

# REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

JULY 2025

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## Tool Library Getting a Boost

We are very pleased to have found a new Tool Guy! Phil Kennedy, one of our community gardeners, has accepted the challenge. He and his wife Lenore moved to the community two years ago and he thought the Tool Library would be right up his alley. He has already spent many hours getting our very small space back in order, putting the tools on the shelves where they belong, finding homes for the large ones that don't fit on the shelves and labelling. Once he reassesses what we have we will be updating the tool online catalogue so people can easily see what we have to lend.

Our tool library opened in October 2021 in a corner of the REAL Deal. For a membership fee (\$25 for six months, or \$45 for a year), tool library members can borrow tools from our collection for a week at a time. The idea is to keep perfectly usable tools in use, reduce the need for everyone to buy a new tool that might just gather dust after a few uses, and to give those with limited space or income the opportunity to access tools. We have a little over a hundred tools at the moment, primarily electrical or battery powered tools, as we are unable to store gas powered appliances in our store.

REAL accepts donations of tools to our library. They will be assessed to ensure they are in good working condition, are something we need, or are better than what we already have. We also sell power tools in the store, more specifically the dome, so please advise if that would be acceptable to you if we can't use it in the library.



## Pitch In and Shoreline Cleanup

Another chapter of Pitch In Smiths Falls and a Shoreline Cleanup has concluded.

Pitch In ran April 19 to May 3. We are pleased at the number of groups and individuals that come out year after year, we really appreciate it. It is nice to see the photos of people at work, we hope it helps inspire others to get out there and do some cleaning up too! Those that filled in our little online survey after their cleanup were entered in a draw. Three groups received a \$25 Tim Horton's gift card. Hopefully they can share some treats or add it to another one of their celebrations.

Groups participating included the BBBS Youth Centre, the SF Bears U13B Team, 2<sup>nd</sup> Smiths Falls Cubs, 2<sup>nd</sup> Smiths Falls Scouts, Beavers, Garbage Warriors, Smiths Falls Paddle Pals, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and three schools: SFDCl, St. Francis and Chimo. Huge thanks to the individuals and families that committed to coming out also, we'd be sure to miss some names if we tried to list them. We appreciate your community spirit. We also know there are lots of people who pick up year round while on their walks, and that is admirable as well.



2nd Smiths Falls Scout Troop on Earth Day, April 22.

Besides all the usual coffee cups and lids, pop cans and bottles, beer and alcohol bottles, cigarette butts, vaping waste, masks and so on, there was lots of other stuff that really should have made it into a garbage can or bin somewhere. This included:

A bike tire rim, broken glass, car parts (including a car door, dashboard, tail pipe and car mats), a cell phone, construction cable, part of a dumpster lid, an exacto knife, wooden ladders, a laptop, oil jugs, planters, a propane tank, a taser (did they really mean they found a taser?), a traffic cone, a huge truck tire, and window frames.



Basil and Ginny led the Shoreline Cleanup volunteers May 3. This is from the afternoon session on Jasper Road.

Ginny Toffanello and Basil Flanagan took charge of the Shoreline Cleanup on May 3. Once again there was a morning session that met at the Bascule Bridge, and an afternoon session at the boat launch off the Jasper Rd near Eric Hutcheson Road. The weather was cooperative, there was a good turnout and the usual assortment of junk was collected. Thanks to everyone who came for that and especially to those who did morning and afternoon!

Thanks also to the REAL folks, Brenda King, Donna McKenna, Cathryn Davidson and Barb Hicks for making sure these annual events got off the ground.



2nd Smiths Falls Cubs cleaned up downtown.



## REAL Deal Summer Plans

**REAL Deal Staff Changes.** We have had some staff changes in the yard, which REAL Deal shoppers have no doubt encountered some of the new faces already. Wolf was the first to join the team, he will be in the regular rotation along with Marshall and Arnold. Andrew is off for a couple of months for surgery. As we would prefer that no one has to work the whole day out in the heat very often, we also hired Jaxon for 8-16 hours a week for the summer.

Then late Friday afternoon, June 20 we received word that we would receive federal funding for two young people for eight weeks each. We had just been remarking that our HRDSC application had not been successful for three years in a row now, so this was a pleasant surprise. This was a second wave of funding that provided for 6,000 jobs in addition to the 70,000 already awarded. So we quickly posted the two jobs, officially "Retail Sales Clerk" and "Use Building Materials Yard Attendant", and started receiving resumes within the hour. We received 16 resumes before we drew up the interview schedule. We appreciate everyone's interest, and are sorry we do not have more hiring capacity. It would appear that summer jobs are scarce out there this year.

