

# REAL Annual Report

Feb. 1, 2015—Jan. 31, 2016

## Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

### Year in Review - President's Message

As I write this I am amazed at how quickly time flies. It is hard to believe that it has already been two years since I was blessed with the opportunity to be a leader of such a great organization as REAL.

Last year I reflected on the accomplishment of REAL reaching our 25<sup>th</sup> year, and what lies ahead for our organization. REAL's successes would not have been possible without the partnerships that we have made within the community at all levels.

The biggest physical project this year was the installation of the coverall to the rear of our REAL Deal Reuse Store. This project is a prime example of the variety and number of partnerships that come into play. Building a structure to better accommodate used renovation materials would have never have happened without the cooperation we received from the Town of Smiths Falls, Parks Canada, the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority and all the municipalities which support REAL. Add to that the non-profit discount that Bruce Wright and Harnois of EZ Dome arranged for us, and the assistance of Malloch construction, McNamee Concrete and Glenview Iron and Metal, who all donated or massively discounted costs to install the structure in a reasonable time frame and a reasonable cost.

The last thank you is to all of our dedicated volunteers. Many people, especially Don Harvey, worked very hard to make sure the structure went up efficiently and that it was organized effectively when the time came to fill the new space. Throughout the year, many others contributed to fundraising events, especially our local foods dinner, which financially support REAL's activities. While it will take additional fundraising to cover all the costs associated with this project, I have no doubt all our partners will be there

to assist and provide the support necessary to make this a great move forward for the REAL Deal Store and REAL.

I encourage all members who are not already involved to find the time to volunteer for REAL in some capacity, as this is what makes the organization great!

Respectfully yours,

Shawn Merriman



### Contribute to the Future of the Local Environment

Since 1989 REAL has been a respected environmental voice in our community, working to assist residents to reduce their waste, protect our common water supplies and use energy more wisely. If protecting the natural environment in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville is important to you and your family, please consider supporting the activities of REAL, your local environmental organization, with a tax deductible donation. Cheques may be mailed to the box address indicated on the last page, or dropped off at the REAL Deal Store. If you prefer to make an online credit card donation, you may do so via [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org). To explore how you could include REAL in your estate planning; see our website under "DONATE".

# 2015 Highlights

## Community Builders Recognized

A special outdoor ceremony took place at Victoria Park June 6 to celebrate the placement of nine new granite tribute stones along Evergreen Avenue as well as the installation of a new interpretive panel at the west end of the path. The event date was chosen to coincide with Environment Week and the 75th anniversary of D-Day. The program included addresses by two Lest We Forget program participants and verbal tributes to community members and veterans being recognized that day. The new interpretive panel explains the concept of the living memorial and the demonstration native plantings along the path. For more about volunteering or sponsoring a memorial stone, contact Peter Au, 284-8338. The students' comments, the tributes, and a list of all the stones placed on Evergreen Avenue to date are all on our [website](#).



*Sue Brandum and some REAL Board members by the unveiled Evergreen interpretive panel.*

## Big Changes Keep REAL DEAL Moving Forward

Upgrades were made to our seven year old reuse store's operations to ensure we can continue to reduce waste, fund its operation, and create an income stream for REAL's other activities. Following some suggestions from the Endeavour consulting group, REAL embarked on a three part expansion plan of extending store hours, hiring a manager to oversee renovation materials, and create more space for renovation materials.

In June Steve Rawlings was hired as our Renovations Materials Manager to expand that department and build relations with local contractors, who could be the source of so many materials currently going to landfill. A new coverall was installed in our back yard to better organize and protect materials, and quickly filled with renovation materials as well as furniture. We had hoped to save the expense of dome ends for a couple of more years, but in



*A coverall was installed in the REAL Deal yard in October to store renovation materials.*

late December work began on doing just that. We quickly determined keeping the store open for an additional two hours on Friday evenings was not effective. Response to Sunday hours 12 – 4 gradually built, but we will be giving that a rest over the winter months.

Earlier in the year, some renovations were made possible by an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant. The concrete pilasters on the long sides of the building were insulated and painted. Thanks to some careful planning, store operations were not interrupted. Our long-hoped for solar thermal panels were incorporated into a south facing wall. This has increased the comfort level at the back of the building on cold days, will be a public demonstration of the technology.

## REAL Action Grants

Results of the eight \$250 REAL Action grants awarded in honour of our 25th anniversary were reported throughout 2015. Community gardens, a water bottle filling station, an e-waste collection program, a high school winter field camp and a tree in memory of female victims of domestic violence were the community projects helped along. Thanks to longtime supporter Tom Foulkes for funding our 25th anniversary activities.



