

REAL Update



For members and friends of the Rideau Environmental Action League

December 2003

Greener Gift Giving

Retailers make a substantial portion of their income during this holiday season. Why not use your purchasing power to make a statement and support companies which provide products and services that are better for the environment.

- choose products that are recyclable or have recycled content
- look for energy efficient appliances with the Energy Star label
- avoid toys made from vinyl plastic containing PVC, and choose handcrafted toys
- choose gifts that encourage reuse: cloth napkins, reusable lunch containers, handkerchiefs, canvas or reusable bags, mugs for the office, rechargeable batteries and recharger etc.
- choose manual, solar-powered or plug-in appliances, rather than battery operated
- buy compact fluorescent light bulbs
- choose biodegradable soaps and shampoos
- look for natural components such as organically grown cotton or hemp when buying clothing, bedding and towels
- think low/no energy transportation and recreation: bicycles, roller blades, skis, a canoe
- think nature: trees, plants, gardening tools, composter or compost bucket, bird feeders
- give afghans, sweaters, slippers so they can turn down the heat and save energy

Or consider a gift that isn't an object:

- a gift certificate for a service from a business or performed yourself, like babysitting, manicure, haircut, spa treatment, maid service, diaper service, snow removal or other yardwork, or phone time

- membership (or magazine subscription) to an environmental or other organization
- charitable donation made in their name
- give an experience or entertainment: movie, concert, theatre or museum tickets; lessons; guided tours eg. a balloon ride; vacations; plane tickets; restaurant gift certificates

Finally, consider making a donation to local environmental causes by donating to the Rideau Environmental Trust, the charitable arm of REAL, and get a tax receipt as your Christmas present.



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Environmental Awards Presented

Deserving groups and individuals were presented with environmental awards at the AGM November 19. We applaud their efforts and the example they set for others.

Individual, Member Award - Frank Roy

Frank is a long-time member of REAL who has been a steady volunteer in our projects, including staffing information booths at public events and being on the Well Aware Advisory Committee. He has been involved in a number of other environmental stewardship and education projects, including the Water Monitoring and Water Quality Advisory Committee, ecoPerth, Friends of the Tay, the Tay River Legal Defence Fund, the Tay River EcoFest and was the founding President of Friends of Murphy's Point Provincial Park.

Individual, Non-Member - Lorne McConnell

Lorne was recognized for his exemplar efforts in shoreline management of his property. He installed a system to direct runoff from his grassy, sloped backyard to avoid direct runoff to Kemptville Creek, and minimize erosion. This also provides water for the hundreds of native shrubs he planted. LLGreen also identified his yard as a "Best Example" in their shoreline photography project.

Group/Corporation/Organization, Member - Corporation of the Township of Elizabethtown-Kitley, Environmental and Conservation Advisory Committee (ECAC) .

The ECAC is Elizabethtown-Kitley's voice of action on environmental concerns. They co-sponsored with LLGreen a public forum on Backyard Burning in 2001, have promoted the goals of the Pesticide Free Naturally campaign since 2001, co-sponsored with LLGreen a public forum on wells and septic systems in 2002, and endorsed and contributed to the Well Aware program in 2003.

Group/Corporation/Organization, Non-

Member - Merrickville District Community Health Centre. The Health Centre was recognized for promoting the correlation between human health and the environment in the practice of health care. They participated in the Merrickville-Wolford well discovery projects, spearheaded the Merrickville-Wolford second-hand smoke campaign, have joined with the local Chamber of Commerce to promote the health of the river, and provided a meeting place, skills and training for environmental and other groups.

Honourary Member Award - Brenda King
Brenda has been a dedicated and active volunteer with REAL since it's beginnings. She takes a lively interest in Waste Management and Waste Reduction and backs it up with lots of action. She has been involved in all our major community events, including composting training, Pitch-in, and Earth Day, but particularly enjoys her association with the Reuse Centre. She has served as Board Secretary since 1997, and is active in environmental pursuits at home, at church and in the community.

Certificates of Appreciation. Three individuals were thanked for their environmental contributions:

Stephen Haggart - for tackling the Bacchus Island cleanup single handedly, participating in the other two shoreline cleanups, and tree planting with Evergreen Avenue.

