

## Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL) 2009 in Review



### New in 2009

REAL, in cooperation with the Rideau Canal Museum, received the first of two years of funding for a **Volunteer Coordinator** to develop the Rideau Volunteers program.

REAL celebrated its **20<sup>th</sup> anniversary** in 2009 with: a wine and cheese for media and municipal representatives in March, birthday cupcakes and entertainment in the park in July, and a celebration local foods dinner in October. A granite stone will be placed on Evergreen Avenue in 2010.

**Walk 'n Roll Week** was organized for May by the Health Unit, Chamber of Commerce and REAL to encourage residents to walk or bike to school, work or for errands.

REAL was honoured to be chosen as one of the ten finalists for **Earth Day Canada's Hometown Heroes** award.

REAL is participating with other Green Communities members in a pilot program on **Urban Stormwater Runoff control**, to be completed in January.

New developments in Ontario this year included "**Do What you Can**" for the return of hazardous materials, the **Ontario Electronic Stewardship program** for electronic waste disposal, an improved **used tire collection program** and a province wide **ban on cosmetic pesticides**.

### Ongoing projects

REAL continues to develop its **REAL Deal Reuse Store**. Sales and donations are growing and we have a regular clientele. Several promotions brought attention and new customers to the store. A new propane furnace was purchased by the Town of Smiths Falls in December. Thanks to a \$15,000 Ontario Trillium Foundation grant we have replaced the large store windows and have functioning utility and kitchen sinks. In the new year we will have a new customer entrance awning, new windows in the office area and safer flooring in the upper level.

The development of the **Environment Centre** hit a snag when Parks Canada announced the need to further investigate a potentially contaminated site on the property, and the presence of a species at risk, the Least bittern. However, we are confident we will eventually be able to proceed with most aspects of our plan for the three acre property. The native garden and demonstration garden are in place, and we continue to investigate the possibility of a community garden. The seedlings planted are doing well.

The **ecoENERGY** program is a continued success, with our energy auditor fully booked by homeowners requiring a home energy assessment before taking advantage of the increased federal and provincial rebates before the March 2011 deadline.

We finished a third year of **Well Aware**, completing a full quota of Guided Self Assessments, several public presentations, and an Information Provider Workshop in November.

**Pitch In Smiths Falls** was another success, with 1100 volunteers participating. The **Evergreen Avenue** Committee maintained the pathway and native plantings at Victoria Park, and continues to replace paver lights with dedicated granite stones.

On the **climate change** front, REAL offered a solar hot water presentation in March, and a presentation by a leading ecoENERGY trainer in October, both in cooperation with the Rideau Canal Museum. Discussions and workshops were attended on active transportation.

Our application to Revenue Canada for **charitable status** is being reviewed. We continue to make presentations to **area municipal councils** to keep them informed and solicit support.

**REAL was visible in the community** by participating in the annual Trivia Challenge, a curling bonspiel, the Art of Being Green and the Rideau Home Hardware Green Show. REAL commented on the proposed Turtle Island spillway, and considered carefully the implications of a water bottling plant in our community.

REAL **communicates** details of REAL events, environmental issues and the activities of similar organizations through our notices, newsletter, website and REAL Actions newspaper column.

## **Who made it happen**

REAL is fortunate to have so many dedicated staff and volunteers to make this busy non-profit organization function. We sincerely appreciate everyone's contributions. Special thanks to Susan Brandum, our Environmental Projects Manager and our Board: Barb Hicks (President), Larry Manson (Vice-President), Carolyn Fraser (Treasurer), Karen Schecter (Secretary), Peter Au, Cathryn Davidson and Claudia Mosher .

## **Challenges for 2010**

Continued development of the REAL Deal Store and Environment Centre. A strengthened volunteer base. Charitable status for the whole organization. Fundraising to keep our organization going in tough economic times. An active and engaged board.

**Thank you for *your* support!**

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