

# REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

JULY 2012

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***Community Garden Grows Another Plot***

Thanks to the generosity of ecoPerth, our REAL Community Garden now has a new “Stone Soup Sharing Plot”. Michael Worger, who built the original four “elbows” was contracted to add an additional 15x3.5 foot plot this spring. The intention is that passers-by can help themselves to any produce there. So far it is being planted with excess plants from the other gardeners. We will be adding some signage to make its designation clear, and ask that people do not interfere in any way with the other eight plots. They have all been assigned to individuals or groups, who have been charged a small fee; it is for these people to decide how their produce will be used. Another sign will acknowledge the contributors to this project: ecoPerth, The Community Health Centre, The Walmart–Evergreen Green Grant Program and REAL.



Rabbits have been nibbling on some of the plants, which is why you see chicken wire and plastic mesh on two of the plots. Dog hair has been sprinkled about to discourage rabbits. However, when you come by later this summer, feel free to snack on anything from our Stone Soup Sharing Plot.

***REAL Goes with the Flow, Establishes Rainwater Garden***

About 20 keen participants helped REAL establish a Rainwater Garden at our site on April 28th. The workshop was intended to demonstrate to residents a particular action they could take to reduce stormwater runoff, but also it solved a physical problem of the REAL site.



REAL has experienced flooding in its building twice now. Consulting with the Town of Smiths Falls, we decided to build a berm that, ideally, will stop the spring melt from flowing off the hill behind the building and entering the building.

The berm is also intended to direct the water away to a lower area. With local landscape architect Chris Canning, we decided to locate a Rainwater Garden at the point where most of the water would collect, allowing the water to be absorbed into the ground instead of flowing directly into the Swale.

*(continued inside)*

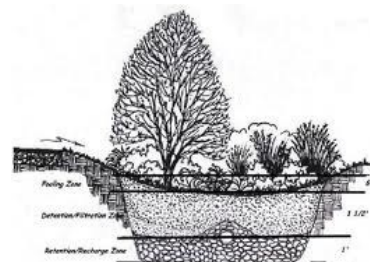


### ***REAL Goes with the Flow, Establishes Rainwater Garden (continued)***

The RAIN program is geared to educating the residents of Smiths Falls about the many actions they can take to keep stormwater and snowmelt from overwhelming the wastewater treatment plant, and from flooding and carrying debris and pollution directly into the Rideau River.

Rainwater gardens are a relatively new concept in stormwater management. Many cities in Canada and the US have begun installing rainwater gardens, with a few making them a compulsory part of their stormwater management program.

Rainwater gardens can be complex, or simple. They can have multiple layers of different soils and gravels, or simple layers of mulch, they can have a complex ecosystem of plants that can both tolerate drought and take up large amounts of water, or simple mass plantings of a couple of such plants. The key is to determine how big and deep the garden needs to be to successfully divert water from the sewer system.



Participants in REAL's workshop learned about stormwater concerns and the fundamentals of designing such a garden, and lent their backs and their enthusiasm to helping us build ours. Angela Gulley-Northfield, REAL's water expert, and Lynn Preston, RAIN Program Coordinator, led the workshops. Chris Canning designed the garden and presented the detailed talk. And thanks go to Gemmell's Nursery, Kiwi Gardens and Richfield Nurseries for helping with the plants.

To see REAL's garden, drop by the REAL Deal Reuse Store. To learn more about the RAIN program and rainwater gardens see [www.REALaction.ca](http://www.REALaction.ca) and [www.slowrain.ca](http://www.slowrain.ca). For specific information about building a rainwater garden see Canada Mortgage and Housing at [www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/maho/la/la\\_005.cfm](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/maho/la/la_005.cfm)

### ***Cultivating Local Food Connections by Cheryl Nash***



The Counties of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville are home to a multitude of small family farms that excel at growing a cornucopia of great tasting and nutritious food and are eager to sell it directly to folks just like you! Despite the rumour that the main crops of our area are rocks and trees, there's a remarkable range of products that you can obtain from local farmers. We are quickly moving into the peak of local food production for our area, so you can enjoy foods such as sun-ripened raspberries, seasonal vegetables, farm fresh eggs, wildflower honey, and sustainably-raised meats from duck to bison. And all this food is grown for its taste, not because it travels well.