Corey Turnbull - for organizing the fall shoreline cleanups and his work for REAL on waste issues.

Ainslee Wood - for her active interest in the SFDCI Environmental Club and participation in Pitch-In and Evergreen Avenue.



Congratulations,
everyone!

Hats off to Reuse Centre Volunteers

Many thanks to the following for volunteering at the Reuse Centre over the past year:

Isobel Conlin	Beth Graham
Elva Corless	Betty McMullen
Iris Doran	Tim Paul
Raymond Farrell, Jr.	Una Pugh
Raymond Farrell, Sr.	William Shappee
Lynn Fraser	

Thanks also to Sheila Patterson for spreading the word about the Reuse Centre.

Shoreline Cleanup

Three area cleanups were organized in September as part of the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup. The Bacchus Island and Lower Rideau Lake area was tackled by Stephen Hagggar, who retrieved a wide assortment of garbage, including seven tires.

Volunteers working at the lower basin of the Rideau (Lower Reach Park) and Queen Street collected many bags, plastic and glass bottles, beverage cans, and a television set. Volunteers provided their own canoes and safety equipment. Thanks to Stephen for creating “grabber poles” to aid in the garbage recovery. A diver cleanup of the Rideau between the Beckwith Street Bridge and Chamber’s Street Plaza yielded 15 shopping carts, two bicycles, and lots of metal junk. Additional volunteers assisted from the shore.



A potential target area for next year is the Jasper area, where there is a creek draining into the Rideau that could stand to be cleaned up. If readers have any other suggestions, REAL would like to hear them.

Thanks to all those who made the cleanup a success: the volunteers, Glenview Iron and Metal Ltd. for providing free use of a dumpster, and Dan Davis, Stephen Hagggar, Dawn Quinn and Corey Turnbull for organizing the event.

This was the first time REAL participated in the national program. Data from the event was forwarded to the Vancouver Aquarium which is coordinating the Canadian portion of the International Coastal Cleanup. To view the results see www.vanaqua.org/cleanup.

Strategic Plan is on Track

Organizers were pleased with the results of “Stopping the Slide: Challenging our Wasteful Ways”, the public consultation on REAL’s strategic plan held September 24 in Smiths Falls. It was attended by a broad cross section of 25 people from across the region, who had many insightful comments in response to the five key questions posed. Paul Cormier of RANA International was our volunteer facilitator. He also assembled the answers in an “As it Was Heard” report which was distributed to the participants.

We were very encouraged by the participants’ knowledge and impressions of REAL, and their environmental awareness. The event evaluations we received were very positive.

In the end, we learned that our strategic plan is on track. Waste reduction, watershed issues and public education should be our focus areas. Two breakthroughs came out of the evening. One was the suggestion that a regional forum for environmental groups be organized to exchange ideas for best practices. As well, we were asked to consider what we expect of the Town of Smiths Falls, and consider a closer working relationship with the Town.

In a post-meeting analysis, REAL used the comments and suggestions gathered to determine our general directions for the future. Tentatively these are:

- expand the Reuse Centre
- have REAL focus on community projects
- have LLGreen focus on individuals
- continue and improve public awareness and education
- improve public awareness of REAL
- solicit a volunteer coordinator.

Next, the REAL Board will be fine tuning the strategic plan. We are nearing the end of the capacity building process funded by Trillium, and will be reporting back to them the results.

Organic Foods - A Better Choice

by Barb Haller and Barb Hicks

In our last issue we covered the many benefits of locally grown food and where to get it. Locally produced food tastes better, is better for you, does not require excessive transportation, and supports local farmers and communities. But to take this a step further, consider the benefits of eating organic food.

In the last 50 years, many small farms have either been forced to sell out to corporations or to adopt factory-style farming methods. These methods use more petroleum, give more preventative antibiotics to their large herds of animals and artificially promote growth to increase profits. Water can become contaminated from these large groups of animals herded together. The recent permanent closure of Lake Huron beaches due to manure pollution is one example. The synthetic fertilizers combined with pesticides pollute surface and groundwater. Soil is eroded and is not replaced.

