



Sustainable Solutions: Your Guide to Healthier Homes and Communities

June 2023



Photo courtesy of Centro Cultural

Community Spotlight: Centro Cultural

In May, Centro Cultural graduated 18 new master recyclers, known as the *Expertos en Reciclaje*. The class came out of Metro's Environmental Promoter program to create community-designed Master Recycler courses. Master recyclers are community engagement volunteers focused on sustainable consumption, climate protection, saving food, reducing toxics, composting and recycling.

The Environmental Promoter program brings specific communities together to design sustainability projects meeting their own goals and aspirations. The community-designed class provides resources, trainings, and project support. Metro provides funds to help remove barriers to participation such as childcare, interpretation, food and transportation. Participants earn \$15 per hour during the course and when engaging in 30 hours of outreach to their communities.

Nine of the twelve course presentations for the Centro Cultural class were taught directly in Spanish by previous class graduates, and the Household Hazardous Waste and Hillsboro Library of Things tours were also given directly by Spanish-speaking workers.



Photo courtesy of Rebuilding Together Portland

Metro's Regional Refresh Fund supports those in need with home clean-up

After a successful pilot, Regional Refresh Fund is now a fully adopted program at Metro. Between the months of March and May, the program funded 30 cleanup projects across the region, including one by [Rebuilding Together Portland](https://www.rebuildingtogetherportland.org/).

This cleanup serviced the homes of 24 individuals with low incomes and restricted mobility whose homes had fallen into disrepair. In a single day, they filled seven dumpsters and three dump trucks, hauling away 150 tons of debris and garbage. One grateful recipient said the help gave them a "new lease on life." Amazing work!

To learn more about Regional Refresh Fund, visit www.oregonmetro.gov/regionalrefresh or reach out to Cayla Pruettt at cayla.pruett@oregonmetro.gov.



Photo courtesy of Repair PDX

Metro grant supports small appliance repair program

With support from a [2022 Metro Investment and Innovation program grant](#), [Repair PDX](#) is piloting a small appliance repair program to keep fixable items out of the garbage and benefit underserved communities.

Repair PDX holds weekly repair drop-in hours for volunteers and community members, building connections as they repair small appliances together. Partnerships with the Gresham ReStore, Free Geek, and James Recycling bring a new stream of incoming items needing to be fixed. Repair PDX donates the repaired items to nonprofits such as Community Warehouse and the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO).

Small appliances that are unable to be repaired are used as repair education tools for youth programming with partners such as the Buckman Elementary SUN program and Environmental Promoters. Other unfixable items can be harvested for parts.

Repair PDX holds regular events such as Repair Cafes for community members to bring items that need to be fixed and learn new skills. Visit repairpdx.org/repair-events to learn about upcoming Repair Cafes.



Solve pest and weed problems

Explore a new online pest management resource for the Pacific Northwest called [Solve Pest and Weed Problems](#). The website, created by Oregon State University, provides resources to help folks use less toxic methods for preventing and removing home pests.

The website shows research-based safe and effective tactics for common garden and property pests and weeds. It also provides non-chemical methods alongside the most effective and least toxic chemical options available, reducing risks to people and the environment.

The initial launch focuses on high-priority pests, pesticide safety and pesticide risk reduction methods, with more pest information to come. To learn more, visit solvepestproblems.oregonstate.edu

Tips for managing pests at home:

1. Identify and learn about the pest or weed.
2. Determine if action is needed. Some pests or weeds need attention, some can be left alone.
3. Use resources like the [Solve Pest Problems](#) website to learn how to manage problems using the safest methods and understand any risks associated with various options.
4. After taking action, follow up with preventive steps for long-term success.



Easy disposal of some everyday hazardous items

Many common items in our homes contain chemicals that shouldn't go in the trash and can be taken to Metro's hazardous waste facilities. But for some, there are other convenient disposal options. Here are a few:

- House paint and related materials such as varnish, primer, sealers and stains can be taken to any [PaintCare](#) site. Containers must be in good condition with readable labels.
- Small rechargeable batteries, found in things like electric toothbrushes and cordless tools, are accepted for free by some retailers through the [Call2Recycle](#) program.
- Handling of some medications, especially those requiring a prescription, is often legally restricted. In Oregon, there are secure drop sites at many pharmacies. You can find one near you on the Med [Take-Back](#) website.
- Large barbecue propane tanks can usually be exchanged when you need a new one. Some manufacturers also have recycling programs for old tanks that aren't refillable. Check with manufacturers and distributors for details.

Our hazardous waste crews can't accept a few items like packing foam (Styrofoam) and electronics. For additional disposal and recycling information, contact Metro's waste prevention experts at 503-234-3000 or visit [Ask Metro](#).

Calendar of Community Events

Summer is here! Join Metro garden educators at the Oregon Zoo Wildlife Garden on weekends throughout the summer for [fun, family-friendly activities](#). Or visit [Metro's learning gardens](#) and discover how to have a healthy, attractive, wildlife-friendly garden without pesticides. Be sure to visit our [website calendar](#) to learn more about upcoming community events, educational programs and volunteer opportunities.

Connect with our Community Partners

Follow the links below to connect directly with our community partners to find out how you can support their work, find upcoming events, classes and volunteer opportunities in your neighborhood.

- **Repair PDX** holds [weekly repair drop-in hours for volunteers](#) to come repair items, building community connections and shared learning among volunteers as they work on repairing small appliances together. Repair PDX holds regular events such as Repair Cafes for community members to bring items that need to be fixed. Visit [repairpdx.org/repair-events](#) to learn about upcoming Repair Cafes where you can get your items fixed and learn new skills.
- Check out **Centro Cultural's** [calendar of summer events](#) to see their work in action!
- **Habitat for Humanity ReStores** are home improvement stores and donation centers that sell new and gently used furniture, home decor, appliances, building materials, light fixtures, and more to the public at discounted prices. All proceeds support local Habitat for Humanity homebuilding programs. [Check out their volunteer calendar to get involved!](#)
- Donate your tech during [Free Geek's](#) public donation hours! Visit their office Wed - Sat, 11 AM - 4PM. You can also [learn how else you can take action](#) on their website.
- Since 1976, the **Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO)** has served refugees, immigrants, and others in greater Portland. IRCO [volunteers provide essential skills and knowledge to fulfill their mission](#), meaning your time can have a real impact on people's lives. Visit [IRCO's website](#) to learn more!

Stay Informed

Subscribe to Metro's quarterly newsletter, Sustainable Solutions, which provides resources for waste prevention from Metro and community partners. Learn helpful tips for recycling, gardening and reducing toxic chemicals in your home and yard.

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