

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

APRIL 2012

Inside this issue:

Just What is RAIN

2

Ken Graham New
RVCA Chair

3

Combat Climate
Change from the
Ground Up

3

Canadians and
Food Waste

4

Real, Local Slow
Food

5

Dog Owner
Workshop Apr. 14

5

REAL Deal
Happenings

6

In REAL Life

7

Pitch In Smiths Falls
April 21 - May 6

8

REAL Strikes Gold - Twice

REAL was doubly honoured at the recent Green Communities Canada annual awards. GCC is a national association of community-based groups that are similar to REAL. The 30 members include such organizations as City Green in Victoria, Warm Up Winnipeg, the Conservation Corps of Newfoundland and Labrador, EcoSuperior in Thunder Bay, the Muskoka Heritage Foundation, Green Venture in Hamilton and Peterborough Green-Up.

Most member organizations are in larger urban centres than REAL. All could submit nominations for the awards.

So, it is a particular honour that GCC awarded REAL's President, Barb Hicks, the Outstanding Board Member of the year and granted Peter Au an Environmental Lifetime Achievement award.



The nomination for Barb said she "must be the most committed volunteer an organization could ever have. She contributes at least a half a day, each day, to REAL, and she's smart, fast and very productive." It also noted she is a graduate of the University of Waterloo's Environmental Studies Program, "believes in the value of incremental steps to enact environmental change and doesn't like wasting effort."



The nomination for Peter noted that he has never met a project he didn't like, and recognized that it has been Peter's boundless enthusiasm that has seen REAL through thick and thin times, including becoming a Green Community.

Just What is This RAIN Program Anyway?

Some of REAL's programs are organized jointly with our national association, Green Communities Canada. ecoENERGY home audits and Well Aware have been two such programs, and now we have RAIN.



Urban stormwater the largest source of pollutants to rivers and lakes. A few years ago, GCC realized the enormous benefits Well Aware was bringing to rural residents, and wanted to do something for urban residents. GCC realized that stormwater run-off had become the number one urban water concern. The US Environmental Protection Agency had determined that urban stormwater run-off was the single largest source of pollutants to surface waters, carrying litter and pollutants from industrial locations, commercial facilities and streets into neighbouring rivers.

(continued inside)



Just What is this RAIN Program Anyway? (continued)

Hardened surfaces speed up and heat up flow. The problem is heightened by the fact that much of our urban centres is covered by hardened surfaces that allow water to run directly over them and not seep into the soil. They include paved streets, driveways, parking lots, rooftops and even grass. There is very little opportunity for rain and snowmelt to seep directly into the ground. Instead, it speeds up and gets hot before emptying into rivers.

Combined Sewer Overflows. The problem is compounded by our waste and stormwater sewer systems. Older systems are Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs), which means the underground pipes that carry sewage away from our homes, along with commercial and industrial effluent, are combined with or are the same as the pipes that carry the water from snowmelt and rain storms.



Bypasses. In the past, water coming into the CSO's during big storms would exceed the capacity of the wastewater treatment plants, which would "bypass" the extra water directly into rivers and lakes without it being fully treated. Only primary treatment, removing the solids, and UV treatment, would be done. Older plants in eastern North America might have "bypassed" full treatment 20-40 times a year. This problem has been getting worse with climate change, as intense storms are happening much more frequently.

Separated storm and waste water. One partial solution has been to separate the CSOs into two pipe systems – one for stormwater from the streets, and one for wastewater. The wastewater pipes go to the wastewater treatment plant and the stormwater pipes go directly to the river. The benefit is that sewage is not going into the rivers at times of storms, but the downside is that street debris and pollutants are carried directly into the river.

CSO tanks. The most recent developments are to build CSO tanks – huge tanks that can store the excess flow from snowmelt and rain storms until the wastewater treatment plant has time to treat it. Another development is to require new subdivisions, commercial establishments and large parking lots to integrate stormwater settling ponds into their infrastructure, allowing debris to settle out before the water flows in stormwater pipes into the rivers.



