

## [\\$12K awarded to Franklin County businesses, schools supports waste reduction](#)

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Four Franklin County businesses and schools have been awarded \$12,312 in micro-grants to aid in efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle.

Swanson's Fabrics and Hens & Chicks Consignment Store, along with Colrain Central School and Sanderson Academy, were among the 23 organizations selected by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) to receive funding through its Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grant Program.

"Reducing the amount of waste we produce — by reusing, repairing, rescuing and donating what we already have — has the biggest direct impact on our ability to meet our waste reduction goals," MassDEP Commissioner Bonnie Heiple said in a statement. "Funding these projects ensures we have the infrastructure to tackle waste reduction right here in Massachusetts."

Swanson's Fabrics in Turners Falls received \$3,650 to develop mobile mending kits, allowing owner Kathryn Swanson and her team to hit the road and show people how to repair worn-out clothes.

Swanson said her Avenue A shop is filled entirely with donated items, from fabric to buttons. Even the furniture in the shop and workroom was donated. In the world of crafting, it's quite common to purchase materials for a project that never gets finished, or sometimes never gets started. Swanson's goal is to get old fabric, buttons and more out of people's basements and into the hands of someone who may actually have a use for it.

Swanson said the store is not necessarily recycling or repurposing items, but it is keeping materials out of the trash and out of forgotten bins in storage. The new mending kits, too, are not really about recycling, she added, but they do promote sustainability by helping people learn how to extend the life of their clothes.

Swanson and her team have already done mobile events before, and have worked with local libraries to host classes such as a rug-braiding workshop. Similar mending classes are offered at the Avenue A shop, such as Mend with Friends sessions on Tuesdays, but the mobile mending kits will be a first.

The \$3,650 grant will allow the shop to buy carts, but much of the other materials in the kits are items the store already has and receives frequent donations of, like zippers and buttons. The store also received a donation of a limited edition Singer Featherweight sewing machine, which is more lightweight and easy to transport than the average sewing machine.

“We haven’t done mobile mending because it’s more equipment and set-up, and you don’t know what people are going to bring you, but you have to be prepared with extra zipper pulls and buckles,” Swanson said. “But we have built enough of a collection that we can go on the road a bit.”

The kits will be taken to libraries, schools and possibly farmers markets for pop-up fixing sessions where people can get help darning socks, reattaching buttons to shirts and more.

“We’re definitely ‘teach a man to fish’ kind of people, so we hope to show people how to fix their clothes, too,” she said.

The Hens & Chicks Consignment Store on Main Street in Greenfield received \$6,650 to buy industrial cleaning equipment that will allow the shop to take in more product.

Co-owner Justin Vincent said when used clothes are given to the consignment store, they must be washed and steamed, putting heavy wear and tear on his machines. He goes through a steamer per month and often brings clothes home to wash.

The grant will allow Vincent and his wife, Mindy, who runs the shop, to buy two industrial steamers, a combination washer/dryer, shelving and clothing racks. They will also be able to increase advertising and hopefully inform more people that they can bring their used textiles there instead of throwing them out.

“The more we take in, the less is going to end up wasting in landfills,” Vincent said. “We’re very appreciative of DEP. ... There’s a lot more we’d like to do, but this is a good start.”

Colrain Central School and Sanderson Academy were awarded \$2,012 to replace single-use plastic serving containers with reusable stainless steel ones.

Colrain Central School’s Librarian and Service Learning Coordinator Talia Miller, who also handles grant applications for the school, said Cafeteria Manager Tina Crossman has been committed to increasing the sustainability of the cafeteria.

Crossman had already bought reusable metal silverware and plates. The grant will allow her to complete the set and buy small stainless steel cups for sides like fruit and vegetables, helping eliminate the \$1,000 the school spends each year on non-recyclable serving containers while also reducing waste.

Additionally, the school will acquire a magnetic trash can lid with a funnel that prevents children from accidentally throwing out silverware. The school loses 40 pieces of silverware per year this way.

“Sometimes when the kids go to throw out their napkins and other trash, they dump the whole tray, not realizing their fork was still on it,” Miller explained.

Miller's children attend Sanderson Academy in Ashfield, so she reached out to the academy to see if it would be interested in joining forces on the grant application.

Sanderson Academy will buy reusable cups, plates, silverware, trays and soup bowls.

"I want to give credit to the cafeteria workers who are taking on this extra work," Miller said. "Between organizing and cleaning all the reusable stuff, it's a lot more work than using the single-use serving dishes."

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