

REAL *update*

For members and friends of the Rideau Environmental Action League

DECEMBER 2007

"Christmas on the Rideau" Concert Wednesday, December 5

The world renowned Central Band of the Canadian Forces will perform it's 10th annual concert to benefit REAL on December 5.

Wayne Cavanagh of JACK-FM will again provide his excellent skills as Master of Ceremonies for this enjoyable evening. The Central Band will perform an entertaining



Jones Falls Photo by Simon Lunn to be raffled

selection of seasonal music and include soloists, vocalists and a special dedication to veterans. This year "Christmas on the Rideau" will pay special tribute to the 175th anniversary of the completion of the Rideau Canal and celebrate its designation as a World Heritage Site. A special photo presentation of the work of talented local photographer and naturalist, and longtime REAL member, Simon Lunn, will be accompanied by the musical piece "Moonlight on the Rideau". Simon, recently retired from Parks Canada, knows well the many

Tribute to the Rideau DVD

Featuring 175 photos by Simon Lunn set to "Moonlight on the Rideau" by the Perth Citizen's Band

Only \$5 each

A perfect Christmas gift or keepsake of the 175th Anniversary of the Rideau Canal

Available at the concert and other local outlets

moods, seasons and special sites along the Rideau. "Moonlight on the Rideau", written by W.R. Spence, was first performed by the Perth Citizens' Band on Sunday, December 20, 1936.

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It was selected as the official theme song of the Rideau Canal's 150th Anniversary.

A framed photo by Simon of a summer view of Jones Falls will be raffled on concert night.

Funds raised from concert admissions, patrons, sponsors, the raffle and DVD sales will be used to support REAL's many environmental projects throughout Lanark, Leeds and Grenville.

The concert gets underway at 7 p.m. at SFDCI. For tickets call Beth at (613) 283-0824 or see www.REALaction.ca.

Ontario Walkers set a World Record!



It is looking like Ontario will be successful in smashing the World Record Walk record of 100,915 set in Western Australia in 2006.

Guinness is still verifying the results from the over 1300 walks across Ontario. Smiths Falls contributed 100 walkers to the total number of residents walking one kilometre simultaneously at 12:30 on Wednesday, October 3. Green Communities Canada has submitted a claim for Ontario of 134,100 walkers. The Canada-wide claim is for 197,284 participants.

Local efforts were organized by the Climate Change Action Team (CCAT) of REAL to promote a culture of walking as an alternative to driving, which contributes to climate change. Walkers were invited to sign the International

Charter for Walking, which encourages “healthy, efficient and sustainable communities where people choose to walk”.

Kirk Everett staffed the Cornelia Street location, which was chosen for its proximity to working people who could join in on their lunch hour. Thirty two people participated there. Alexis Asselin organized the Centennial Park location, which attracted 68 walkers, including a large contingent from the Leeds Grenville and Lanark Health Unit. Lois Dewey spoke to those assembled before the walk, encouraging walking as part of a healthy lifestyle. Mayor Dennis Staples led the participants on their 15-20 minute walk around the basin.

Thanks to Kirk and Alexis for arranging REAL’s participation in this public awareness event.

Well Aware Columns

Angela Gulley-Northfield reports a great response from the public to the Well Aware series printed in the EMC. Since late September, five pieces have appeared, covering important aspects of knowing your well, such as having your water tested, buried wells, and the necessity of properly retiring old wells. The pieces have led to a number of inquiries from well-owners, many resulting in full Guided Self Assessments. Together Angela and our other Certified Water Guide, Patricia Larkin, will have completed almost 70 GSAs by the end of this year, surpassing our target by more than 50%. Angela, who holds a Masters degree in Hydrogeology, has lots of ideas for more Well Aware columns, which will appear in the spring.



Rideau Lakes Starts Curbside Recycling

A curbside recycling program replaced the depot system used by Rideau Lakes residents in October. The program has been running smoothly reports Michael Touw, Manager of Municipal Operations at the township, and response from residents has been favourable, with the amount of materials collected increasing each week.

Unlike other municipal programs, Rideau Lakes requires residents to place their materials in clear blue plastic bags - one for the plastics, glass and cans and another for fibres and papers. Garbage and recyclables are collected by separate trucks, not necessarily on the same day. Regular garbage goes out in clear bags as before. The recyclables go to Waste Management in Brockville.