Smiths Falls Pollution Prevention Control Plan. A few years ago, the Town of Smiths Falls adopted a Pollution Prevention Control Plan for its stormwater. Last summer, it implemented the first recommendation and completed construction on an oversized CSO tank at the wastewater treatment plant facility. This will allow the facility to reduce its bypasses to near zero.

The second recommendation of the plan is to implement "non-source point" pollution prevention. This basically means stopping the pollution from entering the system in the first place, addressing pollution upstream rather than downstream of the system.

Easy solutions. This is what RAIN is about. It's about stopping cigarette butts, street litter and chemical pollutants such as road salt, car oil, car wash soap, and dog poo, from getting into the stormwater system in the first place – **Keep It Clean.** It's about creating more opportunities for snowmelt and rainwater to percolate directly into the soil in urban areas using such things as pervious paving and Rainwater Gardens – **Soak It Up.** And it's about slowing down the rush of water to the stormwater system, especially in the context of increasingly intensive storms, by planting more trees and using rain catchment systems such as rain barrels – **Slow It Down.**



(continued)

Just What is this RAIN Program Anyway? (continued)

REAL actions. REAL will be presenting a range of workshops over the next few months to address these issues and to provide residents of Smiths Falls with alternatives that treat rainwater as a resource, that improve our community with secondary benefits, and that help to keep our Rideau River clean.

We will also be posting more information on our website, on our Facebook page, and in our REAL Deal Reuse Store, but in the meantime you can check out the RAIN website at www.slowrain.ca. And contact us with any questions about what you can do. Lynn Preston is this year's RAIN coordinator, and is available at lynn@realdealstore.ca or 613-283-9500.

Ken Graham New RVCA Chair

Congratulations to Ken Graham, who was acclaimed as Chair of the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority's (RVCA's) 2012 Board of Directors at their AGM February 23.

Ken was first appointed to the RVCA by the Town of Smiths Falls in 2004. Ken, a Smiths Falls Town Councillor, has been Council Liaison to the REAL Board since 1994, and participates in all of our board meetings. Ken is a retired investigator with the Ministry of the Environment, and has also served on the Smiths Falls Police Force.



Combat Climate Change from the Ground Up

Adapted from the Union of Concerned Scientists and www.farmingfutures.org.uk/, here are climate-friendly gardening tips to reduce the impact of climate change in your own backyard;

1. Choose low-emission garden products and practices
Gasoline-powered garden tools are major emitters of carbon dioxide (CO₂). But emissions can also come from fossil fuel-based fertilizers and pesticides and peat-based potting mixes. Use electric or push mowers, rakes, and other low- or no-emission tools, compost, and natural pest-control methods.
2. Don't leave garden soil naked
Stabilize, build, and add nutrients to garden soil that would otherwise remain bare by planting winter cover crops such as grasses, cereal grains, or legumes. In addition to preventing erosion and keeping weeds down, they add carbon to the soil when they are turned under in the spring. Peas, beans, clovers, and other legumes convert nitrogen from the atmosphere into natural fertilizer.
3. Plant trees and shrubs
Because of their size and long life span, trees and large shrubs remove more heat-trapping CO₂ from the atmosphere than other plants. As an added bonus, well-placed trees offer summer shade and protection from winter winds, reducing emissions associated with home heating and air conditioning.
4. Recycle yard and food waste
Organic waste decomposing in oxygen-poor landfills generates methane, a heat-trapping gas 23 times more potent than CO₂. Composting waste in the presence of oxygen minimizes methane production, produces a nutrient-rich soil amendment that reduces the need for synthetic fertilizer, and helps the soil store more carbon.
5. Make your grass "greener"
Lawns absorb carbon from the atmosphere, but this climate benefit is reduced if you use fertilizers and water generously. Make your lawn as climate-friendly as possible by choosing drought-tolerant species, mowing high, watering during the coolest part of the day, and leaving grass clippings to fertilize the soil naturally.



To read the original article, download: [The Climate-Friendly Gardener](#)

Canadian Consumers Contributing to Food Waste

Food waste has become a hot topic lately. We are becoming aware that vast quantities of the world's food is wasted in the field, in transport, in processing, at the grocery store and in restaurants. But consumers are major contributors to food waste as well.

