

REAL

Annual Report

Feb. 1, 2019 to Jan. 31, 2020

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to present this summary of our past year. 2019 was the 30th anniversary of the founding of REAL and we celebrated all year long!

The year began with a meeting of 18 people who decided that a Monarch Butterfly Garden would be a lasting tribute to REAL. The garden turned out to be well received by the community and the butterflies.

The REAL DEAL Reuse Store has seen a number of major changes this year. We began to lock the gate to the property, a debit machine was installed and hours have been extended.

This area has some of the highest radon levels in Ontario. REAL has been lending meters to community members and recently partnered with the local Health Unit in providing an evening information session.

Our annual fundraiser, the Local Foods Harvest Dinner was a huge success with more attending than ever before! Thank you to our loyal sponsors whose support keeps us motivated.

I would like to thank all of our hard working members who have been so committed this year helping us with each and every one of our projects. We couldn't do this without you!

Katie Hoffman



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THE
REAL DEAL
STORE
AND ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

85 William St. W.
Smiths Falls, ON
(613) 283-7999

Store Open
Wed. —Sat.
10 a.m.—5 p.m.

www.REALaction.ca



THE REAL DEAL STORE

The REAL Deal Reuse Store continues to gain momentum, attracting more shoppers from further afield and making a big dent in the amount of waste generated by local residents. Some reorganization has taken place, with several departments being moved out to the dome to make way for more furniture inside.

Extending store hours has been well-received. We have added Wednesdays, and are now open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. four days a week. Sunday hours are being discontinued. Staff began accepting debit payments in November, a change that was welcomed by customers and improved our sales. The first week of December showed our best sales week ever. To reduce security issues and unwanted drop-offs of materials, we began locking the gate to the property and which made an immediate difference. A REAL Deal Committee continues to meet every couple of months to discuss store improvements.

Dan Cunningham continues to supervise store operations inside and outside. Outside we have four paid part time staff, and inside two paid part time cashiers, and are happy to have created these green jobs. We were fortunate to hire two summer students through HRSDC, and several shorter term volunteers and work placements. We welcome new volunteers is any capacity.

We continue to accept end-of-life electronics, ensuring they are recycled responsibly in Ontario and generating about \$6000 annually. Additional materials not accepted in municipal recycling programs, such as batteries and print and toner cartridges, are also diverted from the waste stream.

MONARCH GARDEN

An enthusiastic team created a demonstration monarch butterfly garden in front of the REAL Deal to mark REAL's 30th anniversary. (See cover photo) The results have been very impressive, as a range of butterflies and other pollinators quickly found the garden. Area residents have been dropping by just to take a look as the garden is quite striking, and we have received many positive comments. An opening celebration took place mid September with a ribbon cutting by Tom Foulkes, a REAL member whose generous donation made the project possible.

Several species of milkweed and various other plants were chosen specifically to appeal to pollinators. The garden features flagstone paths, a cedar slab bench and a lovely sign indicating the garden's official Monarch Way Station status.

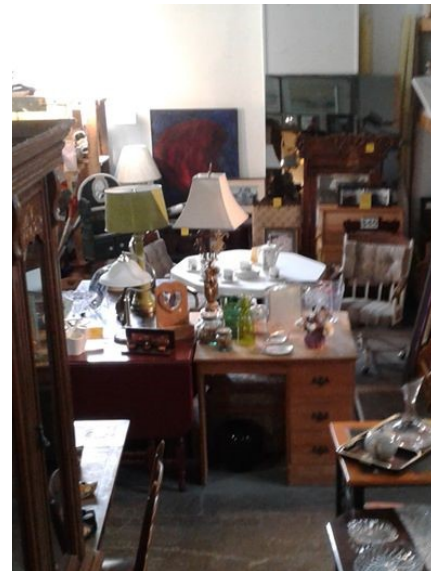
A load of soil has already been delivered so the garden can be extended in 2020.

Contributing Area Municipalities

Smiths Falls
Drummond/N Emsley

Montague

Rideau Lakes



Hardware was moved out to the dome to make room for more furniture display.



The cedar slab bench built and installed by REAL member Phillipe Lagarde.

