

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Making a REAL Difference for 30 Years

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

DECEMBER 2019

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Montreal Climate March by Matia Sinclair

On September 27th, 2019 Montreal went into the record books by having the biggest protest in Quebec's history and I am happy to say I was a part of it. 500,000 Canadians took to the streets in Montreal demanding Climate Justice and political action.

I am only 13 and I still can't believe the size of that march. Everywhere I looked there were people trying to change the world. There was energy in the air that day as we all marched the Montreal streets trying to get the world to listen to our cries of action. We were like a sea of people.



Matia Sinclair (with the Save our Future sign) and her family at the September 27 Montreal Climate March.

When we were first trying to get to the climate rally, we saw lots of other people doing the same thing even though it hadn't started. Once I saw the enormity of it, I was shocked and excited by the sheer number of people who had come. Some people were handing out little green pieces of felt in a circle to show unity. Others were giving hugs to those who felt discouraged by the enormity of climate change.

As we all waited for the march to start, lots of newspeople and cameras were everywhere filming or interviewing us. Sometimes randomly, a shout was taken up and spread through the entire group. It was so cool to see people of all ages, languages, and religions walking for the same cause. There were lots of young people also walking for their future even on a school day.

Finally, the walk started even though it was pretty stop-and-go to start. I don't know if the front had been walking for awhile, which is probably likely since there were so many of us. When we stopped to eat or take a quick break, the stores were full of others with the green badge or climate strike signs. When we came out, it was like we had never left because I still couldn't see the end or the start of the people protesting.

(continued inside)



Journey to Sustainability Starts with Meal Planning Workshop

REAL member Peter Au is spearheading a new series of presentations, “Journey to Sustainability”, that is already gaining momentum in the community.

It began with a “Towards Zero Waste” presentation October 2. Guest speakers Michell Dunford, who practices a near zero-waste lifestyle, and Heather Mitchell-Adams, owner of Modern Thymes, inspired attendees to take another look at their lifestyle choices and start with some small changes to reduce waste. (See [our last newsletter](#) for details.) The collaborative group who organized the evening were already thinking of possibilities to provide additional information and resources on more specific topics, starting with meal planning.

The “Meal Planning 101” presentation took place November 14 at Trinity United Church and featured three speakers. Norma Wrightly described how the organizers of Trinity Tuesdays manage to feed a fluctuating number of guests for less than \$1 per person at their weekly community dinner. Heather Mitchell-Adams described her method of family meal-planning that saves time, reduces waste and simplifies her busy life. Rebekah Nitschmann, a registered dietician with Rideau Community Health Services, explained Canada’s new Food Guide, the basics of a nutritious diet and how meal planning can make meeting nutrition goals easier.

These presentations are available on REAL’s Facebook page as well as the new Facebook Group “Journey to Sustainable Living” that has been set up to further the discussion, especially when it comes to local options.



Norma Wrightly from Trinity United Church was one of the speakers at the November 14 “Meal Planning 101”.

The group is already planning its next session on waste audits for Thursday, January 16. A tentative plan for 2020 includes an Earth Day Potluck dinner on April 22, a possible address by Bea Johnson, author of *Zero-Waste Home*, on May 28 and workshops on preserving for August, and transportation for November. The committee is enlisting additional members, so please contact Peter at peter00au@gmail.com or (613) 284-8338 if you would like to be involved. Various experts will be pulled in for particular sessions as well. Watch REAL’s website and Facebook pages for details on these and other REAL events.

Montreal Climate March (continued)

Seeing Greta Thunberg in person and hearing her speak was so amazing, as she is such an inspiration for everyone. She had started Fridays for Futures and her being at this one was so motivational. Having her and 500,000 other people shutting down the streets in Montreal got the whole world paying attention.

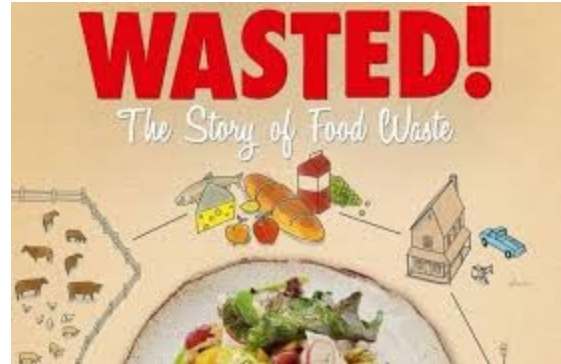
We need politicians to act and solve the climate crisis. We can no longer wait for a miracle to come and solve all of our problems. You might think it doesn’t matter if you didn’t march in Montreal. But the September 27th March in Montreal proves otherwise. We made worldwide news that wouldn’t have happened if no one showed up. Join me in fighting for Climate Justice and a better future for all of us.

