

# Tools for Community Empowerment

## Check-out tool libraries has neighbors helping neighbors

BY CARI HACHMANN  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

When Tringo Bekele, a Gresham resident, walked into Home Depot to buy a lawn mower, a lady there told her to try the Northeast Portland Tool Library instead, where local residents can rent tools for free.

A humane suggestion in contrast to what Home Depot might consider horrible customer service, but during rougher economic times, perhaps people are looking out for their own and not corporate profits.

Moreover, in a time when individual consumption breeds tall egos, gated communities, and plain overabundance, many may wonder if an old-fashioned sense of community that once permitted people the comfort in bor-

rowing from their neighbors -- still exists.

Well, it does-- If you happen to be neighbors with one of the three non-profit Tool Libraries in Southeast, North, or Northeast Portland. Future sites are being planned for Vancouver and southwest Portland.

On a busy Saturday morning inside the bright basement corner of Redeemer Lutheran Church on Northeast 20th and Killingworth, home of the Northeast Portland Tool Library, Bekele and three of her children, became one of 2,100 members who can checkout tools for free on two days of the week, including Wednesday evenings.

Formed by Tom and Eric Fair-Laymen after the idea came about during a neighborhood as-



PHOTO BY CARI HACHMANN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The Northeast Portland Tool Library is located in the basement of Redeemer Lutheran Church on Northeast 20th Avenue and Killingworth Street.

donated, but a few are bought with late fees, which charges \$1 a day for a tools returned after 10 a.m. the following Saturday.

Members can check out up to seven tools per week, ranging from carpentry and woodworking tools, to garden and power tools, as well as mechanical and drywall supplies.

"A lot of people don't have knowledge or finances to maintain and improve their living situation," said Will, who frequented the tool library every weekend in search of project ideas before he became a volunteer there.

While seasonal upkeep projects has weed whackers and lawn mowers flying out the door in the summer months and compressors during the winter, many people come to the library seeking not only home improvements, but ideas for new projects.

During the late fall, the tool library offers a 'Putting Away your Garden' class and a 'Waking Up your Garden' class in the early spring. Other classes are usually offered one a month, such as seed saving and deck building for adults and bird-house construction for kids.

The Northeast Portland Tool Library website, neptl.org, also lists the variety of tools offered as well as informational resources like How to Build a Garden Bench.

"People can empower themselves and improve their life, and it feels good to be apart of that," Will said, who likes to find out what projects people are working for their home.

When Bekele walked in looking for a lawn mower, she had no

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sociation meeting, the volunteer-run library offers hundreds of tools to community members 18 or older living in the northeast area west of 82nd Avenue.

What started in a church garage with a machete and 6 other donated tools soon evolved into a community hub that rents over 300 tools --welders, jacks hammers, grinders, table saws, to the more commonly used hoes, rakes, shovels, and mowers-- on any given weekend.

"Many tools are things people wouldn't use but once or twice a year or in their life, so it would be silly to buy," said Robert Bowles, the volunteer treasurer who's been around since the tool library's opening three years ago.

Nearly all of the tools are

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## Holton Youth Basketball Series

In an effort to help youth basketball players prepare for their upcoming season, the Michael Holton Basketball Academy is inviting boys and girls to attend Elite Individual Skill Development series during the month of September, which includes workouts designed to help players execute fundamental skills in a com-

petitive environment.

Seven, one hour sessions will focus on ball-handling, shooting, passing, footwork, as well as individual and team defense.

The trainings begin this week at Pearl Court, 1425 N.W. 16th Ave. For more information and online registration, visit [holtonbasketball.com](http://holtonbasketball.com) or call 503-517-9090.