**Perfect Timing.** This growing season's "Lanark Local Flavour Farm Gate Guide" is now available both on-line and in hard copy. This handy year-round guide makes it as easy as pie to find locally-grown food in our area. It includes directions to 55 local farms, locations and hours for six area farmers' markets, as well as lists of businesses and restaurants that resell or use locally grown ingredients in their menus. (If you know of one we've missed, be sure to get in touch with us!) Hard copies of the farmgate brochure can be found at municipal offices, libraries and tourism booths, as well as at farmers' markets, and farm-to-table restaurants.

To check it out on-line, visit [www.LanarkLocalFlavour.ca](http://www.LanarkLocalFlavour.ca). You'll find more detailed information about area farms and businesses selling and using locally grown ingredients, who's growing what, and a calendar of local food events. And if you're eager to get a head start on next year's growing season, you can discover who in your area is offering CSA (Community Shared Agriculture) programs that let you pre-purchase a portion of a farmer's production. You might also find that there's a community garden close to you looking for new members. For the Leeds, Grenville and Frontenac Region, see [www.localflavours.org](http://www.localflavours.org).

***REAL's Annual General Meeting***

REAL's Annual General Meeting was held June 20th in the Smiths Falls Community Health Centre, at 2 Gould Street.

Energy Auditor Alan Leonard gave us a summary of the new Ontario Building Code's enhanced energy efficiency requirements. The new code, effective January 1, 2012, requires a minimum energy efficiency rating of 80 for new homes and large buildings. The requirements can be met by evaluation of a building, or by following Supplementary Standard SB-12. The standard lays out various compliance packages, each with minimum standards for ceilings, windows, walls, heat recovery ventilators and so on. If a builder uses those standards, it is assumed the building will meet the 80 rating, and does not require an energy evaluation. Renovations must also meet the new standards.

Barb Hicks, President, outlined some of the challenges for the coming year, including compensating for the loss of Well Aware funding and the ecoENERGY rebate program. A new board of returning members was voted in: Peter Au, Barb Hicks, Scott Lumsden, Larry Manson, Donna McKenna and Karen Schecter. This leaves one opening on our board.

Many thanks to Donna McKenna for the great selection of refreshments, and the Health Centre for the use of their Poonamalie Room.

***Green Summer Reading***

You're trying hard to protect the environment but what about protecting your own body? Ecoholic Body: Your Ultimate Earth Friendly Guide to Living Healthy and Looking Good, by Adria Vasil, is a fascinating book to browse. It covers everything our bodies come in contact with, from medication, to tattoos, to makeup, to shampoo to clothing. Vasil identifies the top 15 ingredients to avoid and provides Canadian sources for healthier alternatives. Vasil is a Toronto based green living expert who has already published Ecoholic Home: The Greenest, Cleanest and Most Energy-Efficient Information Under One (Canadian) Roof and Ecoholic: Your Guide to the Most Environmentally Friendly Information, Products and Services in Canada. All three of these are available at the Smiths Falls Public Library, or check the library you frequent.

Here are a few other eco-friendly living selections recently added to the collection at the Smiths Falls Public Library:

Green Sense for the Home: Rating the Real Payoff from 50 Green Home Projects, by Eric Corey Freed and Kevin Daum. Taunton Press Inc., 2012. The authors have grouped the projects into green projects you can do today, tomorrow (i.e. take some more time), and when you're building a new home.

Revolutionary Yardscape: Ideas for Repurposing Local Materials to Create Containers, Pathways, Lighting and More by Matthew Levesque. Timber Press, 2010. Some of the ideas are a little "out there" but the photos are a good way to get your own creative juices flowing.

Small Green Roofs. Low Tech Options for Greener Living by Nigel Dunnett, Dusty Gedge, John Little and Edmund C. Snodgrass. Timber Press, 2001. Reportedly, this is the first green roof book to focus on the potential of domestic green roofs for water conservation, energy savings, and storm water management.