“Wasted: The Story of Food Waste” the First in a Environmental Film Series

REAL purchased and distributed 25 tickets to the November 16 screening of “Wasted: The Story of Food Waste”. As a result, many attendees to our Nov. 14 Meal Planning Workshop and others were able to see the Anthony Bourdain film that explored all aspects of food waste in our culture and the world. The documentary was well worth seeing, colourful, eye opening, reasonably positive and relevant to everyone, because, well, everyone eats! The film was followed by a panel discussion where five panelists answered questions arising from the film and discussed their own experiences locally. About 100 people were in attendance.

“Wasted” was the first installment of “Shift Happens”, an environmental film series being offered by the Perth based group [“Biosphere Environmental Education”](#) and Three Green Peas. Five award-winning films are being screened at Perth’s Studio Theatre over six months, all on Saturday evenings. REAL will be a sponsor of one of the next films. “Chasing Ice” will be shown in February, the “Last Ocean” in March, “Racing Extinction”

in April, concluding with “A Plastic Ocean” in May. The April film will be followed by a panel discussion, but all films are followed by a mixer with local experts in the theatre lobby. Tickets are \$15, and passes are available if you would like to see them all. Get them at the Studio Theatre office, or online at ticketsplease.ca.



Hierarchy of solutions explored in “Wasted”:

1. Feed people first.
2. If excess food cannot be fed to people, feed it to animals.
3. Convert food unfit for animals to energy.
4. Lastly, food waste can be composted.
5. Food waste should never go to landfill.

Beeswax Wrap Workshop

Summer staff member, Aira Sarmiento, organized a beeswax wrap workshop. About 17 people came to the session at Modern Thymes September 21. Beeswax wraps are specially treated fabric pieces that can be used in place of plastic wrap. Two ways of making the beeswax wraps were demonstrated. For one method you paint the beeswax mixture on the cotton piece before putting it in the oven. For the other, an iron is used to melt the mixture onto the fabric.

The ingredients to make the wraps are beeswax, joboja oil, and pine tree resin. Beeswax wraps are water tight. They lock in moisture but do not let it build up so lets the food naturally breathe, something that plastic wraps, being airtight, will not do. The joboja oil acts as an antibacterial and the pine resin adds to the stickiness and makes the wraps flexible to mold around the food or food container being wrapped. Beeswax wraps can be reused over and over. Simply wash gently with warm (not hot) water, and rinse and hang to dry. The recipe from mountainroseherbs.com was recommended.

Three other upcycling projects were demonstrated: a jewelry holder/hanger out of picture frames and chicken wire, a tray made from picture frames and a pencil case from water bottles.



< Donna McKenna demonstrating to the group.

A jewelry hanger made from an old picture frame. >



< Painting the beeswax mixture onto the fabric to make an alternative to plastic wrap.

REAL Deal News

Debit Now Accepted. We are happy to report that effective November 7 the REAL Deal Store is accepting debit payments. This should make things easier for the many people who don't normally carry cash. For now, we have a minimum debit payment of \$5.00, and we are not accepting credit cards. So far about a third of the revenue taken in each day is via Interac.

New Hours. Other than our second Wednesday, we have been finding being open Wednesdays very worth while, as sales come close to that of Thursdays and Fridays. Saturdays continue to be our busiest day.

Gate Closure. So far closing the gate outside of store hours has been working well, and we have only had a few "drops" of items at the gate. However, please note that if the gate is open the store is still not necessarily open. REAL uses 85 William St. as a base of their operations, so we often have meetings there, or are sometimes just catching up on things at the store. We are constantly amazed at the number of cars which seem to cruise through our lot just moments after the gate has opened. The general public should not be on the property outside of store hours.

The Dome. Many departments have been moved out to the dome to make room for more furniture inside the store. Hardware, sports and luggage are now all out in the dome, with the small hardware items all along the one side. There should be at least two men out there to help you find what you are looking for. Sorry, you will still have to come inside to pay. Lighting and small appliances are still inside, as well as pet supplies. We have established an area to flip through framed wall art, as wall space is always in short supply.

New Staff. You may see some new faces at the store. Vicki Cannon will be volunteering on cash Thursday mornings. Nathan Healey is doing a subsidized work placement for four hours a day, and will be doing cash and other tasks as required. Tracy Van Dusen, Jeff St. John and Heather Jones have been helping out in various capacities. Greg Charette is now being paid for a few hours a week, after volunteering in the yard since early summer. We hope to gather all our REAL Deal staff and volunteers in one place on December 13 for our annual turkey dinner Christmas celebration.