Also new is the collection of all plastics stamped with the symbol #1 through #7, when only #1s and #2s were collected before. The used blue bags are being stockpiled until a sufficient quantity and suitable market can be located.

Changes to the system were made to extend the life of the municipality's two landfills in Delta and Portland, and in anticipation of Ministry of Environment policy changes. It is anticipated the program will boost the recycling participation rate from 35% to 65%.

Beginning in January 2008, residents will be expected to purchase garbage bag tags for \$2 either at the township office or designated retailers. In previous years, residents were supplied with 52 tags free of charge. Sales of composters to residents have increased

dramatically in anticipation of the additional fees.

The new system is welcomed, as it makes recycling easier for residents, and pickup is more energy efficient than having individuals deliver their recyclables to a depot. It has brought home to more people how much waste we really create, bringing renewed interest in recycling and waste reduction in general.

E-waste Depot a Welcome Service

The electronic waste depot organized by Alfred von Mirbach for the Town of Perth on October 20 was an overwhelming success. It attracted 430 vehicles, and gathered more than 30 tonnes of used electronics, about five times as much material as expected.

All Lanark municipalities were invited and agreed to participate, and provided volunteers to assist on the depot day. Clearly there was a need for this service.

REAL had arranged for one 54-foot trailer, provided at a discount by Wills Transfer. By 9 a.m. there was enough material to fill the trailer. There was a steady stream of cars and trucks after that, and most people were unloaded within 15 minutes.

The materials collected were transported to Artex Environmental in Toronto for recycling. The electronics and appliances will be subjected to some manual disassembly, then put through a sophisticated shredding and separation system. The metals, plastic and glass streams are then sold to various North American markets.

Clearly, Lanark County residents had been accumulating large quantities of old computers, televisions, electronics and other household appliances, and were waiting for an opportunity to have them recycled. Given the success of this depot, we hope that more depots will be held in and around the County.

Welcome Back Ron

We are happy to welcome Ron Toop back to REAL's Board of Directors. Ron is a long-time REAL member, and served on the board early in this century, when he also coordinated the newsletter. He will be pitching in with the REAL Update once again, and contributed "Is Your Winter Vacation Eco-Friendly?" in this issue.

Ron is a retired university teacher of English, retired farmer, and has spent many years on staff at the Smiths Falls Alternative School. He has been a board member for many years with a local organization for youth in trouble with the law. He and his wife Libby live on the farm homesteaded by his mother's family in Kitley. Ron enjoys writing, genealogy, and family reunions.

Idle Free Signage for Sale

In the coming months, REAL will be offering Idle Free signs to schools, supporters and corporate members. These metal signs are 12" wide by 18" high on a white background. They say "Spare our Air, have a red "no exhaust" graphic, and under that "Another Idle Free Zone". The idea is to place them on a building near parking spots and dropoff zones to remind people not to idle their vehicles.

REAL purchased these at minimal cost from ecoPerth, and will be offering them free to schools, and for \$15 to others. If you would like one, please contact us. If there is sufficient interest, we could arrange a "bulk" order of a larger version.



Is Your Winter Vacation Eco-Friendly?

If you plan to travel this winter, be environmentally aware, whether you choose a winter getaway in a nearby B-and-B or an ecotourism tour to a sunny Caribbean island. Make choices that preserve the natural environment and benefit the local economy. Here are a few key items to consider.

Travel only as far as necessary to get the vacation you want. If you are traveling by air, travel light: take only what you need. Extra distance and extra weight increases the CO₂ emissions your trip contributes. Investigate carbon credits or consider a donation to offset your CO₂ emissions.

If possible, choose lodgings that are locally owned and operated by local employees. Similarly, when dining, choose the local restaurants rather than the international chains. Chat with the owners, the waitresses, the local customers. Learn from them what day trips to take and what local sites to see. Walk wherever you can. Hire the local taxi driver as a tour guide. If renting a vehicle, choose the most energy-efficient.

For souvenirs and family presents, check out the places where the local artisans sell their paintings, pottery, carvings, jewelry, glassware and toys. Take the time to chat with them. (In the more touristy shops, look at the labels of your purchases to see they are truly made locally and not an import.) Learn about local history, local art, and local culture.

Be as careful with your energy consumption as you would in your own home, whether using the air conditioner or the electric heater in your lodgings. See what is recycled locally and do the same. Create no more garbage for the landfill than is necessary.