***Golf Tournament  
to Benefit REAL***

***Sat. Sept. 15, 2012  
at Lombard Glen***

<b>Full package</b>	<b>\$90</b>	
<b>(18 holes of golf, cart, BBQ lunch and dinner)</b>		11:30 a.m Registration
<b>Golf only</b>	<b>\$60</b>	1:00 p.m. Shot-gun start
<b>Dinner only</b>	<b>\$35</b>	6:30 p.m. Dinner
<b>Silent Auction</b>		
<b>Hole Sponsorships</b>	<b>\$100</b>	For information contact Carol or Larry Manson (613) 283-7743 cala@ripnet.com



## ***Recurrent Energy and Baseline Water Tests***

*By Sue Brandum*



Two years ago, Recurrent Energy held a number of public consultations in Drummond / North Elmsley (DNE) and Rideau Lakes townships about the solar farms it was planning. I went to a couple of the consultations because some residents – who knew about REAL’s Well Aware program - had contacted me with their concerns about the potential effects solar farms could have on their wells.

Consequently, I talked with a number of the Recurrent staff, and recommended that as good corporate citizens they should conduct baseline well water tests for the residents in the immediate vicinity of the farms. The Ministry of Environment also encouraged this, as a consequence of the turbidity that was found subsequent to the earlier installation of a solar farm on Bay Road.

Ultimately, Recurrent Energy contracted REAL to conduct the water sampling program for their projects in Rideau Lakes Township, and through DNE Township, REAL is contracted to do the same for the projects in that township.

At the core of this is the importance of doing baseline tests. Most well owners are familiar with the free Health Unit test (whether they do the test as often as they should or not). The Health Unit test is critically important – it tests for bacterial contamination by e.coli and total coliform, both of which can cause sickness or even death. There are no acceptable levels so you want your test to come back at 0/0, or zero levels of either of those bacteria.



However, there are many other water tests that can, and should be done. All naturally occurring water, from lakes, rivers, underground aquifers and glaciers, contains varying levels of dissolved minerals and naturally occurring chemicals. It’s those things that are credited with giving “good well water” its characteristic taste. But there can be pockets of water that have unusually high, naturally occurring dissolved minerals. For example, some water has a high sulphur content, giving water a characteristic rotten egg smell, or water may have high levels of salts or fluorides.

The Health Unit does not test for these minerals because high levels are not an immediate health concern. But it doesn’t mean that well owners shouldn’t know what’s in their water.

There are some excellent reasons for doing a baseline test, and knowing what is in your water: If you want to treat your water, you’ll know exactly what you are treating for, and won’t waste money on a system that isn’t addressing the particular concern. For example, treating for bacteria requires a different treatment system than that for iron. (A recent scam has been to persuade people to install expensive and unnecessary reverse osmosis systems.) If you are on a salt-restricted diet, or you are concerned about your intake of fluorides, you’ll want to know if your water contributes to the problem. Having a baseline test protects you should your water change. If your water changes as a result of road construction, a new house or subdivision being built beside you, or a quarry going in, you will have the documentation of what your water was before it changed.

Well owners in Ontario are completely responsible for their own wells. Municipal treatment plants know exactly what the chemistry of their raw water is, and build their treatment systems around that knowledge. Shouldn’t well owners have the same knowledge about their own water supplies? The tests run around \$200, a small price for peace of mind.

Most of the residents around the solar farms had not previously had baseline tests, and are now benefiting from the knowledge they are gaining about their own water supplies and their wells.

### ***Bill C-38 a Blow to the Environment***

The passing of Bill C-38 on June 19 was a big disappointment to environmentalists and Canadian citizens. Despite a massive Black Out Speak Out campaign that rallied tens of thousands of Canadians to speak out, send letters, and sign a petition against the Conservatives omnibus budget bill, none of the 700 amendments proposed by the opposing parties were accepted.



Bill C-38, a “Budget Implementation Bill” is a real grab bag of changes that have no place in a budget. It changes or repeals existing environmental laws, and short circuits the approval and public consultation processes on large mining, oil and gas projects. It is a massive step backwards, eliminating environmental standards and procedures that have been developed over the last decades. The bill limits the ability of charitable organizations to speak out on issues, and the changes are being made without public consultation.

The Black Out Speak Out campaign encouraged organizations to Black Out their websites on June 4 to send a unified sign of protest, and encouraged ordinary Canadians to Speak Out against the bill. Twelve major environmental groups signed on, including the David Suzuki Foundation, Greenpeace, Ecojustice and Physicians for the Environment.