“Organic food is produced using methods aimed at enhancing the environmental health of the farm ecosystem”. (Food Safety Network)

Organic farming uses:

- no genetically engineered seeds, plants or

organisms

- no synthetic fertilizers
- no irradiation for food preservation
- no intensive feedlots for livestock
- no synthetic or petroleum based pesticides, for eliminating insects, weeds or fungi
- no artificial growth promoters
- no application of raw manure for fertilizer. (Sierra Club of Canada)

Instead, organic farmers concentrate on maintaining soil health, environmental quality and the efficient use of natural resources. They use techniques such as crop rotation, composted organic matter, mechanical weeding, and naturally disease, insect and frost resistant varieties. Animals are raised in an ethical manner without the use of drugs.

Organic food is available directly through the producers, from health food stores, and in your grocery store. While organic farming is better for the environment than conventional farming, be aware that much of the organic food available in grocery chains is not locally grown and has been imported from the U.S. So the impacts of transportation offset some of the environmental benefits. Try to choose local organic products over imported foods.

The Canadian organic food industry is self-regulated, and certification is voluntary (except in Quebec). The Standards Council of Canada (SCC) has accredited over 40 independent certification bodies in Canada . Provinces can also provide accreditation of certifying bodies. This is a rather piecemeal approach, but

Canada is moving towards a more unified and regulated system. A number of local organic growers object to the cost of certification and prefer to rely on the ability of their customers to visit their farms and check their growing methods for themselves.

In a store, be sure to read the labels carefully.



Food must be at least 95% organic to be labelled organic, and foods with at least 70% organic ingredients can be labelled as containing certified organic ingredients. Look for a “certified organic” sticker on the food. While there are no uniform Canadian standards, the label should indicate the name or number of the certifying body that carried out the certification process. The word natural or any other word does not mean organic!

Organic food accounts for only 1 % of food sales in Canada, and 90% of that has been imported from the U.S. in the form of fresh produce. However, Canada does have over 3,100 certified organic growers, and one in twenty fruit or vegetable farms is considered organic. Much of Canada’s organic food production is exported, primarily to the U.S. where it is processed. Canada is in the top five producers of organic grains and oilseeds.

In the next Update, we will look at genetically modified foods: what are they, why are they dangerous, and how to avoid them.

One Happy Organic Foodee

Barb Haller and her husband and have been



eating primarily organic food for the past four years. A diagnosis of breast cancer lead Barb to reconsider what she was consuming along with her food and water. She started learning more about pesticides, and learned that organic food is a way to avoid consuming pesticides.

“Many pesticides are approved before any research links them to chemicals that cause cancer. Now the EPA (US. Environmental Protection Agency) considers 60% of all

herbicides, 90% of all fungicides and 30% of all insecticides to be carcinogenic,” says Haller.

No pesticides are used in the production of organic food. But often even organic foods cannot be guaranteed “pesticide free” as they may have pesticide residues from spray drifting from fields of conventionally produced foods, or have come in contact with chemically treated foods during shipping and handling.

Says Haller, “Food farmed on artificially fertilized land, controlled by chemicals is also less nutritious and holds more water. The cells are less dense than organic food. Potatoes are a great example of this, especially when you mash them. Because conventional food is less satisfying nutritionally, we tend to eat more and our society is becoming more obese. Look at an “old” movie (1940-1950). In the crowd scenes it is hard to find anyone other than a “token” overweight person.”

Most of the food the Hallers consume is organic: their vegetables, fruits, pasta, rice, eggs, cheese, milk and some meats. They eat very little processed food, but cook it from scratch. Finding a good selection of organic food can be challenging, and is definitely more expensive, but well worth the effort. She shops the area health food stores, Haedae Farms in Merrickville, and even the large grocery chains, which may carry a variety of organic foods, sometimes in a separate section. Homestead Organics in Berwick, Ontario is an organic mill producing grain for farm animals and cereals, spaghetti and other organic foodstuffs for the public. Tom Manley, the chair of COG (Canadian Organic Growers) runs the mill and is extremely knowledgeable. For meats her family may go directly to the producer.

The Hallers discovered organic food to be better for animals, too. “My husband and I raised sheep and goats about five years ago. We used

regular grain one year and went through quite a lot to build up our lambs and kids for slaughter. The next year we bought organic grain in Berwick and found the animals more content with less grain. The nutritional content was noticeably higher.” Organic pet foods are available as well.