Treat the local environment as if it were your own. And make friends among the locals, not just among your travelling companions.

Safe Alternatives to Toxic Toys

Worried about the safety of the toys you buy for Christmas? Daily, news stories document world-wide recalls of toys with toxic or dangerous components. Added to old worries about lead are the newer dangers of soft plastics, especially in toys small enough for little children to chew.

Here are some ideas for playthings that are healthier for children and the environment.

- Solid wood toys. Avoid plywood and particleboard, which are made with glues that can contain formaldehyde. Be careful about the finishes: natural oil, such as walnut oil or beeswax, are safest. Look for Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood.
- Search for stuffed animals and dolls made with certified organic or un-treated cotton and wool, and colored with non-toxic, color-fast dyes. (Some cheap dyes can be carcinogenic.)
- Tried and true board games are always a good choice, as well as cooperative games. You can't beat PVC-free LEGO for creative possibilities. Brio and Chicco are other companies that don't use phthalates in their toys.
- Toys passed along from generation to generation within your family can be a hit, but put them through the same scrutiny you would a new toy.
- Assemble a selection of cardboard boxes, glue, scissors, and craft paper.
- Shop at craft shows or at local artisans, where hand-made toys aren't swaddled in packaging and where you can question the maker about process and materials.
- Books and magazine subscriptions are always a good bet for older children.
- Thrift shops and your closets are a good source of dress-up clothes.



Source: Natural Life Magazine, November/December 2007

Energy Programs Booking Well Ahead

Both the Limited-Income OPA (Ontario Power Authority) Electricity Program and the ecoENERGY programs continue to attract applicants. However, due to the volume of calls there have been delays in doing both the audits and assigning contractors to this project. By early November we were booking audits in January. So we are looking for another certified ecoEnergy assessor. Call (613) 283-9500 to book an appointment.

In REAL Life

The next meeting of the **Climate Change Action Team (CCAT)** is Wednesday, January 9. Jeff Kohl will be our guest, speaking about climate change in Ontario. All welcome. Meeting is at 7 p.m. in the Town Council Lounge, upstairs at 77 Beckwith St.

Select letter carrier routes in Smiths Falls were targeted in our **experimental 'Returnalope' fundraising campaign**. The unaddressed letters invited residents to contribute to REAL. Response was less than we had hoped, but our costs were covered. Donations are always welcome, and charitable receipts are provided.

REAL members attended both Saturdays of the **Weathering the Change: Adapting to Climate Change in the Mississippi Valley** workshops in Almonte in September. The series was offered by Mississippi Valley Conservation (MVC) and the Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists (MVFN). Summaries of the presentations are available at www.mvc.on.ca/program/workshops.html.

Project Porchlight, a Canadian energy efficiency program, came to Smiths Falls, Perth and Montague in November. Volunteers were recruited to distribute 5800 free compact fluorescent light bulbs to every household. Once all these energy-efficient bulbs are in use, residents will save \$290,000 over five years. It

also means 2900 tonnes of carbon dioxide won't be emitted from coal-fired plants because these bulbs use 75% less electricity!

Trying to think of a **Christmas gift for a person who doesn't need any more stuff?** Consider purchasing an engraved granite marker on Evergreen Avenue in their honour, or making a donation to REAL. Online credit card donations can be made through www.Canadahelps.org - just search on Rideau Environment Trust.

We still have a few of the **"Making a REAL Difference" fleece vests** for sale in men's size small and medium. The vests are collared, zippered, two toned blue and sell for \$25. Buy one for a REAL keener so they can turn down the heat!



Getting a new cell phone for Christmas? Remember that **REAL accepts used cell phones as well as printer ink cartridges for recycling.** The phones earn money for REAL, and the print cartridges earn money for the Canadian Diabetes Association. Call the REAL office to arrange a time to drop them off.

Kill-a-watt Meters are now available through the Perth Public Library as well as the Smiths Falls Public Library. Effective November 2007, there will be no charge to borrow the device. However those borrowing from Perth should have a valid library card. These handy devices are used to measure the electricity usage of your appliances.



Next Issue

Submissions for the February issue can be sent to dhicks11@cogeco.ca by Jan. 15, 2007 or call Barb at (613) 283-9966.

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The REAL DEAL Environment Centre

To book Well Aware Visits, or to find out more about our energy programs,

Phone: (613) 283-9500

