

# REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

SEPT 2018

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## REAL Suggests Businesses Give Paper Straws a Try

A group of enthusiastic volunteers took to the streets of Smiths Falls on Wed. August 8<sup>th</sup> to suggest to businesses they consider paper over plastic straws. The volunteers split into teams and blitzed all 49 food establishments in town, explaining the problem with plastic straws, giving them each two sample packages of paper straws to try and contact information for reordering. All but one of the businesses were already aware of the plastic straw problem. Locally owned businesses were onside to try the paper straws and purchase them. Restaurants that were part of a chain and could not make the decision locally would make the suggestion to head office. One local business owner, Amy Rensby of C'est Tout Bakery, had just received an order of paper straws that day, after trying corn-based straws for six months.

Millions of plastic straws are discarded every day after just one use, and they are not being recycled. They are made from a non renewable resource and take decades to break down, releasing toxic chemicals as they do. Many become litter or take up space in landfills. But there are alternatives: paper, compostable, stainless steel or even glass straws are now available. And you can always say no to a straw altogether!

Thanks to all of the REAL volunteers who took part: Helen Smith, Linda Fennell, Cathryn Davidson, David Hoffman, Sally Smith, Terry Watkiss, Julie Creighton, and especially to Katie Hoffman and Lorraine Allen for organizing the event, as well as Sally Smith and Evelyn Harford for the media coverage.



Amy Rensby of C'est Tout Bakery and REAL Board Member Lorraine Allen with some paper drinking straws. Photo by Helen Smith.

REAL hopes that more people will avoid plastic straws, and start to think about avoiding other single-use plastics, such as cutlery, razors, and coffee pods.

A number of packages of paper straws were left over from the event, and can be purchased \$2 for a pack of 24 from the REAL Deal Store.





## Radon Meter Simple to Use

By Keely Maddock

If you're like most Canadians, you may find yourself inundated with health advice surrounding the newest health trends. It seems that just as you grasp and understand one issue, a new one emerges.

I feel the same way. Which is why when I first heard the news surrounding radon gas, I somewhat brushed it off as another trend in health. But further research revealed radon is the second leading cause of cancer in Canada and is prevalent in Canada because of our bedrock foundations.

Fortunately, radon gas can easily be detected with a simple meter. If you find unsafe levels in your home, you can hire a qualified radon mitigator to address the problem.

Here I am going to share my not-so-scary experience using the Air 'N' Things Continuous Corentium Radon Meter that is available for loan at the REAL Deal in Smiths Falls.



Typically, people tend to start their radon testing in frequently used rooms that are close to the ground level. However, in my situation (a small one bedroom apartment) the basement is not used by tenants, so I decided to start the testing in my bedroom.

I followed the guidelines and placed the meter face up out of sunlight, away from the door and window. The device started as soon as the batteries were inserted. I left it to let it get to work!

Sure enough, values were tracked. Fortunately, my readings over a seven day period were quite low, so there are no further steps for me.

### Some Tips and Tricks

Here are some of the things I learned during my time with the Radon Meter.

### Pick the Right Spot to Start

Typically, you want to place your meter in the rooms you use most, especially those that are close to the ground level. Rooms with ground contact are more susceptible to radon gas that can leak through exposed cracks in your basement foundation, dirt floors, openings around pipes, or loose construction joints.

Make sure the meter is lying flat and facing up. Keep it 25 centimeters away from the nearest wall, at least 50 centimeters above the floor, and at least 150 cms from the nearest door, window, or air vent. Try to keep the meter in the same location throughout testing.

### Leave the Meter

Leave the meter in the same spot for at least 7 days or longer. I found the levels changed slightly on a day-to-day basis. Certain factors greatly affected the results. For example, having an open window improved air circulation that caused the reading to be lower. The device will provide you with a daily reading as well as an average reading.

### Follow Up

If you detect unsafe radon levels – those above 4.0 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> – follow up with a certified radon mitigation service. REAL recommends you call Simon Air Quality and Radon Works who serve the Lanark, Leeds, and Grenville Communities and are certified by C-NRPP.

### Share the Message

The meter was easy to use and it was interesting! Each day I anticipated checking the meter to see what the reading was for that day. Let your friends know that they, too, can easily borrow the meter and test their own home!

### Borrowing a Radon Meter from REAL

To borrow a radon meter from REAL, please contact Katie Hoffman at [khoffman@cogeco.ca](mailto:khoffman@cogeco.ca) or (613) 983-3360. REAL requires a \$300 cheque as a deposit, which will be returned to you once the meter is returned in about two weeks. See our [radon webpage](#) for additional information. Look for it under the Greenspace tab.