Despite the passage of the bill, Black Out Speak Out has been seen as a successful campaign on many levels. It is not too late to make your thoughts on this bill known.

- Read more on how this bill impacts nature and democracy at <http://www.blackoutspeakout.ca/about.php>
- Tell your friends what you think
- Speak out on Twitter and Facebook
- E-mail or call your Member of Parliament.

### ***Pitch In 2012 Another Success***

Another successful Pitch In Smiths Falls ran April 21 – May 6. Thanks to everyone in the community who agreed to pick up litter in and around Smiths Falls – it made a big difference. Schools that participated received a small potted pine tree to plant in their yards. While volunteers generally found less litter this year, dumping of garbage and other large junk such as furniture and construction materials continues to be a problem.



Once again our thanks to Tim Hortons for supplying gloves and Community Cleanup t-shirts for the volunteers, and the town for their cooperation. Unfortunately, our best-looking Pitch-In banner was stolen from off the chain link fence at Victoria Park and hasn't been recovered.

The Pitch In team of Brenda King, Cathryn Davidson and Barb Hicks would welcome other volunteers to take over organizing Pitch In for 2013, or to assist, with the goal to take over the following year.

Our Ferrara / Fergusson Road blitz planned for Saturday, April 21 was a limited success. Thankfully the Town had cleaned up most of the litter in that spot earlier, so two very wet volunteers concentrated on the area surrounding the LCBO parking lot, which had been a real eyesore.

Coinciding with Pitch In Smiths Falls was a spring clean of our own Environment Centre site on Saturday May 5. Tasks included cleaning up around the cardboard dumpster, cleaning out the native plant flower bed, whippersnipping around the Community Garden, lawn mowing, window washing and various other outdoor tasks.

Unlike April 21, we had a beautiful day to work with and had a super turnout of volunteers. Thanks to Jamie Arbo, Dan Davidson, David Hoffman, Donna McKenna, Brenda King, Sue Brandum, Barb Hicks and the whole Mills gang: Meghan, Chris, Matt, Josie, Chelsea and Donna. David Grant enjoyed his volunteer experience that day so much he agreed to help out in the REAL Deal store other days. With everyone's help we made good progress on our list. Another work day is in the works if you couldn't make that one.

## *REAL Deal Happenings*



Visitors to the REAL Deal Store will have noticed some big changes. With Nancy Berthiaume's energy, and her husband Bill Hamilton's substantial construction abilities, a revamped cash area and manager's office, and an improved display aisle are in place. The cash area in particular will go a long way to streamline weighing, cashing out and donating small goods, and give staff more room to move. The donation of two matching counters a couple of months ago, and the recent donation of some glass display cases from the Railway Museum made the store changes possible. More changes are afoot to improve operations at the back of the store in the receiving and the smalls sorting areas, and to create additional space to display furniture. Many thanks to Nancy and Bill and to their assistants who worked so hard to complete the

changes while the store was closed: Don Harvey, Eric Sirvant, Ed Crawford, Paul and Della Berthiaume, and of course, Tracy Thomson, the Store Manager.

Donations to the store have been very strong this spring, and many of them are high quality items.

A special promotion by the Town of Smiths Falls giving their residents a \$40 rebate on the purchase of a rain barrel resulted in 11 rain barrels being sold, with another half dozen barrels going to non-Smiths Falls customers. The Arbor rain barrels are no longer available, so we are selling a model from rainbarrels.ca, the folks who are behind the various truckload sales you may have heard about. They are priced at \$65+ HST, and include a set of fittings you add to the barrel yourself.

Welcome to Emma Gunn, a second year Queen's University student, who started her summer position with us June 13. Canada Summer Jobs approved funding for us to hire a student for eight weeks. Emma will be working in the REAL Deal store three days a week and working on the Take it Back online directory one day a week. We had many excellent applicants, and thank all who applied.



Other new faces in the store will include a pair of Canada World Youth who begin their two and half month term in mid-July.

Watch for many special promotions over the summer as we take advantage of nice weather to use our outdoor space as well.