Our Corporate Members

Andress Independent Grocer
Arranel Studios
Civitan Club
Cogeco Connexion Inc.
Denny Ks Car Care
Friendly Fires
Garden Market
Healey Transportation Ltd.
Kilmarnock Enterprise
OT Ontario East
Rideau Home Hardware
Rideau Valley CA
Rotary Club of Smiths Falls
Royal Canadian Legion
Royal Lepage Advantage
Scotiabank
Smiths Falls Optometrists
Smiths Falls Lions Club
Sisters on the Rideau
Tim Hortons
Top Drawer Temp Services
Town of Smiths Falls

REAL Board of Directors (January 2020)

Katie Hoffman—President
Barb Hicks
—Vice President
Karen Schecter
—Treasurer
Donna McKenna
—Secretary
Peter Au
Gloria Pavey
David Thornley

BEHIND THE SCENES

While the monarch garden was our major 30th anniversary project, we also began working on a tree planting initiative and laying the groundwork for various projects in schools.

In March members passed a new bylaw allowing for up to 12 board members. We were fortunate to enlist both Tony Cote and Mercedes Steedman who served on the board until later in the year. Gloria Pavey came on board in July becoming involved in communications and sustainability projects. David Thornley, who is actively involved in many other local organizations, joined in January and will help us manage our finances. We continue to seek additional board members. Nicole Dwyer is our Smiths Falls Town Council Liaison person.

Those attending our annual AGM and Potluck Dinner in June enjoyed a presentation by Nathaniel Giuffrida-Morris on using hemp to combat climate change. Board member Donna McKenna was presented with an honorary Life Membership in REAL for her exemplary and dedicated volunteer commitment.

Board members participated in a day long strategy and visioning session facilitated by Jeff Kohl in November and will be using these insights to guide our decision making moving forward.



We took a fresh look at our communications efforts this summer, and have added Instagram and Twitter to our outreach. REAL's Facebook group became a Facebook page, and the page "Journey to Sustainable Living" is an additional option. Facebook Marketplace has been a useful tool for the REAL Deal Store. We continue to maintain a website, issue five newsletters per year, and send occasional messages through MailChimp.

A "Journey to Sustainability" Team has been organizing workshops and has attracted participation from people not previously associated with REAL.



Katie Hoffman presenting environmental award to Heather Mitchell-Adams of Modern Thymes.

Our Updated Mission

To educate, inspire and provide opportunities for people to protect, preserve and restore our environment.

November 2019



Jim Evoy and Matt Benoit planting a golden crabapple tree donated by Canadian Tire.



The approach to the front door was improved when the monarch garden was added.

New Commemorative Stones on Evergreen Avenue

**George and Phyllis Lemay
Raymond Healey
Marty and Bob Dales
James Bobier
Len and Isobell Curran
Lyle Gibson
Doug Kilpatrick**

REAL ACTION GRANTS

Two area groups were awarded REAL Action Grants in our fourth year of this program. Community Living Lanark County used their funds to expand their "Garden of Peace" at their day program site. Friends of Lanark County used the money to promote the use of native plants through a one day sale in Fallbrook June 1. The grants will not be offered in 2020.



Shoppers at Friends of Lanark County native plant sale.

COMPOST DEMO SITE, COMMUNITY AND RAIN GARDEN

A composting workshop led by David Hinks July 13 was a great opportunity for some local residents to fine tune their knowledge of backyard composting. It was held outdoors next to our new Compost Demonstration Site. REAL hopes to make more headway on making the site an effective educational tool.

We were unable to rent all 11 community garden plots this season, but were happy to add some newcomers to the group. Gardener yields were limited by animal interference, and the groundhog living underneath the garden shed is a prime suspect.

We continue to look for an appropriate site for a demonstration rain water garden, after a proposal for a downtown Smiths Falls site which was turned down. We have had funds set aside for this purpose for several years now.

EVERGREEN AVENUE AND AWARDS

The Evergreen Avenue Committee continues to maintain the shaded memorial walkway at Victoria Park. At their annual commemoration ceremony June 8, seven new stones were dedicated to some special people within the Smiths Falls community. The day was also an opportunity to recognize several businesses and people for making an environmental difference. Michele and John Dunfield, Heather Mitchell-Adam, Sharon and David Brown and Sandra Jones were all presented with environmental awards. More details on their achievements are on the Evergreen page of our website.