Christmas. It is a challenge to get all of the Christmas stuff we gather throughout the year down from the loft, priced, and displayed. We had just about accomplished that by mid November, when more Christmas donations started rolling in. But this is not unexpected. We just ask that any large items like artificial Christmas trees be donated by the end of November so we have a chance to sell them for a fair price. Once December starts, most Christmas merchandise will be 50% off. Our last store day for 2019 will be Saturday, December 21, then we will close for one week. Please remember to hold onto your donations for the holidays; we will be happy to accept them when we reopen Thursday, January 2nd, 2020.



Normal REAL Deal Hours
Wednesdays thru Saturdays
10:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.

Last Shopping Day for 2019
Saturday, December 21,
10:00 a.m. 5:00 p.m.

Closed Dec. 22—Jan .1
inclusive

Reopening on
Thursday, January 2, 2020

Please bring your donations
only when we are open.
(613) 283-7999

An Adventure in Recycling, Re-use and Repair by Alan Leonard

As a firm believer in recycling, re-using and repairing instead of discarding things, I had a problem that would allow me to do all three. My lawnmower had rusted out so much that a wheel fell off and the other wheels and the handle were threatening to all break loose as well. The engine ran just fine and it seemed a shame to get rid of a functioning machine. After finding out that a new mower deck would cost \$100 I looked for another solution.

I asked Dan at the REAL DEAL store if he had an old lawnmower with a wrecked engine and he showed me an old beast with a hefty mower deck that he was willing to sell for ten bucks. He laughed when I told him my plan to replace the engine. I think he thought I would be back in a week to donate the abandoned project back.

My first free day came and I started to disassemble the mower engines and parts and all went well and I thought this was going to be a fun and satisfying afternoon project. The beast's engine came right off along with the old push handles and mower drive (I would have to push the resurrected mower). Blissfully unaware of my fate, I started unbolting the functional engine off the rusted out mower. One bolt, two bolts and one last bolt to go. It didn't go.

Oh well, I believe in the power of physics to solve problems and I figured I just needed a bigger lever and I got out the big wrench. Still wouldn't turn so I applied more force and didn't hear the Fates laughing quietly in the background. As you have probably predicted, the bolt head turned and I ended up holding half the sheared off bolt in my hand, staring dumbfounded at the rest lodged firmly in the engine.

After shaking my fist at the heavens and having a good cry, I went back to solving this problem. Luckily this has happened before and some genius invented the screw extractor which is a hardened steel bit that can be inserted into a hole drilled into a sheared off bolt to apply torque and turn it while also saving the sanity of hapless (wannabe) mechanics. A little penetrating oil to loosen the bolt, drill the center of the bolt, insert the extractor, give it a turn and voila...! Nothing, won't move and I am scared to force it and end up with a broken bit of hardened steel *and* the bolt permanently lodged in the engine.

Fast forward a couple weeks with lots of penetrating oil and careful but futile attempts at turning the *&##% bolt. I decide I won't accept defeat and I surgically drill out the bolt and save most of threads in the bolt hole. Now I have three mostly intact bolt holes and I go about re-assembling the cross breed mower. First I use some leftover paint and give the beast a new look. Engine on, sharpened blade on, handle with safety shut off installed and success, an (almost) new working machine!

The old engine went to my local mechanic to use for parts, the excess metal went to the REAL DEAL metal bin to be recycled and I have a snazzy new lawnmower. I hope this inspires you to find a 'fun and challenging' project like this. Listen for the cackling of the Fates though.



Parting Comment on Lawnmowers

Now to address the issue of using a gas lawnmower instead of an electric one, or a scythe, or sheep, or leaving the lawn as a meadow. Part of my yard is a meadow, but much of my semi-suburban oasis is lawn. I am very aware of the contribution to climate change caused by burning fossil fuel to make this bit of artificial green expanse. I also know that it takes energy and resources to manufacture an electric mower and not all our electricity generation is renewable. When this mower dies I will recycle it and maybe buy an electric mower and only run it off peak when most electric generation is not from fossil fuels. We all make choices and I try to do my best to reduce my still substantial environmental footprint.



REAL's New Mission Statement

At a November 2 Strategy session facilitated by Jeff Kohl, the REAL board crafted a statement that more accurately and succinctly describes what the organization aims to do.

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

The group will be re-examining its current slate of projects according to some screening criteria also discussed that day, and deciding what it can realistically tackle in 2020 and beyond.

Native Plant Sale Supported by a REAL Action Grant

REAL Action Grants were introduced in 2014 to financially encourage community groups to take on their own environmental projects. We were pleased to award Friends of Lanark County (FOLC) a grant which they used to partially fund a Native Plant Sale in Fallbrook on June 1st.

