

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

SEPTEMBER 2020

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Used Coffee Capsules Becoming a Problem by Donna McKenna

More than a billion used coffee capsules make their way into Canadian landfills every year. That's a lot of coffee grounds, a lot of plastic, and a lot of aluminum. Frankly, it's a lot of garbage and we have to know that it is just bad for our environment.

Single serve coffee machines have grown in popularity over the past few years. On the upside these machines save electricity and water, and even use less coffee than regular coffee makers. Saving water is an important sustainable practice that should not be ignored and often is, in the Western world. However, this does not outweigh the problem that the disposable capsules cause in adding to the growing issue of plastic waste.

Before the use of these machines, the cycle of coffee use consisted of growing the coffee, harvesting and processing the beans, roasting, packaging, purchasing, grinding and brewing that great cup of java. The grounds were disposed of, hopefully, in the compost, and the paper filters were eventually broken down with time. Coffee capsules use plastic and aluminum, which entails another layer of processing and manufacturing. The simple paper coffee bag is now replaced with plastic or aluminum cups that are then packaged into larger cardboard boxes. There are some efforts to recycle these capsules after use, but most end up in the garbage.

The time it takes for aluminum/plastic coffee pods to break down is very hard to quantify but, considering that certain tougher plastics can take hundreds or even thousands of years to decompose, they are going to be sitting in our landfills for a long time. For something to be sustainable, it needs to have some kind of "reusable" element to it – something that means it isn't just *consuming*. *Coffee capsules* do the opposite of that. Not only do they sit in landfills, but they begin their life cycles by sucking away useful resources like metals, paper, and plastics that could be put to better use elsewhere.

continued inside....

Left: One variety of reusable coffee pods, Café Cup, available at Canadian Tire.



Right: Compostable coffee cups from Presidents Choice feature a paper lid, a ring made from coffee bean skins, and a basket from plant based materials.

LOOK FOR THE BROWN RING



Coffee Pods (continued)

There are also concerns related to coffee pods and health. Both aluminum and plastic have been linked to various health issues over the years, including cancer, Alzheimers disease, depression and auto-immune conditions. We have now been made aware that heated plastic can leach chemicals into our food. Coffee capsules also contain more furan – a potentially carcinogenic substance – than is found in traditional coffee. Furan arises in foods submitted to heat processes. The sealed coffee capsule prevents the furan from escaping into the air.

Purchasing coffee capsules is also harder on your pocketbook. For example, 920 grams of Folgers at \$8.99 per bag makes about 110 cups of coffee in your drip coffee maker. Folgers coffee capsules sell on Amazon for about \$18.00 for 30 capsules which only makes 30 cups of coffee. That works out to .60 cents per cup for single use coffee makers compared to .08 cents per cup if you use the traditional drip or french press method.

But , if you really like the convenience of a single use coffee maker, there are some things that each of us can do to try to make sure we are making less of an impact with this growing problem:

- **Reusable Pods.** If you're feeling guilty and want to do something about it, hands down the best way to reduce the number of pods you use is by using re-usable or re-fillable pods. Canadian Tire sells the Cafe Cup – 4 of them for 15.99 - and they can be used over and over again.
- **Find Better Pods .** Do some research and look for more compostable brands. More and more versions are being created all the time. President's Choice compostable coffee pods were developed at the University of Guelph and are made almost entirely from plant-based material.

So go on – try these environmentally friendly alternatives and enjoy that well deserved cup of coffee.

Terracycle Capsule Collection

Since the REAL Deal store reopened in late May, it has accepted used coffee capsules to be recycled through the Terracycle Program.

While many of Terracycle's programs are free, for this particular material REAL pays for the collection box, which comes with a prepaid shipping label to a recycling centre in Elora. To date we have filled one medium and two large boxes, somewhat more than we anticipated.

We do want to give residents the opportunity to recycle coffee capsules, but will be monitoring the cost of providing the service over the next few months. We do hope residents consider alternatives to the plastic pods: buying reusable, refillable capsules, choosing compostable capsules, reusing commercial capsules themselves, or even forgoing the use of these machines. French press anyone?



You may deposit coffee capsules in the blue bin by the customer door. We empty it into the Terracycle shipping boxes later.

If you are bringing used capsules to us, note that any brand of coffee pods is OK, but do not bring any other coffee accessories. Advises Terracycle; "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.

REAL's Journey to Sustainability

Presents this FREE Workshop & Presentation

Well Preserved

Learn the basics of how to enjoy local & seasonal produce throughout the year with up-dated safety features and nutritional information from the Health Unit and Agricultural Canada. Recommendations and methodologies will be shared to keep your produce for an extended period of time.

