

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

JANUARY 2016

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Time to Become a Member of REAL

Your membership would mean a lot to us. It means that there is one more person, couple or family out there in the community who values a clean, healthy environment and is willing to support a small, non-profit organization that is making an environmental difference. REAL has been a positive and respected environmental voice in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville since 1989. Despite our accomplishments, we know there is always lots more that can be done to reduce waste, protect our water, use energy more wisely, and meet the challenge of climate change. Your membership gives us the affirmation and the operating funds to continue what we have started.



The two ends of the EZ Dome coverall behind the REAL Deal Store have now been enclosed. See REAL Deal News inside for more.

It doesn't cost much to become a member of the Rideau Environmental Action League. Just \$15 for an individual, or \$20 for a family. If you are reading a print copy of this newsletter, use the form on the back page. If you are reading this online, click on "website" at the bottom of this email, and choose "Join" from the menu bar at the top. We also have membership options for students (\$5), other non-profit groups (\$25), or corporate members (\$50).

If you are already a member, thank you for your continued support! We know many of you have been on our list since the beginning. Current members will be receiving a reminder by Canada Post in mid-February along with a copy of our 2015 Annual Report. It would be appreciated if you could get us your cheque by March 16, so we won't waste valuable volunteer time following up.

Donations are appreciated, too! Please consider including a tax-deductible donation in your cheque. You may also donate by credit card anytime via CanadaHelps.org.



Reducing Your Home Energy Costs

These REAL and provincial programs can help you put a dent in your home energy costs.

Once again, REAL is helping to promote [Hydro One's Greensaver Energy Assistance program](#). Through this program, limited-income families who rent or own their own home can qualify for some free upgrades such as energy-efficient appliances, energy-saving light bulbs, low-flow showerheads, faucet aerators, programmable thermostats, power bars, home insulation and draft proofing. The household income cutoffs are generous, so don't assume you don't qualify without taking a look. For example, the annual household income maximum for a family of 4 to qualify is \$59,859. Download an application form from the HydroOne site. Tell them REAL sent you and REAL will receive a small rebate.

REAL has offered home energy audits for over a decade. Our licensed energy advisor, Alan Leonard, can come to your home to advise where your home is losing energy, and suggest the energy efficiency improvements you could make to get the most bang for your buck. Check the fees [on our website](#). But if you are building a new home, you will know that the Ontario Building Code offers a number of ways for you to approach meeting the new code standards for energy efficiency. But there are also opportunities to go beyond the code requirements. ENERGY STAR qualified homes are on average 20 percent more efficient than a typical code built home. REAL, in cooperation with Hearthmakers in Kingston, is available for consultation on your options.

The [Kill a Watt Meter](#) is handy little device that allows you to measure the electricity use by any of your plugged in appliances. Just plug your appliance in the device, and the device into an outlet. From there you can find the energy guzzlers, the phantom power drawers, or appliances that just aren't operating efficiently. REAL has a device at the REAL Deal store, as well as one meter in each of several area libraries, that you may borrow free of charge. Each of the Perth, Smiths Falls, Carleton Place, Mississippi Mills, Pakenham, South Elmsley and Spring Valley libraries have one kill a watt meter, so call in advance to make sure it is available.

Should you get into a tight spot and are unable to pay your energy bill, here are two options. The new [Ontario Electricity Support Program \(OESP\)](#) can reduce the electricity bills in some lower income households. Families must apply online. The credit received will depend on household income and the number of people in the household. For example a home with 4 people and an annual income of \$37,000 will receive an on-bill credit of \$34 each month. The credit continues for two years before another online application must be made.

Low income energy consumers who are behind in their bills and in danger of having their power supply cut off can apply for [emergency assistance through LEAP](#). Help is available for both natural gas and electricity consumers, but the program can only be accessed once in twelve months.

Some printed information on the above government programs is available at the REAL Deal Reuse Store at 85 William St. W. For REAL's programs call (613) 283-9500 and leave a message.