Barb recommends that if you would like to give organic foods a try, that milk and eggs are a good place to start, as no growth hormones would have been used on the animals. And, she says, “You’ll love the taste! If we want to be healthy into our golden years as people call them, let’s encourage these organic growers by purchasing their food.”

Sources / Resources

- Canadian Organic Growers (COG). COG is a national information network for organic farmers, gardeners and consumers. Founded in 1975, their mission is to be a leading organic information and networking resource for Canada, promoting the methods and techniques of organic growers along with the associated environmental health and social benefits. Check the internet at www.cog.ca for a list of organic farmers and store outlets in this area, or call Tom Manley at (613) 984-0480.
- Sierra Club of Canada. sierraclub.ca/national/-genetic/organic.html. Information on organic food and genetic engineering.
- David Suzuki Foundation. Their Nature Challenge Newsletter Edition 7 examines many food issues. See davidsuzuki.org/-WOL/Challenge/Newsletter/seven.asp.
- Agriculture Canada. Useful factsheet at atn-riac.agr.ca/supply/e3313.html.
- Ecoperth maintains a list of farmgate producers in Lanark County, some of which are certified organic. Go to ecoperth.on.ca and look under current projects, green team, farmgate sales.
- Food Safety Network. Good Canadian source at www.foodsafetynetwork.ca.

LL Green Hosts Regional Well Aware Workshop

Participants in LL Green's Well Aware Information Provider workshop held Nov. 21 clearly like the program and want to see it continue in the region.

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit really welcomes the Well Aware kits and will now be referring callers with water testing problems to LL Green for a Well Aware visit. The Rideau St. Lawrence Real Estate Board wants us to host a Well Aware workshop for their agents. Numerous of the participants are exploring having Well Aware stories placed in their newsletters and newspaper columns. And all the participants came up with great ideas for extending the program and making more people Well Aware.

The Well Aware Information Provider workshop was held November 21 at the Canadian Recreational Canoe Assoc. building in Merrickville. It was one of 27 being delivered across the province by the Green Communities Assoc., of which REAL/LL Green is a member.

The main focus was to bring everyone involved up to speed on new well regulations and to make sure that they are all telling their clients the same thing about wells. One key new message was that old wells need to be properly plugged and sealed by licensed well contractors. Plugging and sealing involves creating a proper plug of cement or a similar material and does not mean simply filling the hole in with dirt, which will continue to allow contaminated surface water to enter the aquifer.

The participants included 20 representatives from the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, the Rideau and Mississippi Valley conservation authorities, the Rideau St. Lawrence Real Estate Industry, the Environmental Farm Plan, well drillers and members of OGWA, the TSSA, municipal planners, and members of the REAL Watershed

Issues Committee which oversees the Well Aware project -- Tom Foulkes, Frank Roy and Peter Au.

A second focus was to discuss ways that these partners could support and continue the Well Aware program in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville counties. Partners came up with a great list of offers and suggestions, including:

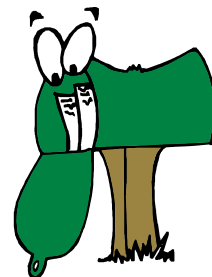
- have workshop participants promote to their constituencies the Well Aware Public Forums to be delivered by LL Green and OGWA in spring, 2004
- hold Well Aware workshops for Building Inspectors
- provide municipal building inspectors with copies of Well Aware kits to provide to people seeking building permits
- have municipalities insert notices about Well Aware and the five key messages in tax bills
- present at lake association meetings in 2004
- present Well Aware video on local Cogeco cable station
- provide copies of the Well Aware video to local libraries, video rental stores and hardware stores
- seek story placement in other newsletter outlets including hospitals and schools
- approach school boards to examine putting stories in newsletters, making presentations to schools, teachers, and making class presentations in classrooms in May/June.
- attend the Children's Water Festival at Baxter in the spring
- produce fridge magnets

Stop the Burn Takes Off

It's one of the best and easiest ways to get your environmental message across -- putting a flyer in your neighbour's mailbox. People are requesting handfuls of the "What Goes Up, Must Come Down" flyer from REAL/LL Green to put in their neighbour's mailboxes. The flyer explicitly explains the health dangers that can arise from burning garbage in your backyard or wood stove. People are finding it a good

explanation to give to their neighbours that burn garbage and an easy way to get the message across.

