

REAL *update*

for members and friends of the Rideau Environmental Action League

Celebrating 20 Years of Environmental Achievement

DECEMBER 2009

The Huge Christmas Sale

Do you want to save money at Christmas – yet get some new decorations? Or at least new to you? Check out our Huge Christmas Sale on now at the REAL Deal. Buy any two Christmas items and get a third item, of lesser value free.

We began with a massive collection of trees, tree stands, decorations, tableware, and ornaments which took up a quarter of our second level storage space. The items came in throughout the year from people downsizing or closing households.

So far the items are moving very well. And we know that once word gets round we will be getting additional donations of Christmas items. But “it’s all good”. We want these items to make it into other people’s hands instead of being thrown out. The sale is in effect until December 19.

For gift giving - the store has a nice range of end-of-stock new items from a popular area gift store: Christmas items and decorative items for just 25% of the original selling price.

If you’re entertaining this holiday season, the store has lots of drinking glasses, stemware and mugs at .25 each. Forget about using those disposables! The REAL Deal has many other party needs, like serving trays, warming trays and punch bowls. And please ask if you don’t see what you are looking for.



**Christmas Get-Together
Saturday, Dec. 19
at the REAL Deal
drop in between 11 and 2
for hot chocolate and goodies.
Everyone Welcome**

The REAL Deal Reuse Store will close over Christmas to give staff and volunteers a break. Please don’t drop off any donations on the days the store is closed: it really doesn’t help us because it’s very difficult for us to manage, often ends up in the garbage because it gets wet and we have to pay to send it to landfill.

In This Issue

Volunteers Deserve Thanks	2
20 th Anniversary Year	2
Used Tire Collection in Ontario	3
Band Concert not on for This Year	3
Keep on Composting in Winter.....	4
Ongoing REAL Deal Site Investigation ...	5
In Memory of Bunny Haughton	5
What’s Really Going into Our Sewers	6
Info Providers Hear about Well Aware	6
Furnace and Window Replacement	7
In REAL Life	7

Our 25 Cent Sale held October 3 was our best sales day yet even though we did not move as many 25 cent items as we had hoped. The additional sales were made inside the store by people attracted to the REAL Deal by the prospect of a sale, many of whom had never come before. We knew to expect this from previous promotions, and are pleased at any opportunity to let people know about the REAL Deal.



**Last REAL Deal Shopping Day
before Christmas:
Sat. Dec. 19**

**Thurs. Dec. 31 - open
Fri. Jan. 1 - closed
Sat. Jan. 2 - open**

**Normal Hours:
Thurs., Fri., Sat.
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.**

**Call 283-7999
or see
REALaction.ca**

Volunteers Deserve Thanks

A round of applause for the awesome volunteers who kept REAL ticking over the past two months. at the REAL Deal and behind the scenes:

Peter Au, Felix Boily Audet, Sue Brandum, Chris Canning, Cathryn and Dan Davidson, Barb Ellis, Kirk Everett, Dave Fergus, Carolyn Fraser, Beth Graham, Ken Graham, Dan Hawkings, Justin Heney, Barb Hicks, Julie Ingram, John and Mary Joynt, Brenda King, John Lockett, Tammy MacKenzie, Larry Manson, Andrea Martucci, Heather McLenaghan, Claudia Mosher, Libby and Ron Toop, Vinny Parent,

Diane Pearen, Kaeli Porteous Una Pugh, Debra Samler, Karen Schechter, Eric Sirvante, and Debbie Thompson.

20th Anniversary Year

Our 20th Anniversary Celebration Year is drawing to a close. It has been an opportunity to draw some attention to REAL, reflect on how we have evolved, and a chance to celebrate with some “REAL people”.

Everyone who has played a part in the Rideau Environmental Action League - be they a past or present individual or corporate member, past or present staff, municipal staff, volunteer or supporter - can be proud of what REAL has accomplished. Every contribution - be it time, money or encouragement - is valued, and has made possible our first 20 years of environmental action.