Come and share in the "how to's and why's" of preserving your produce in 2020

Wednesday, September 30, 2020

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Royal Canadian Legion

7 Main Street East, Smiths Falls

This workshop will include presentations by:

Heather Mitchel-Adams is the owner of Modern Thymes Health & Bulk Foods. Preserving and canning the harvest has always been part of her life with the women in her family.

Judy Drummond is a Judge for Ont. Association of Agricultural Societies an avid gardener for winter food storage and retired teacher who came from a farming background.

PLEASE REGISTAR BY SEPTEMBER 28TH BY emailing
j2s.RealAction@gmail.com

Please state which method you will be attending.
IN PERSON (COVID PROTOCOL IN PLACE and DOOR PRIZES
or JOIN WITH ZOOM (easy free app to get and use)

Please include your name, email, phone and Postal Code in your registraion.



Send J2S Your Recipes. The Journey to Sustainability (J2S) group is back with another workshop, "Well Preserved", on September 30 to demonstrate how to enjoy local and seasonal produce throughout the year. The group would appreciate hearing from residents already experienced with food preservation. Do you have any tips or techniques to share, or favourite recipes? Please feel free to share via video, email or a photo by September 11 to vbernicky65@gmail.com. This will allow organizers to review submissions and determine nutritional value of the recipes for inclusion in the presentation. Thanks for sharing!

Harvest Dinner Gets a Pass this Year

Due to the continuing COVID situation, the board has decided to not proceed with a sit-down local foods buffet dinner this year. We did seriously consider a takeout option to continue to support local food, as Chef Joanne Edwards and the Legion had already been booked. But there was just too much uncertainty to continue with confidence. REAL will still be approaching sponsors to see if they would like to contribute to our local environmental organization. And to compensate for the dollars raised during the silent auction that accompanied the dinner, we are going to try an online auction which will run several weeks in October. See the back cover of this newsletter for more details.



REAL Deal News

One Hot Summer! It's been one incredibly hot summer at the REAL Deal. Kudos to all the yard staff for toughing it out in the yard. It is a little warm inside the store, also, with no air conditioning, but the cement walls, high ceilings and fans certainly help.

Strong Sales. The store experienced exceptional sales many of those days, breaking all previous records, which is encouraging given the approximate \$29,000 sales we lost out on while the store was closed. Thanks to the Canada Wage Subsidy (CEWS) the staff were paid throughout the closure, at a cost to REAL of about three weeks pay, so we did alright there also.

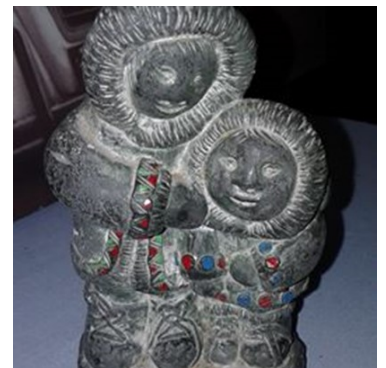
Staffing. We are in the midst of staffing changes, and will have some new employees joining the team in September. Cassidy Drummond, our summer cashier (amongst other duties), worked her last day August 21, and is starting the nursing program at University of Ottawa. Isaac Whan will continue with us into the first weeks of September when classes resume at SFDCI. Aira Sarmiento will complete her summer position at the end of September, but will be continuing her university courses online from Smiths Falls. So she has agreed to become our paid backup cashier starting in October.

But the biggest shift will be in the yard, as Randy Jones left the end of July, and Greg Charette left for a new job at the end of August. Matt Benoit moved on at the end of June. So that leaves Tim Dupras. We have just hired two new yard staff who we will introduce next issue. We have found it best to have two yard staff at a time out there to accept donations, help customers, and keep merchandise organized.

Smalls Vols. Some additional smalls volunteers (sorting and pricing smaller donations) would be welcome. This summer the existing team has done most of their work on days when the store is not open, which has worked quite well. Come October we will have a mound of Christmas paraphernalia to put out which will take additional volunteer effort. It is the biggest collection we have ever amassed upstairs, even though the artificial trees are being stashed in the trailer. If you like stuff and have some time to spare, please speak to the Store Manager, [Dan Cunningham](#), about joining us. Completing a [volunteer application form](#) in advance will save us a step.

High Quality Donations. Donations have been strong, and it is a delight to see what unusual treasures come along with the day-to-day stuff. The best find of the summer was a 1910 coke bottle. Fortunately Dan recognized it for what it was and managed to sell it for \$250. A ceramic kitchen "mushroom" set caused a bit of a stir, as we did not realize they were highly sought after. We've had someone travel from Montreal to get Inuit carvings. Someone from Toronto recognized a sculpture on Marketplace, and sent her father from Portland to purchase it. This is all very entertaining for the staff and volunteers! The more unusual items are put on [Facebook Marketplace](#) so they get more exposure, and the vintage items are usually displayed in one area of the store. You really never know what you'll find.

But don't worry, we still gratefully accept all the little and day-to-day stuff as well, and it is a large portion of our business. Most items are priced at 50 cents and up, but there are a few 25 cent items out there still, for example, soft covered books and binders. Please remember to think second hand first, and see what we have before purchasing new. And never ever buy a new mug, glass or vase! There are already oodles in the world.



Examples of the interesting stuff that gets donated to the store. See [Facebook Marketplace](#) for others.

REAL Deal Customer Survey

This September volunteers will be approaching visitors to the REAL Deal store to complete a brief customer survey. The survey has been created to get some basic data from current REAL supporters, customers and donors to help guide potential new business activities. Anyone who uses any of the store's services could be asked for input: customers as they exit the store, donors as they drop off goods at the "back gate," and recyclers as they drop off metal or e-waste. The survey was designed to take less than two minutes, and our goal is to get 300 responses.

The data will be used by Social Delta, the Ottawa consultant, who is conducting a feasibility study for future opportunities for the REAL Deal. The Investment Readiness Program (IRP) funding allocation was overseen locally by the Perth and District Community Foundation (PDCF).

Pick Up a REAL Bookmark

REAL has an attractive new bookmark available that summarizes what REAL does for the community, and how the community can help REAL.

The bookmark replaces the REAL brochure that was last printed in August 2014. That colourful, four paneled brochure incorporated a membership form and had a cover photo of the participants in a workshop planting a rain water garden. That replaced a similar brochure where the cover featured community gardeners standing on some straw bale gardens, printed in April 2011.

The Board felt that in this internet age it was time to do something that used less paper, and hope people would take the extra step to find out more about us from the website. Our thanks to Heather McFayden who designed the bookmark, as well as the previous brochures.

The bookmarks are free and can be picked up at the REAL Deal Store. If you know of a place that could place some on their counter or information rack, please let us know and we can give you a supply.



Our Projects:

Greening Our World:

Community Garden
Monarch Garden
Compost Demo Site
Evergreen Avenue
Pitch In Smiths Falls
Radon Meter Lending
Journey to Sustainability
Rain Barrel Sales

Waste Reduction:

REAL Deal Reuse Store
Electronics waste depot
Recycle select materials

Energy:

Home energy assessments
Kill a Watt meter lending

Public Awareness:

Workshops & presentations
Newsletter and website
Social media
Displays at public events

...and much more

Contact Us:

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Smiths Falls
(613) 283-7999
info@realaction.ca

Mailing Address:
Box 1061, Smiths Falls ON
K7A 5A5



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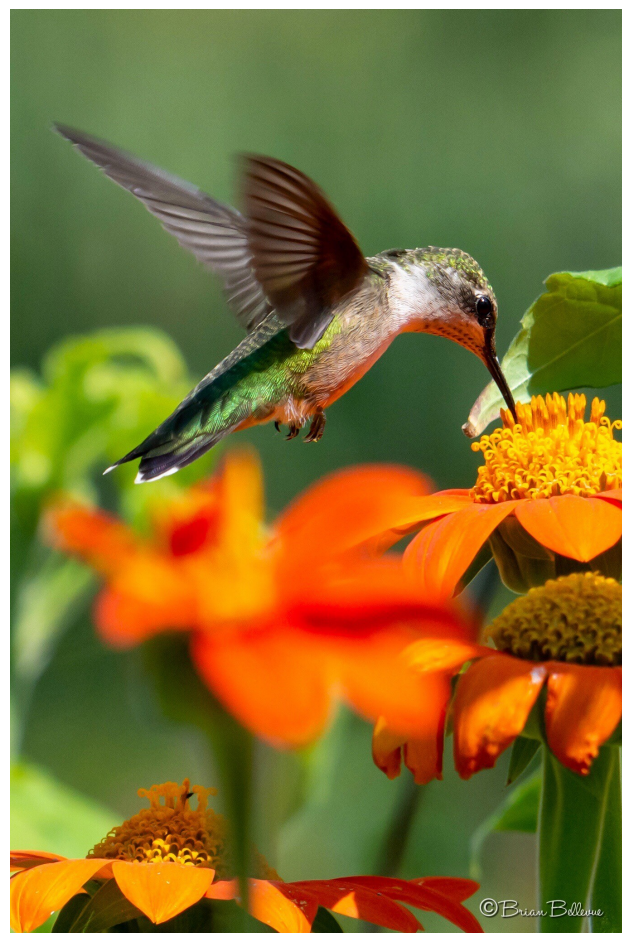
Monarch Garden Continues to Delight

