well as staff from other UWEC departments and community volunteers. With such a large space to staff, it was helpful to have a lot of extra hands to assist as things came up.

A priority for Year 1 was a dedicated photographer so we could have images to use in future promotional activities. We had two people split up for the event – one in the morning, and one for the afternoon, which helped us get a great variety of shots.



For Year 2, we had a much smaller expert crew because of the space limitations. But, we were able to rely on the Earth Fest staff for many of the logistics items that we needed extra coverage to handle in Year 1.

Supplies

Thanks to our support from WiLS, we were able to purchase a great selection of tools and consumables to assist with repairs. Some examples of the items we purchased:

- Plastic Welding Kit + Pins set (for fixing cracked plastic housing on electronics)
- Heat N Bond Iron on Adhesive (for iron on fabric patches)
- Awl tool set (for poking new holes in leather belts or shoe straps)
- Various kinds of glues (super glue, rubber shoe glue, outdoor sport glue, etc)
- Various kinds of tapes (masking, packing, duct,)
- Tiny screwdrivers with different heads (for fixing glasses, electronics, etc)
- Sewing needles of different sizes, with cotton and polyester thread in many colors