Consider these figures quoted on the World Vision website:

- In the US, 27% of edible food is never eaten;
- One third of food purchased in the UK is thrown out;
- Every month, Torontonians throw out 17.5 million kilograms of food;
- In Toronto, only 75% of the food discarded makes it into their city's green bins.

These are alarming numbers when contrasted with poverty in our own backyards, and food shortages and malnutrition elsewhere in the world.

The Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP) food study in the UK found that:

- Sixty one per cent of all the food waste could have been eaten if consumers better planned and stored their food purchases;
- Fifteen per cent of the food was never opened;
- Five per cent was still within the best-before date;
- Less than one-fifth of the food waste was "unavoidable" scraps, such as peels and bones.

People are spending ridiculous amounts of money on food they never eat. Besides the massive waste of resources, much of the food waste must be collected, transported and deposited in a landfill, often very far away from its source, and that rotting food contributes to greenhouse gases. It is estimated Canada's landfills are responsible for up to 38 per cent of the country's human-made methane, the most destructive greenhouse gas. A study by the Value Chain Management Centre in Guelph, 'Food Waste in Canada' estimated \$27 billion worth of food finds it's ways into landfills each year. And, unfortunately, that amount seems to be increasing.



You can easily make a dent in the amount of food waste that happens in your own household. Buying too much food has gotten to be a habit for many of us. But we could plan ahead better.

Shopping

- Shop more frequently for just a few days meals to help you to buy only what you really need.
- Know yourself and your family's habits: Some people buy lots of food to cook or have on hand, but end up eating out, or eating quickly prepared meals because they run out of time to cook.
- Plan ahead and make a list: check your cupboards, fridge and freezer before you head out shopping.
- Check best before dates at the store but be aware that they are not the same as "discard by" dates.
- Shop in the deli aisle or bulk food stores, so you purchase the exact amount you need.

Cooking at Home

- Store food properly so that it lasts as long as it should.
- Plan to eat fresh foods while they are fresh.
- Watch what your family eats and better manage how much you cook. For some portion advice see: <http://england.lovefoodhatewaste.com/portions>.
- Put only what you know you can eat on your plate.
- Plan for leftovers, and include them in your meal planning.
- Store any leftovers in clear containers where they are easily seen so you know they are there. *(continued)*

Food Waste (continued)

- When making big batches of soups and casseroles, freeze a portion right away before you tire of it.
- Designate one meal a week to use up the little bits. We call it “leftover buffet” night.
- Find out how long foods are actually good for. See www.stilltasty.com.
- Cook creatively and find recipes for smoothies, soups, stir fries etc. that use up small amounts. Find ideas at: <http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/home/ways-avoid-waste-food.htm>.

Parting Thoughts

- Still edible packaged foods can be donated to a food bank or community kitchen.
- When dining out, don't be shy to ask for a doggie bag to enjoy the leftovers later.
- Could some of the food be used to feed pets or wildlife, or given to someone with farm or zoo animals?
- Compost as much food waste as you can in your backyard or your municipal compost system.
- There will always be some inconsumable items like peels, tea bags, egg shells and apple cores which can be composted, too!

For more reading, we recommend “How We Waste Food” in the Toronto Star: <http://www.thestar.com/News/Ideas/article/429617> , and The Green Home Guide <http://www.wholeliving.com/136594/recipes-leftovers/@center/136755/green-home-guide>.

Meat Matters: Savouring the Pleasures of Real, Local Slow Food

REAL partnered with Slow Food Lanark County for an educational and tasty local food event February 5th.

Chef Tibrata Gillies and students from the St. Lawrence College Culinary Skills program demonstrated how to prepare and cook local beef and goat and how to debone a chicken. In the culture of Slow Food, the attendees enjoyed an amazing potluck dinner. People were invited to each bring a dish that included one ingredient grown themselves, or by someone they knew, or grown close to home. Also part of the meal were the meat dishes prepared in the demonstration: beef brisket with caramelized onions, beef brisket and goat burger patties, goat ribs and goat stew. Everyone was impressed that the less expensive, grass fed animal cuts were so tender and delicious.