Al Leonard, licensed energy advisor, performing a blower door test.

REAL Deal News



Tim and Ed at the end of the coverall closest to the store..

The REAL Deal Store is looking good these days after some major work. Malloch Construction was hired to enclose the two open ends of our domed coverall. We had hoped to wait until we had better “absorbed” the major expense of the coverall, but a major rainfall convinced us otherwise. And it looks great! Used windowed doors and windows on each end were chosen to maximize the natural light inside the structure, as it is not wired for electricity. The green vinyl siding blends in beautifully with the rest of the building. And it is definitely more comfortable for the customers and staff accessing the renovation materials and furniture enclosed there.

Another well-timed alteration was the replacement of the wooden doors at the centre back of the REAL Deal. Those of you who have accessed the yard through the back of the store will understand the partial wall that allows people to pass without us having to open the garage door to its full height. Now there are French doors, the partial wall is insulated, and there is some additional flashing to help keep the cold air out. This will make it more comfortable and brighter for volunteers in the back, and the new doors are less stubborn than the old ones to open! Our thanks to Bill Hamilton for volunteering to handle this much-appreciated renovation.

Sue Brandum, the REAL Deal’s Executive Director, continues to very ably function as Acting Store Manager while she searches for the perfect candidate to replace Tracy Thomson, who left in October. Steve Rawlings, our Renovations Manager, is experiencing a

serious health issue and is on medical leave. We all wish him a speedy recovery. As you can imagine, it is a challenge to find an ideal candidate with the appropriate skill set who will accept a part-time position, but we are confident we will find that special person. Don Harvey and Tim Dupras are doing a fantastic job out back receiving, keeping the coverall contents under control and assisting customers in the meantime. And we truly appreciate the other volunteers who keep the store humming: yard guys Ed Crawford and Chris Jackson; cashiers Tiffany Carrol, Heather Warren and Judy Mundy; smalls vols Brian McAdam, Donna McKenna, Una Pugh, Brenda King and Barb Hicks. We welcome newcomers Alex Bradburn in smalls, and Bill Kelford in receiving.

Christmas sales were brisk. Although we would like to have sold all that great used Christmas stuff, we did pack some away, and it is continuing to be dropped off! Yes, we will continue to accept Christmas materials, but if you have something large and can hang onto it until the fall, please do so. We only have so much room for artificial trees and large wooden lawn decorations!



New doors into the store from the yard. Thanks to volunteer Bill Hamilton for this major improvement.

The store was closed for almost three weeks over the Christmas holidays, closing Sat. Dec. 20 and reopening Thurs. Jan. 7. Understandably, the store was hopping that Thursday! Our volunteers and staff appreciated the downtime. Thanks to everyone who resisted the temptation to dump donations outside the store over the break.

The store will remain closed winter Sunday afternoons, but will be open Sundays again beginning about April.

Cooking with Energy Efficiency in Mind

Cooking can account for about 4% of your energy bill, so here are some ways to minimize your energy use.

Choose the right appliance for the job. Microwave ovens are the most efficient cooking method, followed by stovetop, followed by an oven. Microwaves are 80% more efficient at reheating food than an oven. But keep the interior clean! Special purpose appliances are generally an energy efficient option: electric toasters, kettles, rice cookers, toaster ovens etc. And remember to only boil the amount of water you need. Slow cookers only use a little more energy than a lightbulb and save you time, too!

Oven Use. When you use your oven, preheat as little as possible, and turn off your oven a few minutes before the food is cooked. The retained heat will continue cooking the food. But make sure you keep the oven door closed as much as possible. Stagger pans on upper and lower racks to improve hot air circulation. Try cutting the food in smaller pieces, or using metal skewers to transfer more heat to the centre of the food (e.g. roasts). You can get by with a 25 degree lower temperature if you use glass or ceramic dishes. Give foods like potatoes a headstart by boiling or microwaving before finishing off in the oven.

