

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

F E B 2017

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Recycling Rate for Textiles Poor

Interesting changes are happening in the recycling of textiles, which is a good thing, because they are becoming a big problem. We recycle a lot of other consumer products, but for the most part this one has been missed. Textiles have one of the poorest recycling rates of any reusable material. In New York City, for example, clothing and textiles account for more than six percent of all garbage, which translates to 193,000 tons annually. While many of us wouldn't think about not donating a used item of clothing to a local charity, about 85% of the clothes we discard are ending up in the landfill (or in some places, the incinerator), meaning just 15% are recycled or reused. There is a misconception that a discarded clothing item must be perfect to be of any use.



Textiles donated to the Salvation Army in Oakville baled for sale to private companies. (Harvard Gould/CBC)

Problem Growing. The textile waste problem is growing. Americans buy about five times as much clothing as they did in 1980. And between 1999 and 2009, the volume of textile trash rose by 40 percent. On average, Canadians discard seven kilograms of clothing per capita each year. Fashions are changing quickly, and much of the clothing is being made of cheaper fabrics, compounding the problem. People are discarding more. Consignment stores are generally not anxious to take cheaper garments or clothing from the past fashion season and some say they won't take items from fast fashion stores such as Forever 21 and H&M.

Municipal Initiatives. Some municipalities are trying to get ahead of the problem. Unfortunately, clothing does not lend itself to curbside pickup because it will get wet and it would require another compartment or a separate truck for collection. In Markham they are setting up additional collection bins around the city. In New York, they are putting bins in larger apartment buildings. The Packmee program in Germany and the Netherlands allows citizens to ship their old clothes for free to textile recyclers. Some stores feature in-store drop-offs and take-back programs, but not enough to make much of a dent.

So what happens to the clothing that gets donated to a thrift store? The Council for Textile Recycling claims as little as 20% might be sold in the store, although some stores do substantially better than that. But overall, just less than half will get reused as clothing

(continued inside)



Textile Recycling (continued)

i.e. worn again, either in that community or somewhere else. The rest is baled up and sent to textile recyclers for 20 cents a pound, or about \$200 a bale. So it is a fund raiser for the thrift store regardless.

Where in the World it Goes. Here is how it breaks down at Trans-America Trading Company, a textile recycling processing facility in New York. Staff quickly sort out the 2% of the material that can be redirected to vintage clothing companies. The rest is sorted into broad categories like T-shirts, pants and cold weather clothing. Forty percent is shipped offshore: Japan gets the best stuff, South America gets the mid-grade items, Eastern Europe gets the cold-weather clothes, and African countries get the low-quality stuff. Like other recycling commodities, textiles are subject to wide fluctuations in price due to international market forces.

In the Trans-Americas, about 20% of donated clothing is ground down and recycled into products like insulation and carpet padding. Another 30% is turned into industrial rags, which could conceivably be only used once before becoming landfill.

At the Landfill. Once natural fibres are buried in the landfill, they produce methane and CO₂ as they degrade but do not compost. Synthetic fibres, being a type of plastic made from petroleum, will take hundreds of years to biodegrade. Processes to recapture fibres through closed-loop technology, so that they can be recycled into the same product are being developed, but it will be years before there is a way to handle the volume and variety of types that are out there.

So What Can You Do? Buy less clothing, choose natural fibres, and buy quality. Consider mending or altering clothing. If a garment is current and in good shape, try selling to a consignment store. Close the loop and shop for second-hand clothing yourself. Use fabric for rags or for crafts. Be sure to donate fabric items you don't want, regardless of condition, so they can make their way to another life other than piling up in a landfill.

Consult these links to read more:

- The Atlantic, [Where Does Discarded Clothing Go?](#)
- CBC, [Textiles are the Next Frontier in Recycling for Cities Looking to Cut Waste](#)
- The Balance, [The Basics of Recycling Clothing and Other Textiles](#)

Please note that the REAL Deal does not accept clothing. Any clothing received at the store gets passed on to Jewel's or the Salvation Army Thrift Store in Smiths Falls. So please just save us the trip and take any unwanted clothing directly to a store that really appreciates it.