FUNDRAISING TO SUPPORT REAL

The Monarch Garden team worked with rainbarrel.ca to offer our first **one day rain barrel “truckload” sale** in May. People were asked to order online in advance and could prepay. Proceeds for about 100 barrels were directed to the garden, but another 30 were sold through the REAL Deal store throughout the summer. We make \$10 per barrel.

The Annual **Customer Ask made** possible by Dan Andress ran June 16–22 at Andress’ Your Independent Grocer. Customers contributed \$810, mostly \$2 at a time. Thanks, everyone!

This years **Local Foods Dinner** also celebrated REAL’s 30th anniversary. We were pleased to have our best turnout ever for a delicious fall feast of local foods, as well as our best fundraising total. Of the over \$8,000 raised, \$1500 will be directed to the REAL Deal Store to improve roadside signage. A short anniversary video premiered featuring some of the people active in REAL and describing how our organization came to be in 1989.

OTHER ENVIRONMENT CENTRE SERVICES

Home Energy Audits. REAL offers no pressure, environmentally inspired home energy audits to area residents wanting to qualify for the Home Energy Conservation Program Rebates available to natural gas customers. As of December 31, Alan Leonard had performed 36 pre audits and 17 post audits. The assessments are also available for a fee to anyone looking to better understand their home energy situation.

Kill a Watt Meters. These devices are used to measure the electricity usage of plugged in appliances, and can be borrowed from one of seven area libraries or the REAL Deal.

Radon Meters. So many area residents want to borrow a meter to measure the radon levels in their homes that REAL has purchased additional meters to lend. REAL also helped promote a November radon information session presented by the Health Unit during Radon Action Month. Anyone obtaining suspicious levels should follow up with a three month reading and seek professional help with remediation, as radon gas is the second leading cause of lung cancer.



The buffet at the local foods dinner.



Home energy assessments continue to be offered to people applying for Enbridge rebates, or anyone looking to reduce home energy needs.



Three painted rain barrels were auctioned at the dinner.

Ways to Help REAL

- Become a Member
- Volunteer
- Join the Board
- Participate in Our Programs
- Support a Fundraiser
- Join our Email List
- Shop or Donate to the REAL Deal
- Share your Expertise
- Say Nice Things about Us in Public
- Acknowledge our Corporate Members and Supporting Municipalities
- Donate Dollars

Contributing to our Environmental Future

If the environment of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville is important to you, please consider supporting REAL, your local environmental organization, with a tax deductible donation.

Cheques can be mailed or dropped at the store. For credit card donations see our "Join" page on our website, REALaction.ca. You can also do an e-transfer to payments@REALaction.ca. To explore how you could include REAL in your estate planning, see our website under the "Donate" tab.

IN THE PUBLIC EYE

REAL was particularly active offering workshops and participating in various local events over 2019. Here are some additional activities that promoted REAL, educated residents and resulted in new memberships.

- Team in Friends of the Library **Trivia Challenge** (February)
- **Pitch In Smiths Falls** all over town (April)
- **Composting Workshop** at our demo site (July)
- Participated in **DNE Waste Info Day** at landfill site (August)
- Part of Friends of **Tay Watershed Discovery Day** at Perth Crystal place (August)
- **Energy Savings Workshops** with The Table (September)
- **Beeswax wrap workshop** at Modern Thymes (September)
- Organized **Towards a Zero Waste Sustainable Lifestyle**, Community Centre (October)
- Display at **Lake Links**, Perth Civitan Club (October)
- **Meal Planning 101** at Trinity United Church (November)
- Distributed tickets to "**Food Waste**" film in Perth (November)
- **Waste Audit Workshop** at Trinity United Church (January)

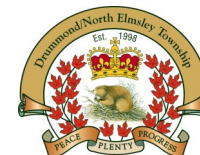
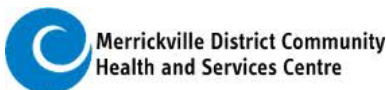


Summer staff member Aira Sarmiento on the smoothie bike borrowed for **Paddlefest** (June)

MAJOR FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS



Tom Foulkes



Pilkington Henniger



SMITHS FALLS
RISE AT THE FALLS



Charitable Trust