

Rideau Environmental Action League

**REAL people taking REAL action
to protect our environment**

REAL conducts community-wide environmental projects and promotes environmental improvements within the Town of Smiths Falls, Ontario and Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Counties.

ANNUAL REPORT

Feb 1, 2010—Jan 31, 2011



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In 2010 REAL entered its third decade - quite a milestone for a diverse group of citizens that began with a vision of "thinking globally and acting locally" back in 1989.

Today we are a well-respected local environmental organization. We have seven skilled staff, 75 dedicated volunteers, and a committed Board of Directors. REAL contributes to the economic activity of the region through our activities and we are on solid financial footing for a non-profit organization. We were also granted charitable status for all of REAL, which opens up additional funding possibilities.

REAL spent more energy on fundraising and special events this year than usual, which shows we will do whatever is needed to ensure we have sufficient financial resources to continue. Each event is also an opportunity to connect with people in the community who may not be familiar with REAL.

The Rideau Volunteers program acknowledges that our strength is people, and that we are looking into the future to ensure we have the necessary human resources to be successful. We have been fortunate to have so many people contribute to REAL through work and volunteer placements. Katimavik, Canada World Youth, Ontario Works, students collecting their Community Service hours, SFDCI art students, long time members and new recruits keep REAL an interesting and enjoyable place to be.

And most importantly, we have been able to continue to take action on water, energy, and waste issues. This year we maintained projects like Well Aware, ecoENERGY, Evergreen Avenue and Pitch-In Smiths Falls.

We held a local foods dinner, and established The REAL Community Garden. Our public education activities inform residents and reinforce healthy environmental practices.

Our challenge is to recruit others to be actively engaged in environmental activities, keep our fundraising going in tough economic times, and limit the projects we undertake to what is achievable and most relevant in our community today.

REAL sincerely appreciates the support of our members, volunteers, donors, and supporters who have helped us on our way. Please continue to participate in whatever capacity you can - the environment of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville needs your attention more than ever!

Barb Hicks, President

Board of Directors

Barbara Hicks	<i>President</i>
Peter Au	<i>Past President</i>
Larry Manson	<i>Vice President</i>
Karen Schecter	<i>Secretary</i>
Carolyn Fraser	<i>Treasurer</i>
Cathryn Davidson	
Scott Lumsden	
Betty Davis	
Elva Corless	<i>Director Emerita</i>
Susan Brandum	<i>Environmental Projects Manager</i>
Ken Graham	<i>Town of Smiths Falls Liaison</i>

2010 Highlights

☆ RIDEAU VOLUNTEERS

REAL, in cooperation with the Rideau Canal Museum (RCM), entered the second year of the **Rideau Volunteers Program**, funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Volunteer Co-ordinator, Lynn Preston, recruited, processed and acknowledged many new volunteers. Volunteer events included a day for RCM and voyageur canoe tours, a bus tour to Jones Falls, and a repurposing workshop. A successful volunteer fair was held in Smiths Falls in September.

☆ COMMUNITY GARDEN

The **REAL Community Garden** was established at the REAL Deal site with the co-operation of ecoPerth, an anonymous donor, the Community Health Centre and others. Four raised, straw-bale plots were used by Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Link, the Smiths Falls and District Club for Youth and REAL. Gardeners also participated in a vegetable preparation workshop at the Community Health Centre.

☆ CAPACITY BUILDING

Our application to Revenue Canada for **charitable status** was successful. As all of REAL's activities are considered charitable, we are in the process of winding down the Rideau Environment Trust. A team continues to make presentations to **area municipal councils** to keep them informed and solicit support. **Two new board members** joined our Board of Directors thanks to a recruitment committee.

☆ THE REAL DEAL

The **REAL Deal Reuse Store** continues to thrive, with sales and donations exceeding the previous year by 30%, a steady crew of volunteers, and a regular clientele. Another part-time paid position was created. Improvements funded by a Trillium capital grant continued with a customer entrance awning, new windows and safer flooring in the upper level.

2010 Initiatives

LOCAL FOODS HARVEST DINNER

An October Local Foods Harvest Dinner celebrated and showcased local foods, and was an enjoyable social time and fundraiser for REAL.

FUNDRAISERS

Two new fundraisers were launched. In April Andress' Independent Grocer allowed us to request a two dollar REAL donation from each customer in honour of Earth Week. A bottle drive at The Beer Store in July was a low effort but effective promotional and fundraising event.

FIT AND microFIT

Two workshops on Ontario's renewable energy installation incentive programs attracted 160 people.

BIKE ROUTE MAP

A map detailing potential bike routes in the area surrounding Smiths Falls was researched and produced by REAL. It was combined with an in-town route map for the Town of Smiths Falls and distributed throughout the region.

PAINTED PANELS

A series of five painted panels depicting the past, present and future of the local environment was painted by SFDCI art club students and mounted at the REAL Deal in December.



Ongoing Projects



Pitch In Smiths Falls was another success, with 1397 volunteers participating to remove litter from our community. The **Evergreen Avenue** Committee continues to replace paver lights with dedicated granite stones. A stone commemorating REAL's 20th anniversary, and one honouring one of our founding members, Elva Corless, will be placed in spring 2011.

- ◆ **Environment Centre.** Parks Canada continue to examine a potentially contaminated site within the 85 William St. W. site, and to monitor the presence of a species at risk, the Least Bittern. The small contaminated area is of no unacceptable risk to the user groups considered, but the Least Bittern study will take another year to complete. We are confident most of our plans for the property will be able to continue. The native garden and seedlings continue to do well, and the community garden and mural are new to the site.

- ◆ REAL was **visible in the community through** the annual Trivia Challenge, a curling bonspiel, and other public events. REAL was given the opportunity to comment on the Town of Smiths Falls new recycling program, the Smiths Falls downtown master plan, and the Health Unit's Healthy Communities program.
- ◆ REAL **communicates** details of REAL events, environmental issues and the activities of similar organizations through our notices, newsletter, website and REAL Actions newspaper column.
- ◆ We were pleased to have the **Central Band of the Canadian Forces** return for their 12th benefit concert for REAL. "Prelude to Christmas" raised \$4000.
- ◆ The **ecoENERGY** program experienced another successful year, despite the federal government withdrawing from the rebate program. The province of Ontario continued to offer rebates for home energy efficiency improvements, and will do so until March 2011.
- ◆ REAL, along with other Green Communities, participated in a pilot **Urban Stormwater Runoff control** program.



We finished a ninth year of **Well Aware**, completing more than 350 Guided Self Assessments, and 20 public presentations.

Financial support provided by



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and
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Communities
CANADA**

**YMCA / YWCA
CANADA**



Plans for 2011 and Beyond

- ◆ Continue to develop the REAL Deal Store.



- ◆ Redesign our home energy audit offerings with the demise of the current ecoEnergy program.



- ◆ Extend our energy audit capacity to multiple unit buildings, small businesses and the small commercial and institutional sectors.

- ◆ Construct a Rain Water Garden at the Library as an example of storm water reduction methods.



- ◆ Fully develop our online Take It Back Directory with municipalities throughout Lanark, Leeds and Grenville and the Town of Smiths Falls.

- ◆ Determine how to more formally develop our site as an Environment Centre.

- ◆ Explore how to continue our volunteer program.



- ◆ Assist with the next incarnation of the low-income housing retrofits.

- ◆ Deliver a storm water reduction program in Smiths Falls.

- ◆ Expand the Community Garden and the number of participants.



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