We welcome Karter, who will be working in the yard, and Alesha, who will be working primarily inside in smalls, on cash, promoting the REAL Deal and REAL and so on. Chester, who has often been needed to fill in out in the yard will be able to continue his yard work, electronics testing, ewaste, and cleaning with fewer interruptions. Having another inside person will help fill in the gaps when our smalls volunteers take some time off over the summer.

**Smalls Vols Meeting.** We call the people who sort, price and display incoming donations Smalls Volunteers. Our work area is small so it is usually just one or two people working at time, occasionally three if the donations are coming in thick and fast. When COVID began some people began taking advantage of working when the store was not open Monday or Tuesday. And some new people have joined the group, too. As a result, not everyone has

necessarily met, and we are almost never in one place at one time (although we come close at the Christmas dinner), and don't have a chance to talk.

So a lunch get together was planned for Tuesday, June 24<sup>th</sup>, where we enjoyed pizza and strawberry shortcake! Everyone had a chance to share some of their concerns in the spirit of making things run more smoothly. We hope to achieve a little more consistency in what we do. It was a worthwhile discussion and we will likely try it again at some point.

**Big Thrift Event.** Get ready for the Big Thrift Event on Saturday, August 16.

The Smiths Falls and District Chamber of Commerce is organizing the event in honour National Thrift Day on August 27. All Smiths Falls thrift shops, including the REAL Deal, have been invited to participate.

The event kicks off at 10 am at The Welcome Centre / Town Hall at 77 Beckwith Street N., where there's lots of parking. Tickets are \$10, and thrifters can buy them at the door or in advance. Thrifters will pick up their Welcome Bags which includes \$10 in Downtown Business Association dollars, coupons for discounts at local restaurants, Smith Falls swag and more. Each ticket is entered in a draw for a Grand Prize worth \$200, which is \$20 discounts to every thrift store. There is bound to be one you haven't experienced yet!



### **Native Plant and Rain Barrel Sale**

Our annual rain barrel and native plant sale went very smoothly.

This year we had a great selection of native plants from Natural Themes Nursery in Frankford, Ontario. We were able to post the list in advance which likely helped sales. Thanks to Donna McKenna and Joanne Constantine for taking a road trip to pick them up the Thursday before the sale. Buyers were very excited for the sale, and we must have sold about a third of them in the first half hour. We will make sure that next year we order more of the plants that sold out first, such as the paw paw trees, cardinal flower, milkweed and Jack in the Pulpit.

We did have some leftover plants and a few shrubs by the end of the day that we continued to sell at the REAL Deal in the two weeks after. The remainder have found a home in REAL's monarch garden! Thanks to Donna McKenna for coordinating the sale, and those who helped out: Marje Fletcher, Betty Couch, Dale Horeczy, and Barb Hicks. People frequently offer us their excess plants, so we also had some watermelon radish plants, various varieties of tomatoes from Jim Meagher, and Trail of Tears bean seeds from Nancy Taylor. While not the day of the sale we also had some yellow iris, Christmas cactus, bulbs and rosebushes donated.



Customers making their selections from the native plants brought in from Natural Themes, Frankford.

The rain barrels and accessories picked up on Saturday had been preordered online by the customers. We sold 33 this year, which is definitely less than we have sold in the past, but worthwhile doing. Many thanks to Lauralee Merkley for taking over the delivery and distribution aspect of the sale when an unexpected issue came up. She was assisted by Nancy McFadyen, Ginny Toffanello and Dina Ortis. That delivery also took place the Thursday before the sale, which made the Friday less chaotic than usual.

An extra 60 barrels were ordered to sell through the REAL Deal store over the summer. The terracotta barrels (\$60) and black barrels (\$55) still available at the store are the ugly duckling barrels – a little more marked but perfectly usable and \$10 cheaper than



We still have two 1000 L rain tanks, and some ugly duckling terracotta or black rain barrels to sell.

there “newer” counterparts. We also have two 1000 L rain tanks that we would like to sell (\$175). They usually sell out from rainbarrel.ca so we thought we would get them while we could. Note you will have to pay HST. Please call the store if you are interested, and remember, you will need a truck or trailer to get it home!

Proceeds from the day will be used to support the monarch gardens. The barrels sold during the summer count as REAL Deal sales.

Trinity United Church was selling their mushroom compost from our site, although the annual fundraiser started on the Victoria Day weekend. The price has now been reduced from \$10 to \$5, so come on and get some while you can!



## Annual General Meeting June 18

REAL's Board was pleased at the better than average turnout at our Annual General Meeting on June 18. We even signed up two new members as a result! The meeting was held in the main floor lounge of the Cristina, the Lepine apartment building on Elmsley St. on the former site of the South Unit of the hospital (for those of you who go back that far.) Thanks to Katie Hoffman, REAL's past president, for arranging the use of the beautiful space as she and husband David are residents there.