There was an overwhelming response to the session, and we had to turn down registrants once we hit 70. Thanks to the Smiths Falls Community Health Centre for the use of their top notch demonstration kitchen and an adjoining room for the dinner and brief presentations. There is interest in both organizing groups in planning a similar “teach and taste” event to promote the benefits of local food, but no definite plans have been made. Read more about the Lanark County Slow Food Convivium at www.lanarklocalflavour.ca, and see the Leeds Grenville Local Flavour site as well: www.localflavours.org.

Dog Owner Workshop

On Saturday, April 14, learn how to prevent poo-lution with a dog waste digester, and how to protect your dog from road salt. To be held at the REAL Deal Reuse Store, from 10 a.m. to noon. Please register with Lynn, RAIN coordinator at 283-9500 or lynn@realdealstore.ca and see REALaction.ca for more details.

This is the link to the news release: <http://www.realaction.ca/pdfs/Dog%20workshop.pdf>



REAL Deal Happenings



Many attractive art pieces found new homes during our Second Chance Art Bazaar. The sale lasted two weeks, March 8-10, 15-17 and took place in what we call the “outer office”, as store space for displaying framed art is limited. Watch for more art to be displayed during an outdoor summer sales event.

As bedbugs are becoming a growing concern, the REAL Deal is taking actions to protect our inventory and our customers. We sent four staff and volunteers to the March 7th session offered by the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit. The possibility of bed bugs is just one of the reasons REAL has decided to no longer accept mattresses. They take up valuable space, are a slow moving item, and are difficult to keep clean. However, bed frames, footboards and headboards are still accepted and sold.

A volunteer has been a big help by picking up the electronics brought to the store. Just a reminder we do not accept or sell TVs, stereos, computers or other electronics except in special circumstances approved by the manager. Please just take it to 2012 Recycling at 42 James St., Smiths Falls, or to a depot in your community. 2012 is easily accessible Mon – Fri. 9 – 6 and Sat. 9 – 4.

A thumbs up to Bernie Laframboise and his assistants Ed Crawford and Don Harvey for completing the stairs to our storage trailer.

A small goodbye celebration took place Friday, March 23 for our departing cashier, Sue McCarten. Sue came to us in October and will be leaving us for new employment at the end of March. We will miss her clever repartee and her skillful execution of all her day-to-day duties. She was a definite asset to us and the REAL Deal Reuse Store and we wish her continued success in the future.



In closing, thanks to all our volunteers who keep the store humming: Ed Lockett, Ed Crawford, Karen Durocher, Dale Steele, Heather Warren, Brenda King, Barb Hicks and Una Pugh. We also welcome a new volunteer Darien, and welcome back Eric Sirvante. We couldn't do it without you!

Frequently Asked Questions at the REAL Deal Store

Q. Why are you weighing my stuff? Why are you asking my municipality?

A. We weigh items being donated and purchased from the store, so we know how much waste we have diverted from landfill. We want to know which municipality our donors and customers come from, so we can report back to those municipalities how much waste has been diverted from their landfills, and we want to know the breadth of the community we are serving.

Q. Where do items in the store come from?

A. Goods for sale in our store are donated primarily by private individuals. However, we do receive donations from building supply stores, contractors, retailers and other community organizations as space allows.

Q. Where does the money go?

A. Currently the money goes toward supporting the REAL Deal store's operation: utilities, wages, supplies, maintenance and capital improvements. REAL's goals for the reuse store are to reduce waste, create training and volunteer opportunities, and to eventually generate enough funds to support REAL's other environmental projects in our community.

Q. What is the warranty on your appliances?

A. We are only able to do rudimentary testing on electric appliances and acknowledge there may be features that do not work well. Appliances are sold as is and are priced accordingly. However, if you get an appliance home and find it does not work to your satisfaction, you may exchange it for another appliance or we will be happy to offer you a store credit.

In REAL Life

Thanks to everyone for your membership renewals, and the many donations included. If you haven't renewed yet, please do it today. Your support is crucial to REAL's continued operation.

Thanks to Andress Your Independent Grocer for making our "Donate a Twoonie" campaign possible. From June 1 -9, coinciding with Environment Week, customers will be asked at the cash if they would like to make a donation to their local environmental group, REAL.