A selection of 14 native plants were purchased from Grow Wild, a native plant nursery in Omamee, and transported to the ballpark in Fallbrook. Information handouts on each plant, as well as a handout on the benefits of native plants were made available. Volunteers, a horticulturalist and a landscaper were on hand to help the approximately 50 customers select plants best suited to their properties. Most plants sold over the course of three hours.

The sale gave the group the opportunity to educate residents on pollinators and the benefits of native plants and gave the buyers the chance to participate in native plant repopulation. The group is planning another sale in the Spring and Fall of 2020.



Picking up the plants at Grow Wild in Omamee.



Labelling the 14 species of native plants.



The June 1st plant sale in Fallbrook.

In REAL Life



REAL In Retrospect. A series of Facebook posts created as a lead up to REAL's Local Food Dinner have now been added to our website. Each post featured a photo and an explanation of some project, practice or milestone in REAL's 30 year history. Our Reuse Centre, volunteer placements and the Idle Free Campaign were some of the topics. You can [see them here](#) under the About tab of our website.

Radon Meter Lending. REAL has three radon meters available for lending. This area of Ontario has higher than average radon levels, so it is worth testing your home. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking. Katie Hoffman looks after the lending. She can be reached at (613) 983-3360 or kthoffman@cogeco.ca. The meters are NOT at the store. The Health Unit has [low cost radon testing kits available](#) at their Brockville and Smiths Falls offices for \$20.

Lunch and Learn Recycling. Four REAL board members met with Vanessa Bernicky, Environmental Coordinator for the Town of Smiths Falls, and Cathie Green, Public Works Assistant for Drummond-North Elmsley, to discuss the local waste and recycling situation, and changes that will be coming. Vanessa shared a little presentation originally developed for local students, that describes what happens to the materials collected for recycling in Smiths Falls. [See it here.](#)

Monarch Garden. The monarch garden planted this past season was an unqualified success, so the group is looking to expand it. The soil has already been delivered so that the group can get an early start on preparations in 2020. It will be a more elongated garden between the current garden and William St.

30th Anniversary Video. In honour of REAL's 30th Anniversary, a short video was created and premiered at our October dinner. Katie Hoffman gathered video clips of people involved in REAL and turned them over to Roger Sands of Arranel Studios who added additional footage of the REAL Deal Store and monarch garden, as well as some photos of REAL activities. In the video you will hear how REAL came to be and meet some of the people who are involved in REAL today. [See it here.](#)

Lake Links. REAL was represented at the annual [Lake Links Workshop](#) at the Perth Civitan Hall, October 26. The event is well-attended by representatives of area lake associations, conservation authorities, scientists and municipalities. REAL's display featured the REAL Deal, other services offered at the store, our monarch garden as well as samples of alternatives to single use household plastics.

Winter Composting. Yes you can! Keep accumulating your food scraps for your compost pile in the winter. You may want to make sure the pieces are smaller. If it is too difficult to get out to your pile, you can accumulate some scraps in tubs in your freezer (or outside), or in a small vessel closer to your house. Hopefully you managed to pile some leaves next to your heap to layer on before it snowed. Things will start cooking again in the spring!

Home Energy Audits. Is your house harder to heat than you think it should be? Call Alan Leonard for a energy assessment. If you are Enbridge customer you may also be eligible for rebates on home energy efficiency upgrades. Contact Alan at (613) 864-3099 or alanleonard9@gmail.com.

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

We're on the Web
www.REALaction.ca

REAL Deal Store & Environment Centre

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

Store open Wednesdays,
Thursdays, Fridays and
Saturdays 10 –5.
Closed Sundays.

For Home Energy Audits,
contact Alan Leonard
alanleonard9@gmail.com
or (613) 864-3099

Find us on:
FaceBook, Twitter
and Instagram

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

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Eco-Friendly Christmas Ideas

Lights:

- smaller light displays
- use LED lights
- use a timer

Wrapping:

- use recyclable materials
- avoid glossy gift wrap and foil
- reuse paper, ribbons, trims

Cards:

- make your own
- reuse cards for crafts
- try E-greeting or phone call

Electronics:

- save old ones for e-waste depot
- set aside batteries for recycling
- beware of phantom power

Entertaining:

- try cloth napkins and tablecloths
- use real glassware, dishes, cutlery
- avoid food waste

Purchasing Gifts:

- buy less
- think homemade
- buy local or close to home
- think recycled or natural
- aim for ethically sourced
- look for battery free
- promote green living
- take your own bags when shopping

Alternative Gifts:

- give an experience
- give to a charity
- buy from a charitable gift catalogue
- coupon for service
- consider reused or regifting

The Tree:

- choose a local fresh tree
- compost or mulch after
- consider a live tree and replant

Recycle:

- check what your area accepts
- take alcohol containers to LCBO
- buy in recyclable containers

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.

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