Winter Vegetable Pricing - Look Closer to Home

The eight dollar price tag on cauliflower in early January was a reminder to all of us how sensitive Canadian food prices can be to weather elsewhere in the world. The cauliflower shortage was the result of drought and cold weather in California, coupled with the sagging loonie, although imported vegetables are usually pricier in winter to begin with. According to the Retail Council of Canada, a whopping 80% of the food sold in Canadian stores is sourced internationally, and nearly two thirds of our imported food comes from the US. California provides a significant chunk of our fruits and vegetables. Lower prices are just one of the many reasons for choosing local foods. In winter you may have to think Ontario grown instead of strictly local. A Toronto dietician, Abby Langer, has some suggestions for keeping winter grocery bills in check with local options. Choose sweet potatoes, cabbage, carrots, parsnips, potatoes and winter squash, which are more reasonably priced. And try these substitutions: white onion instead of green onion, winter squash instead of zucchini, frozen strawberries instead of fresh, and canned tomatoes in place of fresh. And instead of a leafy salad, try coleslaw or carrot salads, or roasted root vegetables. It is too late for this year, but keep an eye on the Two Rivers Food Hub for word on their [pilot monthly Winter Food Box program](#), should it be repeated next fall and winter. For more on winter food prices, see [You Can't Always Get What you Want at the Grocery Store](#).

Stovetop Use. On the stove, use the right sized, flat bottomed pot and a tight fitting lid (if you've lost yours, come look at the REAL Deal!) A 6" pan on an 8" electric burner wastes more than 40 percent of the heat produced by the burner. A warped pan can take 50% more energy to do the job. Dirty burner pans absorb more of the heat instead of reflecting it onto the food, so keep them clean. Use as little water as possible. Turn down the heat and let the food simmer where appropriate, and turn off the heat towards the end of the cooking. Try layering vegetables in a steamer to reduce the number of pots, or try a pressure cooker. Copper pots heat up quicker than stainless steel, and cast iron pans retain heat most efficiently.

Plan ahead. Plan a meal where more than one food uses the oven, or cook in big batches, as reheating takes less heat than cooking. Defrost frozen foods prior to cooking – covered in the refrigerator is the safest. Make sure your ingredients are ready to go before you turn on the heat.



Winter Driving Takes its Toll on Mileage

Winter brings additional challenges to getting the best fuel efficiency for your vehicle. The US Department of Energy says “Fuel economy tests show that, in short-trip city driving, a conventional gasoline car's gas mileage is about 12% lower at 20°F than it would be at 77°F. It can drop as much as 22% for very short trips (3 to 4 miles).” That’s a lot, even when gas prices are lower than normal. Some reasons for lowered fuel efficiency: it takes longer for your engine to reach its most fuel-efficient temperature, there is greater aerodynamic drag against colder denser air, tire pressure decreases creating greater rolling resistance, and drivers increased use of defrosters, heaters and seat warmers.

So here are a few things you can do:

- Keep your car in a warmer place, like your garage, to increase the initial temperature of the engine and interior.
- Combine trips so less trips are made with a cold engine.
- Minimize idling. The engine warms up faster being driven. Thirty seconds should be sufficient.
- Don’t use you defroster and heater more than necessary.
- Remove roof racks when not in use, as they increase wind resistance.



See: <https://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/coldweather.shtml> for more tips.

Three Burning Questions. Whether you heat with wood, or just enjoy the coziness of the occasional fire, these questions frequently come up:

Does burning wood affect indoor air quality?

Yes. Burning wood releases a number of pollutants including particulate matter, carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds, and cancer-causing polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, into the air. These pollutants can enter your home as you stoke the fire, through cracks in poorly maintained stoves, or be drawn back into your home from neighbourhood wood burning stoves. Have your stove and chimney inspected regularly, install smoke detectors and at least one carbon monoxide detector, and burn only seasoned wood that has been drying for at least 6 months to a year. For more see [Healthy Canadians](#) or [Ontario Lung Association](#).