*Upcycled raised garden bed at SFDCL.*





*CrimeStoppers and REAL volunteers with some of the televisions, computers and other e-waste collected during the October event.*

## E-Waste Still a Going Concern

The volume of e-waste brought to the OES approved recycling depot at the REAL Deal continues to amaze us. REAL has collected 40 tonnes of electronic waste from Smiths Falls and surrounding municipalities over the year, which has created a significant income stream for the REAL Deal. A special e-waste weekend in October gave residents and businesses the opportunity to bring their electronic waste to SFDCl or the REAL Deal, or call our Crime Stoppers partner to have it picked up. By the end of the weekend 4.5 tonnes of waste had been collected, and more people learned that we collect used electronics year round.

## Dedicated People Make it Happen

**Our Staff.** Susan Brandum serves as the Environmental Projects Manager and Executive Director of the REAL Deal, as well as being an active volunteer. She coordinates the activities of Al Leonard, Certified Energy Auditor and Angela Northfield, Water Advisor. Steve Rawlings was hired as Renovations Manager in June and is currently on medical leave. In October our REAL Deal Store Manager Tracy Thomson, moved on after four and a half years. Recruitment is under way to fill the managerial roles. Jane Ford was our paid summer student at the REAL Deal.

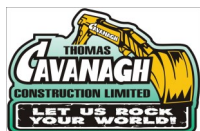
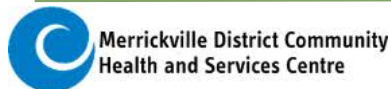
**Our Board.** No changes were made to our REAL Board at June's AGM, although Pam Craig is taking a break to look after her new baby. Around the table we have Shawn Merriman (President), Karen Schecter (Vice-President), Barb Hicks (Secretary-Treasurer), Peter Au, Donna McKenna and Jason Takerer. Representing the Smiths Falls Town Council is liaison member Lorraine Allen.

**Our Volunteers and Placements.** Volunteers contribute to REAL in so many ways, from computer skills to cleaning, from fundraising to photography. We sincerely value everyone's contributions, and especially appreciate the consistency of the REAL Deal volunteers who appear every Thursday, Friday and Saturday to accept donations, sort, price, organize, advise customers, and run the cash.

Through our volunteer program we aim to support volunteers by recognizing birthdays and milestones, providing occasional treats, gift cards and honorariums, and recognizing them in our newsletter. Getting their photos taken with Parrot Rescue birds was one colourful perk in a grey February. An Earth Day mini retreat at Tay River Reflections was an opportunity for staff, volunteers, board and key supporters to get to know one another over a buffet dinner.



*REAL Deal volunteer Don Harvey with Parrot Rescue friends..*



### Major Funders, Donors & Partners



## Greening our Community

Our **Community Garden** provides groups or individuals a place to grow their own healthy, local food. Produce from the Stone Soup Sharing Plot, tended by volunteers, was available to the community.

Our annual April **Pitch-In campaign** attracted a broad cross-section of volunteers, and removed litter from across our community.

Planning continued to further develop our **Environment Centre** to promote and demonstrate eco-friendly living.

**Energy audits** are available to homeowners and owners of small commercial or municipal buildings to promote energy conservation.

## Community Engagement

**Public events** are an opportunity for REAL to network and promote eco-friendly practices. This year in Smiths Falls this included the Friends of the Library's Annual Trivia Challenge, a Volunteer Fair, and the Smiths Falls Home and Living Show. In the surrounding region, REAL was represented at the North Grenville Sustainability Fair, the Merrickville Go Green Eco Fair, the Stewart Park Festival and the Rideau Ferry Regatta.

**Repurposing.** REAL offered two sessions of mosaic plant pot workshops, and organized a two day Art with a Past exhibit for people to share their upcycling ideas.

## Funding and Fundraising

Our Local Foods Harvest Dinner took place at the Gallipeau Centre in October, showcasing local food and the facilities of the Two Rivers Food Hub. The evening and silent auction were a resounding success, raising \$5,000 for REAL's activities. The June Customer Ask at Andress' Your Independent Grocer and the August Bottle Drive at The Beer Store, Smiths Falls, raised our profile locally and were solid contributions to the year's total.

Representatives continued to make presentations to area municipal councils outlining how REAL can help them achieve their environmental goals. As a result, our organization receives financial contributions from The Town of Smiths Falls, the Township of Montague, and the Township of Drummond North Elmsley.



*The REAL Community Garden includes 11 plots and a Stone Soup sharing plot. .*

## Communications

This year we launched a revamped Wordpress website, and started using MailChimp to manage our email communications. REAL maintains three Facebook pages for REAL, the REAL Deal Store and the Community Garden. We produced five eight page newsletters, and used local media to encourage environmental actions.



*Workshops encouraged repurposing materials into new items as a way of reducing waste.*



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