To obtain flyers, or for more information on Well Aware , contact Susan Brandum / LLGreen at 283-3482.



West Nile Virus Advisory Committee

report of a meeting attended by Stew Hamill , REAL member and biologist

The Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark Health Unit's WNV advisory committee met for the third time on October 14, 2003. Attendees included representatives from the Health Unit, the federal government (CFIA), provincial government departments, (MNR, MOE, MTO), municipal governments, Conservation Authorities and the environmental sector (Stew Hamill).

This year's surveillance program indicated there were no human cases of WNV in Eastern Ontario and no mosquitoes tested positive. Four dead birds tested positive for WNV.

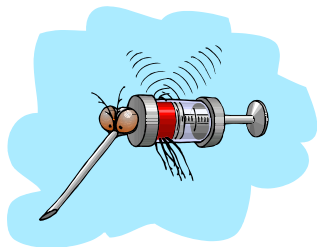
WNV seems to be moving west across the continent, with most cases this year in western Canada and the Midwest USA. In Ontario there were only 78 confirmed human cases, with two deaths possibly related to WNV. Of the 3,733 birds tested in Ontario, 234 were positive.

A representative of the larvicide company (Pestalto) presented results from the larviciding program. Since the last meeting, the larviciding program was expanded from the original eight largest communities to include 16 smaller towns. In addition, a few "low-lying areas", some of them natural wetlands, near residential areas were sprayed with Bt.

The municipal representatives expressed satisfaction with the program, stating that residents' fears were quelled when they knew

something was being done. Stew expressed his concern that there were no guidelines or criteria for low-lying natural areas (temporary wetlands which provide habitat for Chorus Frogs and Spring Peepers). The program this year included some of those with no endorsement from the Advisory Committee. The Ministry of Natural Resources representatives offered to work on criteria for defining areas which might be treated or should not be treated.

Stew reported that a radio news item indicated that possible causes of this year's reduction in WNV cases in Ontario were personal action, larviciding, and an increase in human immunity due to increasing exposure. Dr. Gardner explained that a study was done in the Hamilton area last year to determine the level of human immunity, but the results were not released. A similar study in the U.S. indicated 2.6% immunity, a level not high enough to explain reductions in WNV cases.

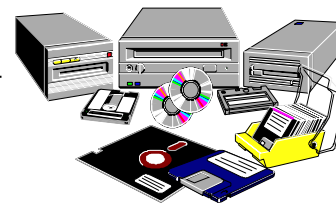


The Health Unit is now drafting a summary report with recommendations, and the committee will reconvene on December 18 to review those recommendations and to work on a plan for next year.

Don't Throw That Computer Away!

Skills and Initiatives is hunting for used computers again. The group recycles old computers and gives them to low-income individuals and other non-profit groups. What can't be re-used is stripped down for useful or scrap material so less goes to landfill. Dave Pringle, the group's Executive Director, reports that they are in short supply of operating machines at the moment. If you have old equipment gathering dust, drop it off at 3 Main St. E., Smiths Falls, or call Skills at 283-8169 to arrange pickup.

Announcements



Every Saturday, 9:30 - 12. **Reuse Centre**, end of Johnston St. Free exchange of household goods too good to throw away. Call Elva at 283-0309.

1st and 3rd Saturdays of the month, 9:00 - 12:00 **Plastics (#2 through #7) Recycling Depot** open to Drummond-North Elmsley and Perth residents, at Town Yard, Perth.

Thursday, December 18, 7:00 p.m. at Glen Tay School, Harper Road, Tay Valley Township. **Public meeting by OMYA** to present information on their water taking from the Tay River.

Membership Rates

Annual rates are: Individuals - \$15, Family - \$20, Partners in Future (schools) - \$15, Students - \$5, Corporate - \$50. Members will be asked to renew early in 2004.

Next Issue

Submissions for the February issue can be sent to dhicks11@cogeco.ca by January 31 or call Barb at 283-9966.

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