Is it safe to burn materials other than firewood in my fireplace or woodstove?

No. Besides avoiding wet wood, green wood or drift wood, do not burn pressure treated wood, painted wood, particle board, household garbage, or plastic. These household wastes release very toxic chemicals when they're burned. They should not be burned in residential stoves or fireplaces, nor in backyard fires. And stick to newspaper for starting you fires. The inks, waxes and glues used on magazines and cardboard can be toxic as well. Source: [BC Air Quality](#) and [Sofas and Sectionals](#). See federal government page [Healthy Canadians](#).

Does using your gas fireplace in winter cost you energy?

Yes. When a fireplace is operated in close proximity to a house’s central thermostat, it can cause the setpoint temperature of the thermostat to be satisfied and furnace operation will be reduced. As a result, the fireplace ends up essentially replacing the furnace as the main source of heat in the home. Unfortunately, not only is the fireplace usually less efficient than the furnace, but many gas fireplaces only direct heat to the room that they are located in – and can leave other rooms cooler in the process. Source: [Canadian Centre for Housing Technology](#).

Green Valentine's Day?

You don't have to give up on all your environmental principles just because it's Valentine's Day.

If you're going to purchase a traditional valentine's gift, choose carefully.

- Chocolate. [The Rainforest Alliance](#) certifies chocolate that is better for the environment, and that ensures cocoa farmers have good living and working conditions. Or buy locally produced. Products from Rochef Chocolatier in Gatineau, QC are available locally. Or try Rideau Candyland on Russell St.
- Wine. Support the Ontario economy by choosing one of the many excellent Ontario wines.
- Flowers. Unfortunately, cut flowers aren't the best choice. They are generally doused with pesticides (not good for the workers) and shipped for thousands of miles. [Read more](#). Ask if your florist has a more eco-friendly option or look for organic florists online. Consider a plant grown in Ontario, or some heirloom seeds, or a gift certificate to a local garden centre if your sweetie loves flowers.
- Gold and Diamonds. If you're going for gold this year, keep in mind that an average gold ring creates 20 tonnes of mining waste. There are retailers who have taken a pledge to cleaner gold extraction. [Read more](#). If you're buying diamonds, look into [ethically produced diamonds](#), including "local" Canadian diamonds.



Instead of a thing, give a gift of an experience (tickets to a play, dinner out) or a coupon for an outing (hike in the woods, day at the beach) or service (babysitting, cooking a fancy meal). Try making something yourself, like a homemade bird-feeder or a playlist.

Go with an e-card and skip the paper! The [World Wildlife Fund](#) has valentines available for free (but why not give a donation in the recipient's honour anyway?) and [Plan Canada](#) offers e-cards when you give one of their "Gifts of Hope". If you love bees, [send Ontario's Premier Wynne a valentine message](#) in support of bee-killing neonicotinoid restrictions.

Why limit your affections to one person? Share that Valentine's day love with the world and commit a random act of kindness, like eating lunch with someone new, or picking up the tab for a stranger's coffee. [More ideas here](#).

Drinking Water Protection Zone Signs

New road signs have appeared in our area to raise awareness about Drinking Water Protection Zones. Drinking Water Protection Zones are located upstream of, or surrounding, a municipal drinking water source. In Lanark County the zones are identified by the Mississippi-Rideau Source Protection Plan, a plan designed to ensure long-term protection of our drinking water sources. The focus is on prevention and is meant to complement the work of water treatment plant operators.

A [mapping tool](#) available on their website shows the protected drinking water areas around municipal sources of drinking water in the Mississippi-Rideau Region, including communities such as Perth, Smiths Falls, and Westport. The different colours on the map indicate where different protection policies are in place depending on how quickly and easily contaminants released at that location could reach a river or aquifer that supplies a town's drinking water. Residents both inside and outside the Drinking Water Protection Zone identified by the new signs can learn about simple steps they can take to help protect their own well water or municipal water supplies at www.mrsourcewater.ca.



Silent Auction a Popular REAL Deal Feature

Every month we display a selection of about 30 items in our Silent Auction in the corner of the store nearest the cash. If you are interested, mark your bid in the orange binder stored on the wall to the right of the area. Each item is numbered, and has one sheet in the binder. Write your name, phone number and a price just higher than the bid before you on the list. Note, some items have a minimum bid specified. Sorry, bids must be made in person; you cannot bid over the phone or online!

On the last Saturday of the month at 1:30 p.m., the manager determines the highest bidder, who may then purchase the item for that price. If you are there, great, you purchase it for that price. If you aren't there, we will phone you that day, and set aside the item so no one else buys it. If you do not come to purchase the item within one week, it will be offered to the next highest bidder.

The Manager aims to include "something for everyone" in the auction, ranging from jewellery, collectibles, art, appliances, furniture, sports equipment, home décor – anything they decide is unusual or could fetch a higher price than the types of things we usually have on the floor. Photos of the items being featured that month are posted on our [Facebook page "REAL Deal Store"](#). (Note, you do not have to have a Facebook account to see the photos.) Thanks to Brenda Campbell who volunteered to be our Silent Auction photographer beginning in December. We are starting to make the photos available from our [REAL Deal webpage](#) as well.



Framed Four Seasons prints by Warren Kimble, a popular American folk artist, attracted many bids in our January auction.

In REAL Life



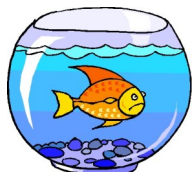
[Our Annual Report](#) summarizes in four pages what REAL has accomplished over the past year. REAL members will be mailed a printed copy. But you can read it on our website.



REAL participated in the 19th Annual Trivia Challenge Fundraiser to support the Smiths Falls Public Library Feb. 7. Our REAL Action team placed a respectable 15th of 18 teams, and had a fun afternoon, too. This year's recruits were Sue Brandum, Iris Doran, Don Harvey, Robin Heald, Barb Hicks, Brian McAdam, Shawn Merriman, Donna Rogers and Heather and Jason Takerer.



See a short video on how a Ghanian entrepreneur is making sustainable, compostable [bamboo bikes](#), and creating employment in her community.



The dumping of unwanted pet [gold fish into Hamilton Harbour](#) is disrupting the local ecosystem. Warmer conditions, water levels and pollution have given them an edge over native species.

A Mexican company is turning [plastic waste into wall and roof panels](#) to create affordable housing. Some 5.5 tonnes of waste is converted every day in just one plant.

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**REAL Deal Store &
Environment Centre**
85 William St. W.,
Smiths Falls ON
613-283-7999

Store open Thursdays
through Saturdays 10 –4,
Closed Sundays Jan.
through March.

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

Send contributions to April
issue by March 15, 2016 to
dhicks11@cogeco.ca
or call Barb at (613) 283-9966

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment



We accept a wide range of goods as long as they are reusable, clean, working and intact, subject to our assessment. Consult our website for complete list, or call us if you are unsure.

Household Items Accepted:

furniture; kitchenware; home decor; lamps and mirrors; bathroom accessories; small home appliances; games and puzzles; art; movies, CDs, DVDs and books; jewellery; gardening materials; office equipment and supplies; pet items, automotive items, newer sports and exercise items; office furniture and supplies; seasonal decor etc.

Electronics Accepted for Recycling:

computers and stereos and their peripherals; televisions, cell phones, cameras, copiers etc.

Renovation Materials Accepted:

tools; hardware; cabinets and countertops; plumbing; windows and doors; flooring; lumber; fencing; roofing, paneling, moldings, vents, siding; lighting etc.

Sorry, We Do Not Accept:

clothing, mattresses, large appliances; microwaves; dehumidifiers and air conditioners; infant equipment and toys; large metal desks, encyclopedias and textbooks; toilets, broken glass, hazardous materials like paints and propane tanks; used or wet insulation; painted lumber

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