If you weren't able to join us on October 17th at Lombardy Hall, you missed a great evening. The crowd enjoyed a delicious roast beef dinner catered by Kieth Drummond and family of The Roosteraunt. Most of the foods were grown or produced locally. The red and white wines came from the Colio Winery on the shores of Lake Erie. Brenda King and Barb Ellis did a great job of decorating the tables creatively. The committee went to extra effort to reduce the waste created that evening by using glass wineglasses, punch cups and juice glasses, and cloth napkins.

Hats off to the anniversary committee of John Joynt, Joyce Brennan, Peter Au, Beth Graham, Stacey Roy, Ken Graham and Barb Hicks for organizing the three events. Still to come is a granite stone to be placed on Evergreen Avenue to commemorate the anniversary.



Used Tire Collection in Ontario

Ontario residents can now drop off their old tires free of charge at registered collection sites.



The Ontario Tire Stewardship Program came into effect September 1, 2009. Through the Used Tire Program, registered collectors will accept your old tires but will no longer charge you a disposal fee. Consumers can return up to four passenger car tires at a time to a collection location at no cost and with no obligation to make a purchase. The tires will be reused or recycled.

The list of registered collectors is long! A list of registered collectors in Eastern Ontario, including establishments in Almonte, Athens, Brockville, Carleton Place, Kemptville, Perth, and Smiths Falls, is available at <http://www.ontariots.ca/files/Locations%20to%20drop%20off%20tires%20in%20Eastern%20Ontario.pdf>.

Currently about 50% of the scrap tires produced in Ontario are recycled, and the other 50% are being shipped out of province, where they could be landfilled or burned. This program will ensure the tires are recycled here in Ontario, benefiting the environment and supporting the recycling industry.

Recycled into what? Most of the tires are ground into crumb rubber, which is used in athletic tracks, playgrounds, patios, walkways and synthetic turf fields. Some is cut into pieces of Tire Derived Aggregate (TDA) which is used as fill for roads and embankments and septic system drain fields. And other parts of tires may

be used in Fabricated Products, such as the base for traffic cones or blasting mats.

For more information please consult the Ontario Tire Stewardship's site, www.ontariots.ca.

Band Concert not on for This Year

Smiths Falls music lovers will be disappointed to learn that the renowned Central Band of the Canadian Forces will not be performing in Smiths Falls this Christmas season. The lively "Prelude to Christmas" concert was a major fundraiser for REAL. The band has played eleven concerts for us to date, and we do hope they will be able to continue next year.

This has, of course, left us looking for other ways to fund our activities. We are contacting our loyal band concert supporters to see if they would make a financial contribution towards REAL's work. A large percentage of the money raised from each concert comes from the contributions of Patrons, Sponsors, "Stars" and "Enablers" as opposed to direct ticket sales.

Contributions can be made by cheque payable to the Rideau Environment Trust, or by credit card at Canada Helps Online www.canadahelps.org. In each case individuals will receive a tax receipt for the full amount, and a business can be issued a receipt upon request.

We have two additional fundraisers in the works, including a bottle drive at The Beer Store and a donate a loonie campaign during Earth Week at Address Independent Grocer.

If you have an idea or an interest in fundraising we would love to hear from you. As a non-profit we know fundraising is a necessity, but the more time the board spends on fundraising activities, the less time we have to do what we really want to do, which is supporting environmental change in our community. Having someone else take the lead on a fundraiser would be more effective use of time.

Keep on Composting in Winter

by Tammy Mackenzie

Winter is just around the corner, so by now you will have raked the leaves, cleaned out the flowerbeds and given the lawn a last mow. This generates a lot of organic waste material, which many people bag for disposal, which is a real shame, for that material is a free supply of rich food for your gardens, in the form of compost. Autumn leaves and garden debris can be finely mulched into the lawn, spread in a 2-3 inch layer around trees, shrubs, and garden beds, or added to a composter.

The composting process requires organic materials, heat, aeration and moisture, with alternating layers of nitrogen rich green and carbon rich brown material. Freezing temperatures in the winter stops this process, but that does not mean that adding to the compost heap has to stop too!