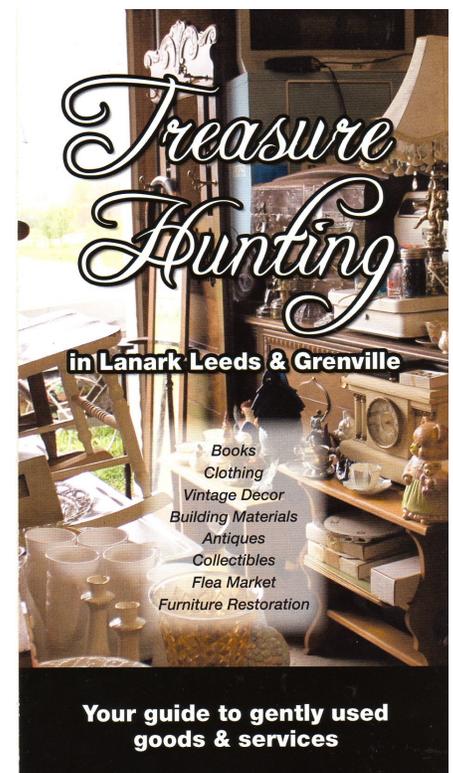
Promoting our Area as a Reuse Shopping Destination

An updated listing of businesses dealing in used goods and services is now available in a colour brochure format.

"Treasure Hunting in Lanark Leeds and Grenville" was pulled together by Dawn Quinn, owner of Dawn's Closet and Smiths Falls Town Counsellor. It replaces the two previous versions of "Treasure Hunting in Smiths Falls". Our own REAL Deal store is featured in a bright yellow ad on the back cover.

The brochure lists and features 14 local reuse businesses and suggests this area as a reuse shopping destination. We also think it's a great way to promote the reuse culture, and encourage people to consider used before buying new – clothes, books, furniture, renovation supplies and so on – as a way of reducing waste.

You can pick up a copy at any of the businesses mentioned, including the REAL Deal.



Three REAL Action Grants of \$250 Being Offered

What environmental action would you take in your neighbourhood if you had an extra \$250? REAL is reintroducing its REAL Action Grants. Three grants of \$250 will be offered to schools, community groups and neighbourhood associations in the region to make environmental improvements that benefit their community.

REAL will accept applications for projects demonstrating an eco-friendly practice that would benefit a group or the community at large. Projects could include ways to conserve water, reduce solid waste, reduce energy use, promote local food, implement adaptations to climate change or naturalize a space.

REAL first offered the Action Grants in 2014 in celebration of its 25th anniversary year. By fall 2015, eight organizations had turned their ideas into action. As a non-profit organization, REAL understands the challenge of finding funding and wants to support community groups who may need a little financial support to get their projects rolling.

The application process will be a simple one. Full instructions are available on REAL's website, www.REALaction.ca. Applications will be accepted until March 1, 2017, and winners selected by March 31. Projects will be announced publicly by Earth Day, April 22, and should be completed by August 31, 2017.



Above: A recycled planter created at SFDCI in 2015. Below: Carleton Place High School Enviro Project making a meal at their winter field camp.



2014 REAL Action Grant Winners

The Drummond Central School Parent Council for rain barrels and tools for their Pumpkin Patch Project.

SFDCI Food Program and Special Needs Class for raised garlic beds in their community garden.

The Lanark Highlands Youth Centre for a freezer to preserve produce grown in their community garden.

YAK Youth Services, for t-shirts and a moving dolly to support their Green Volunteer Program.

The SFDCI Environmental Club for a water bottle filling station.

Community Support Services Perth, for an in-house recycling program .

TYPS Youth Centre, Almonte, towards their Parks and Garden Program.

SADV Women's Monument Committee for a tree to be planted in Perth to honour women who have been victims of violence.

Carleton Place High School Enviro Project towards their winter field camp where students will study climate change.

REAL Deal News

REAL Deal volunteers received toques embroidered with their name proclaiming "[their name] is the REAL Deal" at a Christmas turkey dinner.

The busy Christmas season is behind us, and we aren't anxious to see any more Christmas trees or garlands for a long time. Joking aside, we are happy to accept seasonal items year round, but if you have something large like an artificial tree to donate and could hold onto it until next November, please do! They take up a lot of room in our upstairs storage space.

Aside from Matthew completing his placement with us, the composition of the REAL DEAL team is quite stable at the moment. Don, Tim, Mike and Ed are outside mostly; Donna, Brenda, Una and Barb are in smalls; Tiffany and Heather on cash, and Kelsey is everywhere, mostly smalls and cash. Our Executive Director, Sue Brandum, is great at stretching the budget making use of various wage subsidy initiatives, so that some positions are partially paid, or temporarily paid. This has resulted in better coverage at the cash.

Interior and exterior doors are now all out in the coverall, opening up some space inside in hardware. Tim is now modifying the rack so that drywall and paneling can be stored inside.

We were delighted to be given an electric snowblower, which has been great for clearing snow in the yard. Please note that the yard can be quite icy at the best of times. The guys do their best to keep it and pathways

near the store safe, but there may be times when sections or the entire yard will have to be closed. We are paying to have the parking lot sanded as necessary.

