

REAL

Annual Report

Feb. 1, 2016 to Jan. 31, 2017

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)



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THE
REAL DEAL
STORE
AND ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

People are a Natural Resource

So many good things have happened in the REAL world this year. We had a particularly enthusiastic and productive batch of community gardeners, a steady stream of used electronics being dropped off that continues to amaze us, and a surprise donation of \$1000 from the Pilkington-Henniger Charitable Trust. The Township of Rideau Lakes voted to contribute to our organization, and we hope they will be able to continue their support into the future. The REAL Deal Reuse Store continues to attract new visitors and maintain a loyal following, and people comment they appreciate having REAL as a resource in this community. Our local foods dinner was a great time and a fundraising success.

It takes a lot of coordination and energy to maintain REAL's existing commitments, and those bits of good news give us encouragement to keep moving forward on new and necessary environmental actions that bridge the gap between what is legislated and what should be.

But it can't be said enough how much we appreciate the people that put the "action" and "league" in REAL! Absolutely nothing would get done without the contributions of our volunteers and paid staff. These dedicated people keep on giving, and doing it enthusiastically. From planning a budget, to sweeping the floors, and speaking in front of municipal councils, to answering the phone with a smile, everyone gets along and enjoys facing REAL's challenges together. We all believe more can be done to better the local environment and help the community understand their role in protecting it.

Not to be forgotten are our members, donors, the people who use our services and participate in our programs, and those who just follow with interest our progress. They are the reason we do what we do. Whatever your role, thank you for being part of REAL – we look forward to the year ahead.

Barb Hicks, Acting President



REAL Deal volunteers were presented with toques embroidered with their name, e.g. "Sue is the REAL Deal" at our December turkey dinner.

REAL Deal Reuse Store Entering its Ninth Year

The REAL Deal Reuse Store continues to thrive, accepting gently used household and renovation materials that might otherwise end up in the landfill. There is now improved access from the store to the yard and the fully enclosed coverall. Grading modifications were made to improve drainage for the operating and parking areas, and a new garbage bin has simplified operations. Also outside, the Beyond the Blue Box art panels were repaired by their creator Val Hudson. The constant influx of electronics wastes to our on-site OES depot is a steady income earner. Rain barrel sales were brisk as well.

In addition to our core hours of Thursday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the store was open Sundays from noon until four beginning in April, and ending after the two week Christmas shutdown.

Shelley Wills started in February as our in-store Manager. Sue Brandum, the store's Executive Director continues to fill in while we search for the ideal Renovations Manager candidate. We began employing a Property Manager for a few hours per month. Rounding out the team is a dedicated core of people, largely volunteer and work



The coverall is an immense improvement on the store's accommodation of renovation supplies and some furniture.

placements. Some receive some financial compensation if it can be managed, or if we and the candidate qualify for subsidy programs.



REAL Deal Special Events

Our "Second Chance Art Bazaar", held for the fifth year, effectively displayed some art pieces that were donated to the store. Local artist Carole Richardson volunteered to lead two repurposing craft workshops that showed participants how to do mosaics on glassed picture frames near the end of the year. The REAL Board hosted a turkey dinner at the Community Health Centre kitchen just before Christmas to thank the REAL Deal volunteers for their contributions.

Behind the Scenes

A new REAL Board took effect in June, with many of the same faces but different roles. Shawn Merriman stepped down, and Barb Hicks is now Acting President, with Jason Takerer as Vice President. Karen Schecter is back in the Treasurer role, and Donna McKenna is now Secretary. Peter Au, a founding member, sits on the board, and we welcome new board member Keely Maddock. We continue to recruit for a seventh board member. Also at the board table are Environmental Projects Director Sue Brandum, and Smiths Falls Town Council Liaison person, Lorraine Allen. At our March meeting we had the opportunity to demonstrate to a long time donor and supporter what his contributions did for the community. Bruce Enloe, Manager of the Two Rivers Food Hub, was the guest speaker at our June AGM.



Some REAL members enjoying the potluck at our June 15 AGM at the SFCHC.



Community residents can rent garden plots for growing their own healthy, local food. A Stone Soup Sharing Plot was available for produce sampling by the public.

Local Environmental Actions

REAL continues to offer home energy audits to residents, make the Kill a Watt meter available for lending at local libraries, and promote Hydro One’s Greensaver program.

The Evergreen Avenue continues to maintain a shaded walkway in Victoria Park planted with native species. The placement of five new granite tribute stones was celebrated at a canal-side event in June that coincided with Environment Week.

Pitch In Smiths Falls continues to attract a broad cross-section of residents to clean up litter every April.

This was the seventh season for REAL’s Community Garden. Despite the incredibly dry summer, the dedicated gardeners all had productive garden plots.

Communications

REAL maintains a website, www.REALaction.ca, as well as three active Facebook pages for REAL, the REAL Deal Store and the Community Garden. Photos of the REAL Deal’s monthly Silent Auction treasures are now posted on Facebook. Anyone can join our email list to receive communications about events and volunteer opportunities. Five 8-page newsletters are produced per year and emailed to members, with paper copies available at select locations in Smiths Falls. We also use local media to encourage environmental actions.



Supporters can pay to have an engraved stone placed along the Evergreen pathway in memory of a loved one.



Peter Au, an organizer of Paddlefest, stopped by REAL’s Rain display dressed in his voyageur costume.

Community Engagement

REAL takes advantage of opportunities to interact with the public, or to just show our community support. This year we participated in the Smiths Falls Public Library’s Trivia Challenge and in the Drummond North Elmsley Heritage Day in May. We provided volunteers for the 200 km for 200 years cycle ride through Lanark County, and had a display at Rideau Roundtable’s Paddlefest. Two young volunteers did a composting demonstration at the Merrickville Go Green Eco-Fair. Sue Brandum was presented with a “Contribution to the General Environment” award by the Friends of the Tay Watershed.

Funding our Projects

An annual “Customer Ask” at Andress’ Your Independent Grocer raised \$700 for REAL. Our Local Foods Harvest Dinner and Silent Auction at the Gallipeau Centre raised over \$6,000, and effectively showcased local food. A long-time supporter made a fifth generous donation of \$5,000, and we had an unexpected donation of \$1,000 from the Pilkington-Henniger Charitable Trust. We are grateful for the ongoing financial support of the Town of Smiths Falls and neighbouring municipalities Drummond/North Elmsley and Montague who provide sustaining funding, and for Rideau Lakes Council for supporting REAL for the first time. A full financial review engagement is completed by CA Don Ross, and will be available by mid-June.



A well-received addition to the dinner was the four appetizer-tasting stations.



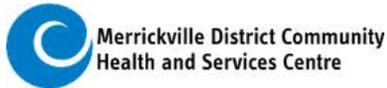
Major Funders and Supporters

THE ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION



LA FONDATION TRILLIUM DE L'ONTARIO

Pilkington_Henniger Charitable Trust



Some upcoming projects: a compost demonstration site, REAL Action grants, a revamped Take it Back Recyclopeda, and assisting some low income residents with energy efficiency. Photo by Simon Lunn.

Contribute to the Future of the Local Environment

If protecting the natural environment of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville is important to you and your family, please consider supporting the activities of REAL, your local environmental organization, with a tax deductible donation.

Cheques can be mailed to the box address indicated on the first page, or dropped off at the REAL Deal Store. If you prefer to make an online credit card donation, you may do so via CanadaHelps.org or PayPal (see the link on our “Join” page.) To explore how you could include REAL in your estate planning, see our website under the “DONATE” tab.

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment