

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

JULY 2020

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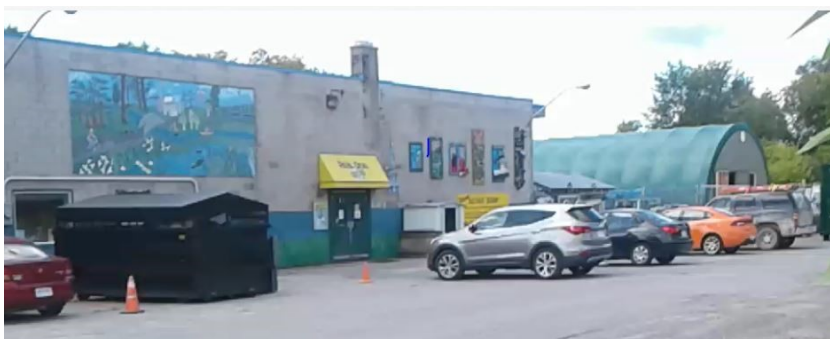
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REAL Deal Averts Becoming Campground Location

REAL was taken by surprise to learn in mid-May that the 85 William St. W. site was one of the top three contenders for a new site for the Victoria Park Campground.



Council Liaison Representative Nicole Dwyer shared with the REAL board a May 11 report from Economic Development and Tourism on the Victoria Park Campground Relocation. Parks Canada had requested that the campground, operated by Chamber of Commerce and the Town of Smiths Falls, be moved from the federal lands next to the Rideau Canal. Parks, the Chamber and the town reviewed seven potential locations, and narrowed it down to three that warranted further investigation. The other two finalists were Riverdale Avenue, and 3551 Highway 43 (Donneybrooke Golf Course). (Of interest, one of the sites rejected was 72 Lombard, the site of REAL's first REAL Deal Store in 2006.) The property at 85 William St. W. is owned by Parks Canada and leased by the Town of Smiths Falls. The Town owns the building, a former public works facility, and permits REAL to use it rent free.

REAL quickly put together a statement summarizing the devastating effect losing the use of this building and property would have on the REAL Deal and REAL as an organization. The letter was sent to council members for their May 20 discussion. Here is an excerpt:

In short, we feel the loss of this location would be the end of the REAL Deal. That would be a significant loss to this community in terms of waste reduction, employment, environmental education and tourism. The REAL Deal is really the focal point of our organization and we would have to give careful consideration to REAL continuing without it.

Thankfully, there was unanimous support from Council to not include the REAL site in the investigation/consultation. If you would like to hear the discussion check this link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_NckY0EB_hQ starting at the 50 minute mark.

The board was understandably very relieved to learn of this decision, and very appreciative of the supportive comments we heard from community members.



Reusable Face Mask Project

REAL is taking part in a collaborative project with the Salvation Army, the Rotary Club and others in the community that aims to produce reusable cloth face masks for distribution to anyone who needs one.

Arlene Hunter, who has coordinated the production of the 1500 free masks for Trinity United Church, will share her experience. Christine Nayar and Brenda King have been making reusable face masks for free distribution. They are sharing their tips for making ear-loop as well as tie-up versions with easy-to-make patterns.

The Salvation Army will be providing materials from its store and the Rotary Club will provide funding for other needed materials such as elastic. REAL's Journey to Sustainability (J2S) team was instrumental in arranging for Heather Mitchell-Adams of Modern Thymes to use the store's meeting room as a dropoff/pickup point for materials.

Katie Hoffman, who has agreed to act as Project Coordinator, has already enlisted sewers and additional volunteers willing to cut the fabric pieces: Brenda King, Judy Snider, Susan Boyle, Daisy Au, Christine Nayar, Katie Hoffman and Linda Fennell are amongst the volunteers. Thanks to Iris Allard for donating fabric. Please contact Katie if you have any fabric to contribute.

Masks would be provided free of charge to people who need them. Possibilities for distribution centres include the REAL Deal Store and Modern Thymes, on Russell Street. Masks are currently being provided to REAL Deal customers who do not have their own to wear. Reusable masks are given when available.

Wearing a face mask protects the wearer and other people they come in contact with in situations where social distancing is not feasible. Non-medical masks that can be washed and reused are preferable to using disposable masks. This project will provide an opportunity for community members to participate in personal and community safety, conserving resources and protecting our environment.

To get involved, please contact Katie Hoffman at 613-983-3360 or kthoffman@cogeco.ca.



Christine Nayar sewing up a batch of reusable face masks that will be distributed in the community. Many have already been distributed to customers at the REAL Deal Store..

Large Donations a Welcome Surprise

It is very gratifying for a non-profit organization like REAL to receive financial donations towards our activities, but it is an extra pleasant surprise to receive unsolicited contributions. REAL recently received two very sizable donations through the donation portal CanadaHelps.

The first donation in early June came from Leslie Scanlon, a “very proud and happy native of Ottawa”, who is currently the Canadian Ambassador to Poland. Says Leslie, “I am always looking for new organizations to support and was interested in yours. Best of luck with everything you are doing.” She asked that her donation be directed to the community garden.

Then less than a week later, we received a generous donation from Steve Bennett, the General Manager of H and R Block in Smiths Falls. While he does not live in town, and is about to move to Prescott, he does work here two days a week. In an email exchange with President Katie Hoffman, he was interested to hear we are investigating the feasibility of a tool lending library, and is willing to volunteer with us as well.



Earlier in the year we were delighted to receive another major donation from Tom Foulkes, who is an avid supporter of REAL as well as a great many other local organizations. Tom has donated \$5,000 to REAL every year since 2011. Tom's contribution last year was used to establish the Monarch Garden to mark REAL's 30th anniversary. Our 2020 plans have not crystallized, but it is an enviable position for us to be able to dream big and make an investment in environmental protection that comes with no strings attached.

REAL appreciates contributions of any size. Please see our website for how to go about donating to your local environmental organization.

Investment Readiness Program

REAL is very fortunate to have been approved for funding through the Investment Readiness Program (IRP). The board learned of this exciting opportunity in mid January through the Regional Partner, the Perth and District Community Foundation (PDCF). This federal funding is intended to help social enterprises get ready to take on future investment.



A social enterprise is an organization or program that is mission-driven, aiming to sell goods or services to earn revenue, while also helping achieve positive social, cultural or environmental results.

Our board had just a few weeks to pull together an application that requested funding for a feasibility study to look into several potential sidelines to the REAL Deal. These were 1) a pickup and delivery service for large items 2) tool and equipment lending 3) shared workshop space 4) beekeeping and 5) eco-friendly product sales.

We were assisted in refining our application by Jonathan Wade, of Social Delta, an Ottawa firm specializing in Social Enterprise Consulting. He has a wealth of experience working with social enterprises, including the Ottawa Tool Lending Library.

In early May we were notified by Lynn McIntyre of the PDCF that we were being granted \$14,000 for our proposal. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, successful applications were being offered longer time-lines and the opportunity to apply to use 20% of the funding towards operational costs for the project.

Jonathan Wade will be executing the feasibility study, which will look into the viability of these potential expansions to the REAL Deal's services. A written strategy to implement and finance the top two lines of business will be prepared. We are hopeful the work will be done by the end of the year despite Covid-19. At that point we will be in a better position to solicit the investment to follow through with one or two of the options.

REAL Deal News

Reopening. The REAL Deal reopened Wed. May 27, and store activity levels quickly bounced back to where they were when the store had closed 10 weeks earlier. In fact, the second week of June we experienced our best sales ever. Customers were very happy we reopened when we did, and our volunteers and staff were happy to be back to running the store. Thanks everyone for hanging onto your donations while we were closed and not leaving them at the gate. We have had some really, really high quality donations lately, and we appreciate that donors choose us.

Covid Measures. But the Covid pandemic is far from over, so we are doing a few things differently. Most importantly, we require that anyone in the store wear a face mask, and we will supply them if necessary. Most people have been very cooperative, although a handful have chosen to leave rather than comply. Hand sanitizer and gloves are available at the yard and store entrances. We invested in an acrylic “sneeze guard” shield for the cash counter. Until the end of the summer we will accept debit cards with no minimum purchase, as well as Visa and Mastercard, but will happily accept cash, also! Staff will be sanitizing baskets and frequently touched surfaces periodically. A donated temporary garage tent is being used to quarantine incoming donations for a minimum of three days, so we ask that all donations, big or small, be taken back to the gate in front of the green dome. [Read more about our increased safety measures on our website.](#)

New Faces. Thanks to OnTrac for arranging placements with us for Cole and Chester. They have been a big help to us with extra cleaning, yard maintenance, and other tasks. We were also fortunate to receive federal HRDSC funding to hire two young people for 30 hours a week for 12 weeks, effectively the entire summer. Cassidy Drummond will be working on cash, smalls and other indoor pursuits, and is entering a university nursing program in the fall. Aira Sarmiento, who worked with us last summer, will be assisting with various projects. Isaac Whan is a high school student who previously did a placement with us. He works mostly outside. So we are well set for help, as summer tends to be our busy season.

Matt's Departure. Matt Benoit, one of our yard employees, will be leaving us at the end of June. We are happy that his studio [Benoit Photography](#) is getting busier, but are sorry to see him go, as we have enjoyed having him around this past two years.



Isaac is working mostly outside, and Cassidy is on cash and smalls.



Manager Dan Cunningham and Chester, who is doing a placement with us.



Cole is with us for the summer, doing cleaning, yardwork and whatever is needed.

Monarch Garden Growing Again

Encouraged by the success of the Monarch Garden established in 2019 on the REAL Deal site, a second garden, a little closer to William Street, is being added.

The Trees. You may remember that one of our 30th anniversary projects was to get 30 trees planted. Several have been planted right on the REAL Deal site, many thanks to some generous donations by our members.

- A witch hazel, donated by Diane Pearen, in memory of her parents, went in last year in the first garden
- A butterfly bush was planted last year in memory of Tiffany Carroll's mother, who passed away last summer. REAL contributed this one as Tiffany at the time was one of the store cashiers.
- Canadian Tire donated two golden crab-apple trees which were placed in front of the Community Garden late last year.
- A large buttonbush shrub (*Cephalanthus*) was donated by Heather and Randy Jones to commemorate the September wedding of some friends, and went in this year in the newer garden.
- A fringe tree has been added at the left end of the newer garden, donated by Brenda King. We are glad to have finally found one as they seemed to be scarce last summer when we started looking.
- A phantom hydrangea is in the newer garden, paid for with general Monarch Garden funds.
- The two dogwoods were already on site when we began last year, and the garden was built around them.
- Committee member Marje Fletcher donated two of the butterfly bushes that went in this year.
- Donna McKenna, also a committee member, has very generously started a number of smaller plants including milkweed, sunflower, Mexican sunflower and rudbeckia
- Klaas Vandermeer helped by starting some of the milkweed, rudbeckia and Mexican sunflower in his greenhouse. Some of the excess seedlings were sold during our rain barrel distributions days, along with seeds we had collected from last year's garden.



If you are interested in contributing to the project in this way, please get in touch with Donna at 283-2254. There isn't space for more trees within the garden itself, but they could be placed elsewhere on the property. We prefer, and the Town of Smiths Falls requires, that all new trees should be native species. The first garden is looking very healthy with minimal maintenance other than a little weeding and watering, as all of the perennials except for a butterfly bush survived from the previous year.

The demonstration Monarch Garden was planned as a 30th anniversary project for REAL. It will provide critical habitat for the monarch butterfly, as well as other butterflies and pollinators. Tom Foulkes provided the money to get the monarch garden established, and the committee has supplemented that with the rain barrel fundraiser.

Visitors are welcome to come have a look. It is easiest to come when the store is open, Wednesday through Saturday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. so you can drive in to 85 William St. W. But there is room for a few cars to park outside the gate and walk the very short distance in when the REAL Deal Store is not open.

Community Garden Continues Despite Covid-19

We were a little concerned that the Community Garden might be another victim of Covid-19, but it turned out all right in the end.

When the Ontario government directed that all recreational facilities must close to reduce the spread of Covid-19, it had lumped community gardens in with facilities like arenas, parks and swimming pools. After some lobbying by garden groups that community gardens were more an essential service than a recreational pursuit, the province declared an exemption for community gardens on April 25. Local health units were tasked with establishing guidelines for the gardens in their communities. The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit released their list on May 1. [See the guidelines here](#). All gardeners have been made aware of the safety instructions and REAL has posted a sign specifying the rules. On June 23 the maximum number of gardeners was raised to 10.



The sign by the entrance to the REAL Community Garden.

All twelve plots in the garden had been allocated by March 5; however it turned out that Lanark Community Programs could not participate due to the Covid situation. Besides not being able to use the two plots, they are unable to do the mowing, trimming, water barrel filling and compost tending as we had hoped. So far the mowing is being looked after by Cole, Chester and Isaac, and Greg may take on the compost task. These guys have also done a great job accomplishing some long overdue cleanup of the garden and our yard in general.

On June 13 we received a large donation of vegetable and herb plants from a gentleman who is part of the Lanark Parkinson's Support Group. Donna McKenna and Diane Pearen immediately planted in the plots that could not be used by Lanark Community Programs. The board voted to donate \$50 towards the charity in thanks for the plants. The vegetables grown will be shared.