Everyone enjoyed our Christmas party for the REAL Deal volunteers and board members. We served a turkey dinner "with all the trimmings", and volunteers went home with a loot bag and a toque. Thanks to the Smiths Falls Community Health Centre for the use of their wonderful kitchen. It was nice to have a decorated, non chaotic atmosphere for our celebration. Everyone enjoyed the Christmas break too – we closed early Dec. 24 and did not reopen until Jan. 5.

REAL Deal Winter Hours

**Thursdays, Fridays
and Saturdays**

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Closed Sundays until Spring

Introducing Keely Maddock—New Board Member

Hi everyone! My name is Keely. I am a graduate student at Queen's University working towards the completion of my M. Ed. As a local Smiths Falls resident, I grew up experiencing the positive impact REAL had on our local environment. I was fortunate enough to spend two summers working for REAL as a summer student assisting with projects and delivering environmental and educational programs. I strongly believe that education extends beyond the classroom and I see informal learning spaces, like REAL and the outdoors, as those that have the ability to connect the public to the environment in interactive, engaging, and meaningful ways.

By serving on the Board of Directors for REAL, I hope to develop new programs and events, and hopefully attract some new supporters! If you would like to talk about program ideas, our local habitat, or amazing hiking spots be sure to send me an email at keelymaddock@gmail.com!



Keely Maddock was officially appointed to the REAL Board in December, and has quickly become involved in the radon testing issue, youth engagement, Montague Township liaison, REAL action grants and recruiting our trivia team for February 12.

Protect free speech: Canadians and charities seek changes to federal charity law

December 14, 2016. Ottawa, ON— Today marks the close of the federal government's 10-week public consultation on the rules governing how charities engage in public policy work. Over 24,000 Canadians submitted letters urging the federal government to reform charity law to end restrictions on charities' free speech. In addition, hundreds of charities and non-profits from a variety of sectors made formal written submissions and participated in in-person consultations.

"The message from Canadians and the organizations they support is clear: Canada needs a new law to protect charities' free speech," said Tim Gray, Executive Director of Environmental Defence. "The law must be changed if it is to reflect that Canada is an open, democratic nation, where free speech matters and where all Canadians deserve a voice in government decisions through organizations they support."

"Charities operate for the public benefit, their contributions to creating good public policy are present throughout society and this engagement should be encouraged, not limited," said Bruce MacDonald,

President and CEO of Imagine Canada (check!) The request is a legislative amendment to the *Income Tax Act* to change its regulatory focus from a charity's activities to its purposes. A focus on purposes would mean that charities are no longer restricted in the activities they undertake to achieve their purpose.

Reviewing the rules on charities' involvement in public policy work is in response to the outcry over political activity audits of many prominent charities under the previous federal government. In January, the federal government announced the winding down of the political audit program, but allowed over 20 audits to continue. The audits have had a silencing effect on the charitable sector.

A five-member expert panel will now use the letters and submissions from charities and non-profits to make a recommendation to government. The panel's report is expected in March 2017.

The above was adapted from a joint news release of three leading Canadian non-profit organizations: [Imagine Canada](#), [Environmental Defence](#), and [The Ontario NonProfit Network](#). See those websites for the [full text](#).

Membership Renewal Letters on the Way

Current members should watch for renewal details in the mail later this February, along with an annual report. The report will summarize REAL activities for our supporters for the fiscal year ending January 31st 2016.

Membership dues are an important source of income for REAL's activities, bringing in \$1915 over last year. Rates have been steady for at least a decade now at \$15 for individuals, \$20 for families, and \$50 for corporate members. Members often take the opportunity to include a small donation to REAL, which are gratefully received and promptly receipted!

We are hoping to get a PayPal option set up for those who would like to renew by credit card, and will include details with the membership renewal request.

And we welcome new members! If you are reading a print copy of this newsletter, use the form on the back page. If you have received this online via MailChimp, click on the website icon at the bottom of the email and choose "Join" from the menu bar at the top of the homepage.

Donations are appreciated any time. If you use CanadaHelps.org to donate via credit card, you will receive your charitable tax receipt immediately. A small service charge will be deducted.

Works in Progress

Here are a few of the things that REAL is working on this winter:

- Applying for a grant to hire summer students
- Investigating offering a limited number of clothes drying racks to income-challenged Lanark County residents
- Making sure devices are available to area residents to check for radon gas in their basements
- Crunching the numbers for this year's budget
- Reviving the Rideau Mississippi Take it Back Encyclopedia on an updated online platform



As always, we would welcome any additional help to see these projects through. Watch for developments in the coming months.