Attendees enjoyed two inspiring presentations before we got to the AGM business. Tina Bye, Program Manager of the Rideau Eco-Literacy Program for Children, gave an enthusiastic account of how this Rideau Roundtable program came to be and how her varied experiences in theatre, teaching, art, eco-educator and community building led her to the position. The program runs sessions for 6 – 10 year olds in six area libraries (Smiths Falls, Perth, North Grenville, Merrickville, Westport and Rideau Lakes.) Some workshops were held inside earlier in the season, but they will be moving outdoors over the summer and will culminate with a guided trip in the 35 foot voyageur canoe. Nature photography, wetlands, closed terrariums, bird sock puppets and the food web are some of the topics explored. If you have a young person you would like to register, see the website [rideauecoliteracy.com](http://rideauecoliteracy.com) for the schedule. Preregistration is appreciated.

Jilliane Eady is a Perth District Collegiate Institute student who participated in the Rideau - St. Lawrence District Science Fair in late April. Her project "Crystal Clear? A Data Analysis of Lakes" stood out in the senior category and also received an environmental award contributed by REAL. Jilliane took a look at water quality and invasive species over three sample lakes, Mississippi Lake, Calabogie Lake and Lac Louisa (in Quebec). The passion she shows for the topic really shows, and we were impressed that she intends to continue her research.

Barb Hicks, Secretary, gave a quick summary of what REAL has been up to since our last AGM. Besides the many activities that happen every year like the monarch garden, Pitch In and the REAL Deal Store,

this was the year we created the first mini forest in Smiths Falls at Hyland Park. There is lots that goes on behind the scenes as well to keep our non profit functioning smoothly.



*REAL member Joni Thornley and PDCI student Jilliane Eady on June 18 at the Cristina.*

In AGM business, our Treasurer David Thornley summarized our financial position. Our organization ran a deficit over our fiscal year Feb. 1, 2024 to Jan. 31, 2025 but had reserves to cover the loss. There will be a delay in receiving the financial statements, but the board has been authorized to accept them, and any member may ask to see them as well. We will also be choosing a new accountant now as Steve Kotze is retiring. Four board members: Karen Schecter, Peter Au, Donna McKenna and Barb Hicks are partway through their two year terms, but David Thornley was at the end of his term. He was unanimously re-elected by the group! REAL has a pressing need for new board members. As there are vacancies, the board can appoint someone at any time of year, so don't be shy if you would like to discuss getting involved in this way.

## Evergreen Avenue Event

The June 22<sup>nd</sup> Evergreen Avenue Commemorative went very well with over 80 attendees.

This annual event is organized to recognize the people for whom granite stones have been placed along Evergreen Avenue at Victoria Park. Two veterans, Dave Lawrence and Bill Baxter, and two community builders, Enid Rabb and Bud Fawcett, were honoured this year. We hope to be able to post the tributes made by friends and family members at the Legion that afternoon on our Evergreen page.



Thanks to Kathy Botham for taking photos of the event and of the memorial stones at Evergreen Avenue and sharing them on her Facebook page.

REAL also presented environmental awards to Joyce Hostyn and Little Forests Kingston. Robert MacLeod, director of Little Forests Kingston (LFK), gave some highlights of the group's work in Kingston. LFK has been planted mini forests and pocket forests across Kingston since 2021, and provided invaluable support to REAL when establishing our first mini forest last year.



Robert MacLeod accepting Environmental Award to Little Forests Kingston from Karen Schecter and Peter Au from the REAL Board..

## Biochar Available at REAL Deal

The REAL Deal Store is pleased to be offering a new (to us) gardening product. Biochar is a natural, high-carbon soil amendment made from sustainably processed wood. It can be used to enhance soil health, retain moisture/nutrients, and support microbial life for stronger plant growth. It is suitable for lawns, gardens, potted plants or even your compost pile. Just mix it in with your soil at the suggested ratio. Biochar is a long-lasting soil amendment that doesn't break down quickly like compost or mulch, so does not have to be added repeatedly.

The biochar we are selling is a truly local product, made from Osgoode forestry wood residue, primarily fir and poplar. It comes from the company Green Carbon Products in Osgoode, Ontario. A local project to produce biochar at the Smiths Falls Community Compost site is still in development, so the biochar is not ready to sell to the public yet.

Beyond its practical benefits, biochar helps fight climate change by capturing and sequestering carbon in the soil for generations. Find out more on their Green Carbon Products' website [greencarbonproducts.com](https://greencarbonproducts.com).



website [greencarbonproducts.com](https://greencarbonproducts.com).

