

REAL

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

ANNUAL REPORT
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Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL) *25 Years of Environmental Action*

Year in Review - President's Message

Many times in life people are blessed to be in the right position at the right time. That is how I feel regarding REAL. This past June, when I was named president of this great association -- which was celebrating its 25th anniversary -- I knew that although my name was at the top it was really the names of the founding and on-going directors that deserved the credit. This association was fortunate enough to have been guided by, and helped by, some amazing people. Although I cannot thank everyone in this short space, I would like to thank the following people for having made this organization better by making it a part of their lives: Tom and Pat Foulkes, whose support and time have been immeasurable; Peter Au, who dreamed the organization into reality; and finally, but certainly not least, Barb Hicks, who led the organization through a trying metamorphosis from its roots into the nonprofit leader that it is today. All of these people, and many more, have made this organization 25 years strong, and secure in the goal of preserving, protecting and enhancing the local environment.

As our 25th Anniversary celebration, we chose to give gifts back to the community. REAL awarded 9 micro grants of \$250 to various projects around the area that will be reported on during the coming year. In addition, the movie Watermark was shown to great fanfare and REAL's biggest fundraiser, the local foods Harvest Dinner, was so successful that a larger venue is under consideration for next year.

One thing that has become abundantly clear is that no project is ever started and finished within such a short time frame as one year. Many projects, even if they actually do finish within the year, were started

much sooner and some never can be called completed as the nature of the work is to constantly improve towards a perfection that can never be reached, but always strived for, in the local environment. I hope during the next year, with the help of the great people on the Board (Vice President Karen Schechter, Treasurer Barb Hicks and Directors Peter Au, Donna McKenna, Jason Takerer and Pam Craig; and Smith Falls Liaisons Shawn Pankow and Lorraine Allen) that great strides are made in expanding the reach of the REAL Deal Reuse Store and the Environment Center and that we can explore and nurture more partnerships with everyone in the regional community from individuals to businesses, municipalities and other local groups. As REAL starts its next 25 years, I thank all who see the value in REAL and all that we try to accomplish.

Shawn Merriman
President REAL

Contribute to the Future of the Local Environment

For twenty five years REAL has been a respected environmental voice in our community, working to provide opportunities for residents to reduce their waste, protect our common water supplies and use energy more wisely. If protecting the natural environment in 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 may be mailed to the box address indicated on the last 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. To explore how you could include REAL in your estate planning; see our website under "DONATE".

2014 Highlights

25 Years Celebrated

2014 marked the 25th year for our local environmental organization. An impressive array of activities have given residents the opportunities to make a real environmental difference by taking actions in their own communities. Thanks to the generous support of Tom Foulkes, our board was able to choose three special projects to celebrate this anniversary. Arranel Studios created a video, now available on Facebook and our website, to highlight and promote REAL. The public were invited to a free screening of the stunning documentary "Watermark" at the Smiths Falls Station Theatre. And REAL was able to turn the tables and become a funder ourselves by offering ten \$250 grants to non-profit community groups to get their environmental projects off the ground.



A promotional video was produced to encourage involvement in REAL.

REAL DEAL Looks to the Future



Stone window sills being lowered from tearout home at 140 Elmsley Street.

The REAL Deal Reuse Store continues to thrive, ensuring usable materials get into other people's hands instead of clogging landfills, earning income for REAL's environmental programs, and creating volunteer and skills development opportunities. Public interest in the store is maintained through additional waste reduction options, ongoing features of Make a Deal Day and the Silent auction, and special promotions such as our art and our annual 50% off sale. Ongoing e-waste collection has been very successful, diverting almost 2 tonnes a month. The tearout at 140 Elmsley St. and subsequent auction demonstrated the interest the public has in preserving heritage building materials, and was a wonderful community building experience. Working with the non-profit, Endeavour, helped solidify our vision of how the store should develop in the coming years.

EnergyEast Pipeline Explained

REAL organized a public information session on TransCanada's proposed EnergyEast pipeline project at the Smiths Falls Station Theatre in April. The four guest speakers covered the potential consequences of the project, notably potential spills, threatened water quality, tar sands expansion and the thwarting of climate change reduction efforts. The board also made a submission to the Ontario Energy Board Public Consultation process.



Angela Northfield, Darko Matovic, Andrea Harden and Ben Powless

Storm Water Mitigation at Public Docks

REAL was able to suggest and introduce storm water management features at the new Drummond North Elmsley Public Docks at Rideau Ferry. Through RAIN, a storm water mitigation program, two components were incorporated to keep storm water from flushing directly in to Big Rideau Lake: a river rock swale and a catchment system under the deck.