Latest Mosaic Workshops



Some participants in the November 26 session of the mosaic workshop led by Carole Richardson at the REAL Deal.

We had a great response to our repurposing craft workshops November 26 and December 10, led by Perth artist Carole Richardson. This year the participants were making art on picture frame glass, using mosaic "tiles" of broken china or ceramics, as well as other embellishments. The same techniques can be used on old multi-paned windows. Carol also demonstrated how to make a recycled blackboard with chalk paint, and how to use glitter nail polish to create a stained glass effect on regular glass. Eight ladies came to each session, where \$15 covered all the necessary supplies. Our sincere thanks to Carole for donating her time to encouraging creativity with used materials. To see more of her work, see the Facebook page [Art with a Past](#).

REAL promotes repurposing as a way to reuse or upcycle materials, particularly those that can be found at the REAL Deal. Plentiful items like mason jars, tiles, glassware, trays, fan blades and hardware are a few examples, but with imagination you can find many more. Our last two repurposing workshops in the spring of 2015 had participants creating mosaic plant pots.

If you are a crafter who could demonstrate a up-cycling project to others, or if you would be interested in attending future workshops, please email info@realaction.ca or leave your name at the REAL Deal cash.

In REAL Life

Hometown Heroes. Earth Day Canada is looking for nominees to its Hometown Heroes Award Program, which celebrates Canada's environmental leaders. The categories are Youth, Individual, Group and Small Business, and new this year, Teacher. REAL was honoured to be chosen as a Hometown Hero finalist in 2010. Nominations will be accepted until February 28, and presented in June 2017 in Toronto. See <https://earthday.ca/hometown/> for full details.

Speaking of Heroes.....We continue to look for committed, energetic people to join our board. If you are connected to the community, familiar with environmental issues, and motivated to do something about them, find out how you can join the team! [See the website for more.](#)

Pitch In Smiths Falls. Eventually it will be spring, and REAL will be organizing people and groups to clean up Smiths Falls. The Official Canada-wide date is April 22-29, which marks the 50th year of the campaign! Locally we will be extending it another week until May 6 to account for less than ideal weather. Watch the website for more.

Trivia Challenge. We will be entering a "REAL Action Team" in the 20th Annual Trivia Challenge in support of the Friends of the Smiths Falls Public Library on Sunday, February 12. We have fun, but haven't done so well in recent years, so if you think you could be a boost to the team's brain power, contact [Keely](#) who is recruiting the team.

Bubbler Mailers. Those padded mailing envelopes can really pile up, especially if you've been doing a lot of online shopping. Unfortunately, if they are the usual mix of paper and plastic bubble material they are not recyclable. But almost anything is reusable! Reuse them yourself for mailing. You can strike out the old address, peel off an old shipping label or stick a larger label over top of an old address. You can also try turning the mailer inside out and addressing it with a marker.

Offer used envelopes to organizations or small business owners who do a lot of mailing. Store fragile items in them, or use the beat up ones as extra padding inside a new envelope. Use them to organize small items. Some other interesting uses: knee pads or seat pads, cat cushions, pipe insulation and seedling pots. Here are instructions for [making an ipad case](#) from padded envelopes.

- If you've been steering clear of real leather for ethical environmental reasons, you might want to give faux leather a pass, too, [says Earth Talk.](#)
- Several Canadian communities are using sugar beet juice to combat icy roads, including Huron County, the Niagara Region and Montreal, describes an [Ottawa Citizen story.](#)
- Ecologist Sasha Kramer is [transforming human poop into eco-friendly fertilizer](#) in Haiti. The non-profit Sustainable Organic Integrated Livelihoods (SOIL) will be able to improve health, protect Haiti's fragile soil, and empower communities with this project.
- Terri-Lee Reid from the Canadian Wildlife Federation advises [what to say](#) to people who say climate change is hogwash.



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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
613-283-7999

Store open Thursdays
through Saturdays 10 –4.
Closed Sundays until
spring.

**Well Aware, Energy Audits,
RAIN or other programs**

Phone: 613-283-9500

Send contributions to the April
issue by March 15, 2017 to
dhicks11@cogeco.ca
or call Barb at (613) 283-9966

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment



Make a REAL Difference

Tell us how you would make an impact on the local environment
by applying for a **2017 REAL Action Grant**.
3 grants of **\$250** to be awarded!

For application details or to see past winners please visit:
<http://www.realaction.ca>

Deadline: March 1st, 2017



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

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Contact Information

Name

Street/RR Address

Town, Province

Postal Code

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Best time to reach me

Email address