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## *Antique Show May 24*

The REAL Deal Store participated in an Antique Show and Sale at the Smiths Falls Memorial Community Centre on Saturday, May 24, organized by local auctioneer Dave Reid. It was a major operation for Tracy and volunteers to pull all the antique, vintage and collectible pieces we had amassed, transport them to the area, prepare an attractive booth, and (alas!) to bring most of them back again, as few people chose to spend that glorious weekend indoors. While we did not sell as much as we had hoped, costs were covered and it was an opportunity to meet and show other dealers that we do get unique and valuable items donated to us.

Various other options are being considered for ensuring we get a good return on these items that are a cut above the everyday donations. Thanks to everyone who helped Tracy pull this off on such a beautiful long weekend: Bill Hamilton, Nancy, Paul and Della Berthiaume, Don Harvey, Heather Warren, Dan Davidson, Dan Hawkins, Sue Brandum, Brenda King and Barb Hicks.

*In REAL Life*

Pat Foulkes, a long-time member and supporter of REAL, was presented with an award at the April 25 Volunteer Appreciation night in Smiths Falls. Pat was recognized for her many valuable volunteer contributions to Smiths Falls through the Smiths Falls Public Library Board, Friends of the Library, the Station Theatre, Canadian Federation University Women, school breakfast and reading programs, and of course REAL. Congratulations Pat!



Long-time corporate member [Renewable Energy of Plum Hollow](#), now located in Kingston, has planted a garden and will be donating most of their produce to the Loving Spoonful-Grow-A-Row Campaign. The campaign encourages gardeners to grow an extra row of produce to donate to emergency meal programs. Way to grow, Renewable Energy!



A huge thank you to Dan Andress and staff of the Independent Grocer for making our Environment Week fundraiser a reality, June 1 – 11 at the Smiths Falls store. Customers at the cash were asked if they would like to donate to their local environmental group, REAL, and \$1246 was raised. Thanks to all the shoppers who contributed, too – every little bit helps.



Use our free online waste exchange at [www.Rideau.Reuses.com](http://www.Rideau.Reuses.com). Once you create an account you can post items you would like, items you have to give away (or sell for less than \$100), post garage sales and link to other waste exchanges in the network.



This year's "Prelude to Christmas" concert date is tentatively Wednesday December 5. We are also discussing an afternoon concert for students if the logistics allow. If you can contribute to organizing this fundraising event, please contact Peter Au at [peter00au@gmail.com](mailto:peter00au@gmail.com) 284-8338.



Explore the Smiths Falls area through one of REAL's suggested bike routes. All are less than one and a half hours. Find and print a PDF of the map in the energy section of [REALaction.ca](http://REALaction.ca), or check out the map on the Town's new information kiosk in Lower Reach Park.

Bike racks donated by Chimo School will soon be installed at the REAL Deal for customer and volunteer use. In exchange, REAL will make a donation to the school's Breakfast for Learning Program. Thanks to Judy Snider for making the arrangements.

<http://www>

- How Green is It? List of web resources by Candice Batista to help you sort out if companies are being upfront about their environmental claims <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/home-and-garden/spring-cleaning/how-green-is-it-how-to-sort-out-the-environmental-hype/article4101512/>.
- Jets don't use leaded fuel, but smaller piston engine planes still do, accounting for half the lead pollution in American skies. <http://www.emagazine.com/earth-talk/lead-in-aviation-fuel>
- "Repair Cafes" have sprung up in the Netherlands. Volunteers meet to fix things, eliminating unnecessary waste, providing social benefits, too. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/09/world/europe/amsterdam-tries-to-change-culture-with-repair-cafes.html?pagewanted=1&\\_r=3](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/09/world/europe/amsterdam-tries-to-change-culture-with-repair-cafes.html?pagewanted=1&_r=3)



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We're on the Web  
www.REALaction.ca

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Sue Brandum  
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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

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

# Bottle Drive Fundraiser for REAL

**Fri. Aug. 10 and Sat. Aug. 11  
outside The Beer Store, Smiths Falls**

**Call Cathryn or Dan 283-9819  
or cnddavidson@cogeco.ca**

**We need two volunteers for  
each of these times→**

**Friday**

**Saturday**

**2 - 4**

**10 -12**

**4 - 6**

**12- 2**

**6 - 8**

**2- 4**

**4 - 6**



**We ask people if they'd like to  
donate their empties, take them  
from them, and cash them in.  
It's easy! Volunteers must be at  
least 19 years of age.**

## 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](http://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 .....