Note that all other plots have been rented by gardeners for their personal use. Feast only with your eyes!

Rain Barrels Popular, a Few Still Left

We managed to sell 130 rain barrels to area residents to support our Monarch garden, and we have about 40 extras to sell through the REAL Deal this summer. The original pickup day was to be May 9, but had to be postponed due to Covid. Customers were asked to order their barrels and other parts online through rainbarrel.ca. Due to a major website problem wreaking havoc with the ordering system, we ended up taking two deliveries and hosting two pickup days June 13 and June 20. June 13 some volunteers were in their winter jackets, and by the next weekend we were experiencing a heat wave.

Thanks to the many volunteers who helped out on the two pickup days: Nancy Andison, Cathryn Davidson, Beth Graham, Don Harvey, Barb Hicks, Katie Hoffman, Donna McKenna, Lauralee Merkeley, Diane Pearen, Hailey Reynolds-Middleton, Mia & Neil Rowlands, and David & Joannie Thornley. Thanks to the REAL Deal staff for unloading the trucks, fielding questions and other assistance in the midst of their other duties.



Terracotta and grey barrels seemed to be equally popular.

In REAL Life



Thank You Montague! REAL has received a \$500 contribution from the Township of Montague. This is in response to our November grant application submitted by our Treasurer, Karen Schechter. They have voted to support us most years, for which we are very grateful! We also receive support from the Town of Smiths Falls and Rideau Lakes and in the past from Drummond-North Elmsley.



Home Energy Audits. Enbridge Gas gave notice that Energy Advisors were free to resume home energy assessments June 15. They provided a list of preventative measures to take, and GCC also came up with their own safety protocols. Alan is going to begin by trying to schedule all the necessary E audits (the post audit that is necessary to receive the subsidies) that were left hanging when Covid hit, and following up with backlog of inquiries. But rest assured, the Enbridge Home Efficiency Rebate program is back up and running.



Evergreen Avenue Dedications. The dedication ceremony typically held in June by the Evergreen Avenue Committee will take place this fall, subject to government and Health Unit regulations that may be in place at that time. Granite stones are being dedicated for ten WWII veterans and two community builders.



Lanark County Turtle Watch. The Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists (MVFN) have initiated a project using iNaturalist called "**Lanark County Turtle Watch**". They write: "We are looking for photos of turtles. Turtles crossing the road, turtles nesting or turtles sunning themselves on a log or a rock. And, sadly turtles that did not make it across the road." By photographing turtles and uploading the images to the project, you provide important data on the location and population of turtles. To participate, you will need to open an account on [iNaturalist](https://www.inaturalist.org/). You can call the Ontario Turtle Centre at 705-741-5000 immediately if you come across an injured turtle.



Coffee Pod Recycling. We are now collecting used coffee pods for recycling through TetraCycle. Any coffee pod is OK, but please do not bring any other coffee accessories. Advises TetraCycle; "There is no need to remove the used coffee grounds. The collected waste is mechanically and/or manually separated into metals, organics and plastics. Metals are melted so they may be recycled. The organics are composted, and the plastics are molded into new recycled plastic products". There is a bin to the right as you come in the customer entrance.



Local Foods Dinner. We have not given up on hosting this annual fundraiser in some form. It seems doubtful that gatherings of more than 100 will get the go-ahead by October 17, and if it did, that enough dinner guests would be comfortable enough to gather. One possibility would be to hold an online auction of the goods normally offered at our silent auction, and offer a local foods dinner by take-out. Nothing is for certain yet, but we will need to make a decision by late July, especially if we want to pursue sponsorship as well.



Radon Meter Lending. Katie reports she has had three requests to borrow one of REAL's radon meters this past week, so our radon meter lending program is back in business. Testing is the only way to know for sure if your home has a radon gas issue. Contact Katie by [email](mailto:katie@real.ca) or call (613) 983-3360.

RIDEAU ENVIRONMENTAL
ACTION LEAGUE

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
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

This year's meeting
will be held online
via the Zoom
platform

You do not
need a Zoom
account. Just
access the
meeting
from your
computer
or mobile
device.

REAL AGM
Wed. July 15
at 7:00 p.m.

Hear some highlights from the past year
before we conduct our AGM business.
Financial reports available in advance
by request.



Members and friends of REAL welcome.

**Please RSVP to info@REALaction.ca by July 10
or phone Katie (613) 983-3360.**

We will then send you the link and log on instructions.

**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

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- ☐ Individual membership \$15
☐ Family membership \$20
☐ Student membership \$5
☐ Corporate membership \$50

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