Keep one or more large containers filled with brown materials, such as dry leaves and garden debris, next to your composter for the winter. As the frost arrives, pile leaves and other brown material in a 12 inch or deeper layer over your compost, and leave a hole in the centre.

Throughout the winter you can add your kitchen waste to the compost: dump it into the hole, and add 2 or 3 inches of brown material from your container(s). In the spring, when the compost has thawed out, warm weather and a good turning will get it started again.

If you don't want to keep a path clear to your composter through the winter, you could also store your kitchen compost in sealable buckets or bins in a cold place until spring arrives – just remember that you will want to add these materials very soon once they weather warms up.

Another option to continue composting through the winter is to use an indoor worm composter, which can be purchased commercially or built.

They can be kept on a kitchen counter, a storage area or the basement, all year round. In this case, worms do the work: you provide the food and bedding, they turn it into rich, dark compost. Bedding can be shredded newspaper, dry leaves, chopped up hay, compost... in short, materials normally put into an outdoor composter. An excellent resource to learn all about composting with worms can be found at City Farmer's website:

www.cityfarmer.org/wormcomp61.html#wormcompost.

Winter compostable material, to go outside or into a worm composter, can include chopped house plant materials, sawdust, old potting soil, fruit and vegetable scraps and peels, coffee grounds and tea bags, crushed eggshells and shredded paper. Dryer lint, dust bunnies, animal hair, cage bedding from pet rodents and birds, liquids and wood ashes can also go into outdoor composters.



Materials that should not be composted include meat, solid dairy products, fat, oily liquids and sauces, dog and cat feces, and any non-biodegradable materials such as plastic and metal

So think twice before bundling those raked piles into plastic bags, and consider taking some REAL Action to improve your own lawn and garden by recycling that organic bounty into compost.

Ongoing REAL Deal Site Investigation

Some additional investigation is happening at the REAL Deal site, but there is no need to panic! The results of these studies are not likely to affect the use of the building for our offices or as the REAL Deal Store.

Parks Canada has asked that REAL hold back on any changes to the swale property at 85 William Street pending some further investigation regarding soil contamination and the presence of a species at risk. The property is owned by Parks Canada and leased by the Town of Smiths Falls, who also own the building.

A Phase I environmental assessment identified three possible areas of concern for soil contamination given the previous use of the property, and concluded that just one specific site required further investigation. During Phase II of the investigation, water and soil samples were taken that indicated certain metals were present in excess of expected levels. So, in the yet to be completed Phase III of the assessment, further samples will be taken to confirm the levels of those metals, and suggest whether remediation is required. Results are expected by March 31, 2010. It could be as simple as removing some of the soil in that area, or not recommending certain uses of that site.

REAL had already concluded that a community garden would need to be in raised boxes with new soil. As an extra precaution we will ensure there is an impermeable barrier beneath the boxes so that nothing below could be taken up into edible plants. It should be noted, however, that the proposed garden is not located near the site in question, and that soil samples taken by REAL showed metals there were well below established provincial and federal guidelines for “residential agriculture”.

The other concern is that the Least Bittern, a Species at Risk, has been observed in the swale. It needs to be determined if any of these threatened birds nest on the property, or use the

site as part of their territory. It will take at least one year to accurately determine this. If there are least bitterns nesting on the property, a dock could be ruled out.

On our wish list had been a dock for the Rideau Roundtables Voyageur Canoes, to allow easier access to the swale for interpretation. Given that the swale is a provincially significant, Class 1 Wetland, this may not be feasible. The potential impact of other activities e.g a trail and viewing point, will be discussed when we know more.



REAL is pleased that Parks Canada is investigating this property thoroughly. As environmentalists we are very aware of the need to be cautious in these situations, and believe that the established processes must be followed. We, too, want to know what we are dealing with on this property and want to protect human health, and understand the need to protect a threatened species. Planning and implementing the Environment Centre uses of the site is a long term process, and we must be prepared to be patient.