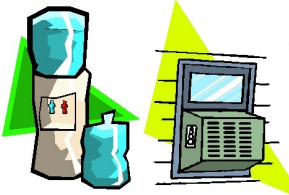
We are selling the high carbon biochar in convenient 1.8 L resealable bags. Our introductory price is \$15.00 per bag, tax included. It has been selling well so far, and it is clear that many gardeners out there are already aware of benefits of biochar. Look for it in our "garden centre", immediately behind the store. We have already placed an order for an additional 300 bags. You can ask for a handout on how to use biochar at the cash, although basic instructions are on the packaging.



## In REAL Life



**Friends of the Tay Watershed Discovery Day.** If you have never visited the Perth Farmer's Market, Sat. Aug 16 would be a good time. FoTW will be hosting their Watershed Discovery Day there at the Crystal Palace until 1 p.m., featuring exhibits by conservation organizations (including REAL!) and with activities for all generations.



**Appliances Containing Coolant.** Surprise! We are not telling you not to bring them to us this time. We have learned that the EPRA WILL accept dehumidifiers, water coolers, mini fridges and air conditioners in our electronics waste bin, so you can bring those appliances to us now, store hours only. The EPRA will look after removing the coolant at their end. Note we still do not take large white appliances, so no full size fridges or freezers please!



**Mini Forest Progress.** In early June several volunteers did some weeding to remove primarily Manitoba maple seedlings. Just 5 of the 330 seedlings planted did not survive the winter. That is a reasonable loss rate, so they will not be replaced. The cedars that looked a little sad earlier in the spring have greened up. June 17 a cubic metre of inoculated biochar was spread on the eastern half (right hand side). More biochar may be added later; it will be interesting to see the difference between the two halves of the forest. Sadly, the tulip tree planted at the park about the same time last year was vandalized for a second time. It may be rehabilitated but another tree may be planted there in case it does not recuperate.



**Household Hazardous Waste.** Local collection depots are seasonal, so make sure you make plans to get all that nasty stuff you have accumulated taken care of before the end of the summer. **If you are a resident of Smiths Falls, Carleton Place, Beckwith, Mississippi Mills, Drummond North Elmsley, Perth, or Montague** you are entitled to use the depot at 128 Patterson Cres., Carleton Place Saturdays 8 a.m. until noon until August 30. If you live in **Tay Valley** you use the Middleville depot, open Wednesday and Saturdays until October 11. Check the hours and fill out a list before you go. If you are in **Rideau Lakes** but close to Smiths Falls, you have already missed the depot at the Lombardy Fairgrounds, July 5. But you can also go Sat. Aug. 15 to the South Leeds County Patrol Garage, or Sat. Oct. 11 to the Spencerville Fairgrounds. Again, check the website before you go, they don't run all day.



**Home Energy Assessments** Alan Leonard is still available to do home energy assessments in this area. There are no widely available incentive grant programs at the moment, but you can qualify for the Canada Greener Homes Loan. It offers up to \$40,000 interest free for up to ten years. You will need to have a full audit done before you do any renovations, and have an "after" audit to qualify. You may also simply choose to have an assessment done to know more about your home, and to receive an EnerGuide rating, useful if you end up trying to sell your home. We recently produced a little flier on what REAL has to offer, good for handing out or leaving at unstaffed events. Get one at the REAL Deal cash, or [read it here](#).

**RIDEAU ENVIRONMENTAL  
ACTION LEAGUE**

Box 1061  
Smiths Falls ON  
K7A 5A5  
info@REALaction.ca

**www.REALaction.ca**

**REAL Deal Store &  
Environment Centre**

85 William St. W.  
Smiths Falls ON  
**613-283-7999**

Open Wednesday  
through Saturdays  
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Ask about our  
Tool Library**

For Home Energy Audits,  
contact Alan Leonard at:  
alanleonard9@gmail.com

**Find us on  
Facebook and  
Instagram**

Send contributions to the  
September issue by August 15  
to dhicks11@cogeco.ca  
or call Barb at (613) 283-9966

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

# Like What REAL Does?

## You Can Help Us!



- **Become a Member**
- **Volunteer**
- **Join the Board**
- **Participate in Our Programs**
- **Support a Fundraiser**
- **Join our Email List**
- **Support the REAL Deal Store**
- **Join our Tool Library**
- **Share your Expertise**
- **Say Nice Things about Us**
- **Thank our Corporate Members and Supporting Municipalities**



**RIDEAU  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
ACTION LEAGUE**

## 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](http://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

### Join our Email List

Use the green signup button on the  
bottom of our homepage.

### Contact Information

Name .....

Street/RR Address .....

Town, Province .....

Postal Code .....

Home Phone .....

Work Phone .....

Best time to reach me .....

Email address .....