River rock swale at Rideau Ferry docks.

Core Projects Address Waste, Water and Energy

Our annual **Pitch-In campaign** April 19 – May 4 attracted a broad cross section of community volunteers, and removed litter from dozens of trouble spots in and near Smiths Falls. REAL continues to update the **Rideau Mississippi Take it Back (TIB)**, our online directory of area waste reduction opportunities.

Home energy audits are available to homeowners and owners of small commercial or municipal buildings to demonstrate ways to save energy. REAL made **Kill a Watt Meters** available at three additional libraries,

making it possible for residents to assess their home appliance energy use.

Contracts for **baseline well water sampling** for homeowners adjacent to solar farms are nearing completion. A small contract to consult with a sample population of property owners near Athens regarding their needs for well and septic information was completed in connection with on-hiatus **Well Aware** program.

The People Who Make it Happen

Our Staff. REAL employs a number of skilled, part-time staff. Tracy Thomson manages the REAL Deal Store, assisted by Arthur Janes. Al Leonard, Energy Auditor and Angela Northfield, Well Aware Guide, are contracted staff. Susan Brandum serves as the Environmental Projects Manager and Executive Director of the REAL Deal, as well as being an active volunteer. Sue is now the deserving recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award by Green Communities Canada (GCC).



Tracy Thomson and Arthur Janes

Our Board. Two new directors, Jason Takerer and Pam Craig, bring our board to its full complement of seven members. Returning Board members are Shawn Merriman (President), Karen Schecter (Vice-President), Barb Hicks (Secretary-Treasurer), Peter Au, and Donna McKenna. Our sincere thanks to retiring Smiths Falls Town Council liaison member, Ken Graham, for his 10 years of contributions to our meetings. We welcome his successor to this position, Town Councillor Lorraine Allen.

Our Volunteers. Volunteers contribute to REAL in a myriad of ways from fix it skills to organizing, from fundraising to photo taking and beyond, and we sincerely value everyone's contributions. REAL Deal volunteers deserve special recognition for their year-round consistency: Ed Crawford, John Fisk, Don Harvey, Barb Hicks, Brenda King, Chance Lockett, Nathan Matthews and Una Pugh, and Bonita Lucas and Heather Warren on cash. Braden Spanton, a student, helped out in the summer at the store. Leann Merriman has volunteered to be our Volunteer Coordinator, and many others have contributed to specific projects.



Volunteers at REAL Deal auction.

Major Funders, Donors & Partners



Greening our Community

Thanks to financial contributions from ecoPerth, the Rideau District Health Centre and REAL, three plots were added to the **Community Garden**, giving 11 groups or individuals a place to grow their own healthy, local food. Produce from the Stone Soup Sharing Plot, tended by volunteers, was available to the community.

An interpretive panel for **Evergreen Avenue** describing the memorial path and the native species planted at Victoria Park was produced and will be installed as soon as weather permits.

Discussions continued with Parks Canada and funders for our one-stop **Environment Centre** to promote and demonstrate eco-friendly living.



The REAL Community Garden includes 11 plots and one sharing plot. Our successful REAL Deal Reuse Store is seen in the background.

Community Engagement

Public events are an opportunity for REAL to network and promote eco-friendly practices. This year in Smiths Falls this included the Friends of the Library's Annual Trivia Challenge in February, the fall Volunteer Fair, and the Smiths Falls Home and Living Show. In the surrounding region, REAL was represented at the North Grenville Sustainability Fair, the Merrickville Go Green Eco Fair, the Stewart Park Festival and The Tay

Watershed Discovery Day.

Our Communications Team produced five newsletters, operated our website, maintained three Facebook pages, and used local media to encourage environmental actions.

Fundraising

Our October Local Foods Harvest Dinner and Murder Mystery Evening showcasing local food and local talent, was a resounding success, raising \$6,000 for REAL's activities. The Customer Ask at Andress Your Independent Grocer July 25-August 2 and the Bottle Drive at The Beer Store, Smiths Falls, raised our profile locally and were solid contributions to the year's total.



SFDCI Hospitality students volunteered at our October Local Foods Harvest Dinner.

REAL was awarded a \$15,000 capital grant from the **Ontario Trillium Foundation capital grant**. A larger portion of the REAL yard was fenced, and the Park and Pedal enclosure created as a result. A demonstration solar wall and other energy efficiency improvements to the REAL Deal building will be completed in the early part of 2015 with this Trillium support.

Municipal Liaison

Representatives continued to make presentations to area municipal councils outlining how REAL can help them achieve their environmental goals. REAL commented on both the Smiths Falls Official Plan and the town's waste reduction handbook.



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