In Memory of Bunny Haughton

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Bunny Haughton on November 15. Bunny served on the REAL Board of Directors between 2001 and 2007. Bunny was both a doer and planner, as illustrated by her contribution to the Band Concert Committee. She listened carefully and spoke up when she heard something that was not right. She had many other volunteer involvements as well, including roles with Trinity United Church, the snowmobile club, and Buenavista on the Rideau. Our sympathies to her husband Fred, and her children Dan and Karen. Bunny had been battling ALS.

Smiths Falls Residential Storm Water Project

Through its membership in Green Communities Canada, REAL is doing a small pilot project this fall to address the issue of residential urban run-off. This is the water that runs off the streets in towns and cities, and that carries litter, pet waste, street debris, chemical pollutants and other matter into our rivers. It is often not treated, or may be partially treated, or held back in settling ponds or tanks, but ultimately the water flows into the river. Like any pollution, the best solution is to stop it in the first place.

Through the pilot, REAL is working with the Town of Smiths Falls to develop a larger program that would help our residents learn what they can do to stop this type of pollution. We are also partnering with Riversides, the Toronto organization that has marked the path in addressing residential urban run-off.



Riversides has developed the “5 Things You Can Do” campaign, the main points of which are:

1. *Capture Rain:* Divert roof water to gardens, collect it in rain barrels or build rain gardens.
2. *Go Natural:* Instead of lawns choose gardens and native plants, trees and shrubs that are better at absorbing rain than grass. Choose permeable surfaces for walkways and driveways such as loosely laid brick or gravel.
3. *Go Toxic-Free:* Eliminate lawn and garden chemicals and fertilizer. Choose environmentally friendly products for your home. Wash your car at the carwash.
4. *Conserve water:* Collect rainwater for your gardens. Install water efficient appliances to

reduce the load on your water pollution control plant. Don't water lawns.

5. *Get Involved:* Help spread the word about actions we can all take!

You can pick up a brochure on the campaign at the Smiths Falls Library this fall. For more information, contact Susan Brandum at (613) 267-2257 or sbrandum@cogeco.ca

Info Providers Hear about Well Aware

The Well Aware program provides outreach not only to private well owners, but to the people who may be providing them advice.

REAL Well Aware staff member Patricia Larkin organized an Information Providers Workshop for November 18 at the Smiths Falls Legion for municipal front-line staff, building inspectors, real estate agents, home inspectors and others who provide information or referrals to the public about private, residential wells.

The purpose of the workshop was to present the Well Aware messages and resources, ensure that well owners are receiving the same messages from the information providers, and encourage local action and cooperation in support of well stewardship.

The 30 attendees were active participants in the workshop, asking many interesting questions throughout the presentation by Mary Jane Conboy, the Technical Adviser for the province-wide Well Aware program.

It was clear that much of the information was new to most of the participants who called the workshop "excellent" and evaluated it at 4.5 out of 5. Many requested additional copies of the Well Aware kits and booklets to hand out at municipal offices, through the building permit process and to their clients. Hats off to Dan Prest, Chief Building Officer for the Town of Smiths Falls, who arranged parking for all the participants.

Furnace and Window Replacement

It took a lot of doing, but the REAL Deal now has three new windows in the store area and a new propane furnace.

The window replacement is just one of the projects included in the \$15,000 Trillium grant awarded in August. The windows, installed by Healey's Glass November 10, will be far more energy efficient, and look much neater. The grant will also cover some plumbing work, windows in the office area, new flooring in the loft and an awning over the customer entrance.

Also that week REAL had a propane furnace installed in the mezzanine by Good Mechanical. The Town of Smiths Falls, which owns the building at 85 William St. W., covered the cost. Eventually the furnace will be converted to natural gas. The old oil furnace, suspended from the ceiling near the customer entrance, wasn't going to make it through the winter. It and the oil tank will be removed. This will give us some additional storage space in the room built to enclose the tank. The front offices continue to use baseboard electrical heat.

Preparing for these installations, putting it all back together again and preparing for the Christmas sale took some major volunteer time. Thanks to Dan Davidson, Eric Sirvante, Julie Ingram, Brenda King, Felix Boily Audet, Barb Hicks, Sue Brandum as well as the daytime store staff for their perserverance. Both Angela Northfield and Sasha Honsl happened to drop by while this was going on and were pressed into service as well.