## Compost Demo Site Progressing

Our Compost Demonstration Site continues to progress. We installed some lattice on the side of the compost shelter facing William Street, and got a good price from Lanark Cedar by purchasing seconds. An old wooden door makes it look more like an actual shed. We made use of a number of rusty old tools we had accumulated to decorate it.



*Some purchased lattice, rusty old tools and a donated old door were used to decorate the compost shelter.*

Thanks to volunteer, Sam, and to Matt Benoit, staff, wooden boxes were built using pieces left over from the larger garden plot construction to go along the base of the wall. The idea is to protect the climbing plants we will be planting from lawn mowing and weed trimming. Thanks to Claudia Mosher for supplying the morning glory plants which were planted there. It was rather late in the season when they were planted so there are just a few blooms, but we will be ready for next spring. An oval "Compost Demo Site" sign was created by Arcand Signs in Perth to match the Community Garden Sign.

Gardeners and board members have been contributing kitchen and garden scraps to the five different composters. Charles McLenaghan has volunteered to help us manage the compost production, and is working on an enclosure for us to stockpile leaves and grass for layering in the composters. Due to various delays, and other commitments, we will be unable to offer compost workshops this year, but will make it a priority for next year. We are pleased to have come as far as we have.

Our goal is to demonstrate effective backyard composting methods and encourage residents to compost in their own backyards, as a means of reducing waste. Compost, of course, makes a great soil enhancer for lawns and gardens. REAL will not be accepting compost material from the general public. Contributions will be by invitation only!

Our sincere thanks to Tom Foulkes for providing the funds for this compost demonstration project. We have made some headway on our demonstration compost site, but have a way to go!



*Andre from Arcand Signs in Perth produced the Compost Demo Site sign.*

## Lanark Cedar Composters

We still have three of the one cubic meter rough hewn demonstration cedar composters commissioned last year from a mill outside McDonald's



Corners. They are made from Lanark cedar and should last you about 20 years. We are willing to part with them for \$135 each plus tax.



## Blowout Sale Does the Trick

Organizers were happy with the results of our End of Summer Blowout Sale at the REAL Deal on Saturday, August 25<sup>th</sup>. We lucked out with the weather, and our sales were at least twice as much as a normal Saturday, even with the 25% discount. We also had better than usual sales the two days leading up to the sale.

The plan was to move some of the larger items, especially furniture, and in particular chairs. We had accumulated almost 60, mostly wooden, dining room chairs. So it was quite the operation to get more of the furniture out of its "hiding places" so shoppers could get a better look. Some was displayed outside the store, and some in the "courtyard" immediately behind the store. We also had a major donation of furniture immediately before the sale, a good portion of which sold that day also.



Chairs R Us? We had at least 60 dining room chairs accumulated. Many were 50% off. We made use of the area directly behind the store to display them as well as other furniture.

The REAL Deal also offered 50% off certain items: medicine cabinets, bifold doors, mirrors, sinks and select furniture, and some deals on mason jars, art, tents, seeds, photo frames and even free lightbulbs. Oddly enough, lots of doors sold that day, too.

We were very glad of the help of some terrific volunteers who helped prepare the days before the sale, setting up, taking down, and keeping things running smoothly - we couldn't have done it without them. Through the process various items were culled, things reorganized, and cleaned up, an accomplishment in itself. Our sincere thanks to: Claudia Mosher, Rick Collins, Diane Pearen, Heather and Randy Foster, Lynn Fraser, Linda Fennell, Judy Mundy, Sally Smith, Terry Watkiss, Christine Nayer, Jim and Agnes McVeety, David and Katie Hoffman, Donna McKenna and Barb Hicks.

The interviews by Hugh Colton and the Hinton Auto Group, Lake 88, and promotion by other local media were very welcome – it's always great to spread the word about what we do even if people can't make it to the sale.

## Looking to Hire a New Store Manager

Shelley Wills, our current REAL Deal Store Manager, is retiring this fall. We are on the lookout for a candidate who loves stuff, knows building supplies, enjoys working with volunteers, is environmentally conscious, physically fit and has some retail background. A tall order! The job is posted on our website, ON Trac, Indeed, GoodWork.ca and in the EMC. Applications are due September 15th. Ideally, we will have someone in place to work with Shelley for a month before she leaves.