Thanks to the REAL Action Team for representing us at the Annual Smiths Falls Public Library Trivia Challenge on February 12. Our team: Ken and Kathy Graham, Jay and Jackie Brennan, Ron and Linda Stronski, Larry Manson, Susan Brandum, Donna McKenna and Betty Davis.



There is a very good chance that REAL will receive funding for a Summer Jobs Canada student position for 8 weeks at 30 hours a week at minimum wage. Three of the days will be in the REAL Deal store. Priority will be given to post secondary students, and a cover letter and resume must be supplied. Check our website for updates, or email info@REALaction.ca.



Celebrate Earth Day at the North Grenville Sustainability Fair, Sunday April 22, 11 – 3 at the North Grenville Municipal Centre. See electric vehicles and children's activities, enjoy local foods and hear the Junkyard Symphony. See sustainablenorthgrenville.ca for more details.

Save these dates! REAL's Annual General Meeting is set for Wednesday, June 20th. Members will receive an invitation by e-mail or Canada Post with more details. Our "nine and dine" golf event is set for Saturday, September 15 at Lombard Glen. More details in July newsletter.

Important DATE!

Watch for REAL at community events this spring: the North Grenville Sustainability Fair, April 22; the Smiths Falls Home Show, May 11 –12; and the Merrickville Green event May 11.



Gardeners, don't forget to recycle your plastic greenhouse containers. Most garden centres accept multi-paks, pots and flats for recycling in season. Only put them in your household recycling if they are clearly stamped with a number that your municipal program accepts. Styrofoam is best avoided. The REAL Deal Store accepts pots that are good enough to reuse.



Remember to check out REAL's Facebook group, "Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)", and join in on Twitter tweets at "RideauEnvActL". A Facebook group for the Community gardeners has just begun ("Smiths Falls, REAL Community Garden") – but other gardeners will find some interesting references there as well.

- Lanark Local Flavours will help put you in touch with local growers and sellers of fruits, vegetables, meats and prepared foods. Watch for their printed guide as well

www.lanarklocalflavour.ca/

- Great graphics in the video from Hellmans' Mayonnaise encouraging Canadians to eat local. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRfjMOjrflI>

- Many ocean fish stocks are in danger – find out how you can ensure that the seafood you eat is sustainable at <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/what-you-can-do/food-and-our-planet/choose-sustainable-seafood/>. See also Greenpeace's Canned Tuna Rankings - <http://www.greenpeace.org/canada/tunaranking/> to see how your cans stack up.

<http://www>

Box 1061
Smiths Falls ON
K7A 5A5
613-283-9500
info@REALaction.ca

We're on the Web
www.REALaction.ca

Environmental
Projects Manager
Sue Brandum
613-267-2257
sbrandum@cogeco.ca

**REAL Deal Store &
Environment Centre**

85 William St. W.,
Smiths Falls ON
K7A 5A5
613-283-7999

Store open Thurs, Fri, Sat
10am—4pm

Well Aware, Energy Audits,
RAIN or other programs
Phone: 613-283-9500



APRIL 21 - MAY 6



Pitch In Smiths Falls

Call REAL to be matched up to a site.

Call Cathryn (613) 283-9819 or email info@REALaction.ca

Pick up your supplies at the REAL Deal starting April 5. Clean up anytime during the two weeks. Join us to cleanup Ferrara, Fergusson and Harold Streets Saturday, April 21, 9 – 12.

Report back how many people helped and how much you collected.

Feel GOOD about improving your community!

**BAGS PROVIDED ☺ WEAR GLOVES ☺
☺ BE SAFE!**

REAL The Rideau Environmental Action League

**Make a
REAL
Difference**

Please return this form to:
REAL
Box 1061
Smiths Falls, ON
K7A 5A5

Or bring to
The REAL Deal

Make a Donation

I would like to make a donation of

\$ _____

A charitable receipt for income tax purposes will be issued. To donate by credit card, go to www.Canadahelps.org.

Volunteer

I want to help

Become a Member

I would like to become a member

- Individual membership \$15
- Family membership \$20
- Student membership \$5
- Corporate membership \$50

Contact Information

Name

Street/RR Address

Town, Province

Postal Code

Home Phone

Work Phone

Best time to reach me

Email address