We were fortunate to only have to close the store for one day, Thursday November 12, to accommodate the changes.

In REAL Life

REAL welcomes new members! Annual fees are just \$15 for individuals and \$20 for families. Corporate memberships are \$50 and include a number of businesses, service clubs and organizations supportive of environmental change in our community. Forms are available at the REAL Deal or on our website. Contact Carolyn Fraser if you have questions about your membership: 283-6858 or fraser@superaje.com.

Tell everyone you know that they do have options for electronics disposal! If you are looking to unload computers, computer parts, or televisions, we suggest **Twenty Twelve Electronics Recycling or Apollo Computers**. Twenty Twelve is located at 42 James St., Smiths Falls, phone (613) 253-3058, web www.tter.ca, open Wed. 9 - 6 and Sat. 9 - 4. Apollo Computers are at 12 Beckwith St. S. phone (613) 284-2446, www.appollocomputers.ca. Beginning in April 2010, most other electronics will also be accepted. See our website for other depots in the area.

Peter Au and Barb Hicks attended an all-day session "**Working Together to Build Healthy and Active Communities**" Oct. 21 at Camp Merrywood. The workshop, organized by the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit and led by Kim Bergeron, discussed ways that diverse professions could work together to influence community design that increases physical activity amongst community residents.

Thanks to Larry Manson, Dan Davidson and Barry Mapplebeck for curling as the **REAL Ice Action Team** at the Smiths Falls Library Funspiel October 31. This was the second year for this fundraiser, held at the Smiths Falls Curling Club.

Quick: How many paid staff does REAL have? This was asked as a trivia question at the celebration dinner. We have Susan Brandum, Environmental Projects Manager; Lynn Preston,

Volunteer Coordinator; Alan Leonard, ecoENERGY Auditor; Patricia Larkin and Angela Northfield, Well Aware Guides; Julie Ingram, Administrative Support and Gwenda Kinch, Bookkeeper. We will soon be hiring a Business Development Manager and a Floor Coordinator for the REAL Deal Store. REAL does not exist on volunteer time alone - we are very fortunate to have trained, part-time, professional staff as well.

We've had a several new volunteers contact us about working in the REAL Deal Store, which is very encouraging. **We can always use volunteers for our other REAL activities as well.** Please contact Lynn at 283-9500 if you would like to be involved. It would be helpful if you complete a volunteer application form as well. Print copies are available at the store, or from the website.

The REAL Deal is on the lookout for a few things: high, solid bookshelves, brooms, and a good lawnmower for next year for REAL's own use, and for resale: hardware and good quality furniture. After Christmas, bring in your unused/no longer used sports and fitness equipment.

Helpful Websites

- Looking for some interesting Christmas gift ideas for a child on your list? Check out www.ecotutor.ca, a business based in Port Perry.
- The Eastern Ontario Visual Character Project is documenting buildings and landscapes that make Eastern Ontario unique. See www.eovc.ca.
- Find out about energy-efficient vehicles at www.greencar.com. See the top selling green cars in Canada at www.autos.canada.com/news/story.html?id=1588629.
- A Sharbot Lake woman explains the 10 in 10 diet - cooking healthy food conveniently and cheaply, without meat to reduce your carbon emissions!: www.10in10diet.com.

Next Issue

Submissions for the next issue can be sent to dhicks11@cogeco.ca by January 15, 2010 or call Barb at (613) 283-9966.

Contact Us

REAL

E-mail: info@REALaction.ca

Mail: Box 1061, Smiths Falls, ON K7A 5A5

Web: www.REALaction.ca

Environmental Projects Manager

Phone: (613) 267-2257

E-mail: sbrandum@cogeco.ca

REAL Deal Store & Environment Centre

85 William St. W., Smiths Falls

(across from Railway Museum)

Store open Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Phone: (613) 283-7999

For Well Aware Visits, ecoENERGY audits,
or other programs,

Phone: (613) 283-9500