An extra cashier's station was set up outside the yard gate.





### ***After Hours Frustrations***

The REAL Board and staff continue to be frustrated by what happens on our property when the store is not open. We notice a steady stream of traffic coming onto our property most of whom should probably not be there. Some people are making use of the Town's cardboard dumpster, which is fine if you are a Smiths Falls business. Community gardeners, of course, can tend their gardens at any time. Although not encouraged, if you are dropping off electronic waste, that is OK. We are going to make money from it and it will not be damaged by the weather.

However, there is a constant parade of people looking for freebies who should not be there. Please note that if an item has been left as a donation, it becomes REAL property, and if you help yourself you are stealing. We do leave the odd item out there for free, and suspect most people know the difference.

We do not encourage anyone to leave donations after hours. Chances are it is something we do not accept and it is going to cost us money to dispose of it. We don't want your mattresses, clothing, large appliance, appliances containing coolant, garbage or hazardous waste. If it is a resellable item, it could still be out in the elements for as long as five days, and will probably get ruined in the rain (or snow, as the season may be.) We will still have to throw it out. If it is a good quality, sellable donation and it is left after hours, someone else is going to take it and we will miss the opportunity to make money from it. If you want to help us, please make your donations when we are open so that we may assess, price and secure it.

We suspect our readers know better and are not doing this. However, if you are describing the store to anyone else, please be clear that we are not a waste disposal site, and that people should take the time to find out what is acceptable. Not making money from donations, and having to pay to dispose of inappropriate donations, will not help us build this into a viable operation, and will put this valuable community service in jeopardy.

### ***Other REAL Deal News***

The exceptionally hot weather has made working in the yard very difficult this summer. Our sincere thanks to Tim Dupras, Don Harvey and Matt Benoit for toughing it out. There were a few days when Manager Shelley Wills authorized the guys to close the gates, so they would only have to venture outside when customers wanted to be out there. And thanks to other volunteers who were out there for shorter stints: Ethan Morrow, David Thornley, Rick Collins and Ed Crawford. Inside the store, Aira Sarmiento was a big help and has now gone back to school. The store itself is not air conditioned, but the concrete walls kept it somewhat cooler than it might have been, and we have lots of fans.

**Please note that our Sunday hours are drawing to a close. It is expected that Sunday, October 14 will be our last Sunday for 2018. Sales aren't high enough Sundays to cover our staffing costs. Other years we have stayed open Sundays until Christmas. We are sorry to disappoint our Sunday shoppers, please visit us Thursday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**



## Nothing is Really Garbage

by Brenda King

I'm not sure where the idea that nothing is really garbage came from. It could be my parents who lived through the depression and seeing cupboards made from orange crates covered in fabric to match the curtains, a footstool made from large cans, attached together and upholstered by hand. Cushions in the living room on the sofa made from ties my Dad bought at an auction sale. Nothing appeared to be a throw away. I, as a young wife and mother, was thrilled to re-strap aluminum lawn chairs and make curtains and bed spreads from bolts of bargain fabric, and salvage an old wash stand and turn it into a buffet table in my dining room.

So helping at the REAL DEAL Store or the Reuse Centre, as it was called in the beginning, became exciting to me. Hearing what other people saw in discarded items was inspiring.

I took an old chair from the free table at the REAL Deal and painted it red, added a small beaten up shelf to the backrest and replaced the upholstered seat with a large planter for flowers. I added a few décor items found in a box on the Free Table to the shelf and Voila! This decorative planter still sits beside my door at the cottage.



Some garden art from free items at the REAL Deal.

Also from the free table at the REAL Deal, I took a number of clear plates and bowls of various sizes, an empty wine bottle from the recycle box, and a rusty round curtain rod from the metal dumpster. I stuck the curtain rod in the open end of the wine bottle and glued (with weather proof glue) the glass plates and bowls, right side up and upside down to create a water catcher for the birds in my garden.

I bought a small broken globe-shaped lamp for \$1.00. I thought the shade was worth \$1.00. I glued the globe back together and decoupaged fabric leaves



from a piece of fabric I had, all over the globe to hide the repairs. The lamp looked pretty good. I cut a few more leaves from the fabric and added them to the shade to tie it together. Voila! It is still working in my spare room.

I really love chairs and have repaired and reupholstered two others and donated them back to the REAL DEAL to sell. I had the fun of doing it and the store made a little money. I have two projects presently percolating in my head and perhaps by Christmas they will appear in the store for sale. It's a great way to downsize and have fun making something.



A reupholstered chair that Brenda fixed up and sold in the store.



**Saturday  
September 15**

After an absence of three years, Doors Open Smiths Falls is set to return this year! Sixteen sites

across Smiths Falls are open to the public for tours and other special events, and the REAL Deal Store and Environment Centre is one of them. Come for a visit that day, 10 – 4, take a tour, and learn why we are more than just a Reuse Store. [See a summary](#) of all the historical treasures and innovative businesses open that day, and start planning your route. It is a challenge to fit them all in!



*In REAL Life*

**Evergreen Avenue**



**Evergreen Dedication.** The Evergreen Avenue dedication ceremony is set for Saturday, September 22, 11:00 a.m. to noon, at Victoria Park. The landscaping at the park, including a new stone wall, is now complete. Seven new stones will be dedicated and three more WW I soldiers' names added to the Cenotaph. Contact [Peter Au](#), (613) 284-8338 for further details.



**High School Community Service Hours.** Please tell any teens you know that the REAL Deal Reuse Store is willing to take on teenaged volunteers looking to earn their 40 hours. Weekends would work best: Saturdays 10—4 and until mid October, Sundays 12—4. They can sweep, dust, help pack purchases at the cash, reorganize, be a gopher, carry boxes, carry customer purchases to their cars etc. Drop in an speak to the manager or call 293-7999. A completed volunteer form would be a good start.



**Plastics Presentation.** Another public presentation by REAL at the Station Theatre is in the works for an evening in November. We aim to focus on the problem with plastics, single use plastics in particular, and the plastic accumulation in the oceans. Watch our website, Facebook and other local media for details.



**Limited Number Rain Barrels Still Available.** We still have a number of rain barrels, in both terracotta or grey, for sale. These are recycled food grade barrels from rainbarrel.ca. We will provide you the kits of fittings at the time of purchase. You can interconnect the barrels so you can collect even more precious rainwater. The barrels are \$55 plus tax, which comes to \$62.15. Remember our store is cash only! People have no problem getting them home in the passenger seat of their car.

**FoTW Discovery Day.** Gena Gibson was the lucky winner of the rain barrel draw that took place at the Friends of the Tay Watershed (FoTW) Discovery Day at the Crystal Palace, Perth on August 18. Alan Leonard, REAL's Registered Energy Advisor, was on hand to answer questions about home energy audits, rain barrel use and the REAL Deal Store.

**More than Just a Reuse Store.** Services available at the REAL Deal:

- ☐ Kill a Watt Meter lending – measure the electricity usage of your appliances
- ☐ Radon meter lending – test for radon gas levels in your home
- ☐ Dishware lending – borrow plates, glasses, mugs, etc. for your next event and skip the disposables
- ☐ End of life electronics, scrap metal, batteries, mercury thermostats dropoff
- ☐ Printer and toner cartridges dropoff
- ☐ Plastic outer milk bags dropoff
- ☐ Recycled rain barrel sales
- ☐ Wish Book – record what you are looking for so we can call you if it comes in
- ☐ Provide useful excess materials to other area non-profits





Box 1061  
Smiths Falls ON  
K7A 5A5  
613-283-9500  
info@REALaction.ca

We're on the Web  
[www.REALaction.ca](http://www.REALaction.ca)

**REAL Deal Store &  
Environment Centre**

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

Store open Thursdays  
through Saturdays 10 –4  
Open Sundays  
Noon—4 until fall

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

**Facebook Groups:**  
**REAL Deal Store**  
**REAL**  
**Community Garden**

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

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

*Celebrate our  
local food producers!*



**Saturday, October 20th, 2018**

**Smiths Falls Legion, 7 Main St. E.**

*Enjoy a delicious buffet meal featuring foods produced  
close to home, music by The Giocosos Strings and a  
silent auction.*

- Meal by Chef Joanne Edwards of The Roamin' Tomato
- Appetizer Tasting Stations
- Cash bar featuring local beers and Ontario wines

**5:30 pm** Doors open  
**6:00 pm** Cocktail hour  
**7:00 pm** Dinner

**Tickets 60\$** (cash or cheque)

Purchase before Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup> for \$55

- Modern Thymes, 11 Russell St. E.
- The REAL Deal, 85 William St. W
- Or call Cathryn (613) 283-9819



**RIDEAU  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
ACTION LEAGUE**

[www.REALaction.ca](http://www.REALaction.ca)

**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 sign up 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 .....