The monarch garden on the REAL Deal site continues to amaze visitors and even the monarch team. The second plot added this spring really took off, and the overall effect is quite spectacular and well worth a visit. We have had many compliments from store customers as well as people who have made a special stop to see the garden. Many photographers have come to get shots of the blooms, butterflies and other pollinators. The photo at the right by Brian Bellevue is one such example.

Aira Sarmiento has been putting together a handout of monarch information as well as a laminated “key” to the plants. Visitors will be able to borrow the key to do a self-guided tour of the garden. If you come this September, you may also request a brief tour by Aira. Just come to the cash and ask. The garden may be winding down soon, but the materials will mean we will have a running start to the 2021 season.

We will be collecting some seeds as well as cuttings from the plants this fall, and may be in a position to sell some either this fall or next spring. Please contact Donna at andisondj@gmail.com if you are interested, as our plans have not firmed up just yet.

See a recent Inside Ottawa Valley [story on the garden](#).



A hummingbird visiting REAL's monarch garden in late August.
Photo by Brian Bellevue.

Summer Students, Cassidy and Isaac, Say Goodbye

I would like to thank the REAL Deal Store for taking me on as a summer student. I am very grateful for the opportunity and I'm proud to say that it was my favourite job before leaving for university. Everyone was very welcoming towards me, so much that at times it didn't even feel like I was at work. The customers here are amazing and I was able to meet some pretty great people. Anyway, thank you to everyone who works at the store and the customers for making it such an enjoyable and easy place to work.

P.S. If you are a summer student moving out, I recommend getting your dishware from here. It will save you a lot of money!

Cassidy Drummond

Hello, my name is Isaac and I worked at the REAL Deal Store as a summer student for three months. Whether it was taking in donations or trying my best to make a sale, I learned a great deal. Another thing I enjoyed was helping to make sure all the rain barrels were full so the people had access to water for their plants in the community garden. I learned so much on how much stays out of landfills and what people can be like on their grumpy days.

I'd like to thank the REAL Deal staff for the work experience and teaching me how to handle different situations.

Isaac Whan

In REAL Life

AGM

Annual General Meeting



Annual General Meeting. Our first ever AGM via Zoom went off without a hitch the evening of Wednesday, July 15. REAL members logged on to hear some highlights of REAL's past year and tend to the usual AGM business. The meeting was recorded and is available on REAL's YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4pu4k3pmns>.

Evergreen Dedication. The Evergreen team has decided to postpone the granite stone dedication ceremony altogether for this year. Originally, they had postponed it to the fall at Victoria Park. Put the afternoon of D-Day, Sunday June 6th, 2021 on your calendar. At least ten WW 2 veterans and community leaders will have an inscribed stone place in their honour on the pathway.

Rain Barrels. We still have four rain barrels left, three terracotta and one grey. They normally cost \$55 plus tax (\$62.15), but we will be not be charging tax on the remaining barrels. If you are coming from far away, please call (613) 283-7999 to reserve one so you are not disappointed. We also have lots of t-adaptors, filter baskets and spigot assemblies which are \$5 each if you require a replacement. We do expect to sell rain barrels once again next year.

Face Masks. While most people are arriving at the store with their own face masks, we are still giving out the occasional fabric mask. REAL is a partner in a project that has volunteers sew the masks which are then made available at the Smiths Falls Public Library, Modern Thymes and the REAL Deal Store. Trinity United Church is still distributing masks as well.

Shoreline Restoration Project Proposed

The Rideau Roundtable has proposed a shoreline restoration project along the Rideau River in Smiths Falls. Peter Au, the group's president, presented the idea at a Smiths Falls town's council meeting August 17. The group proposed a stretch of shoreline on town-owned land off Queen Street between Churchill Crescent and Roosevelt Drive as a possible site.

"Frost and Wood used to dump their tailings near the shore. Near the edge of the water, there has been quite a bit of erosion" commented Au said. There isn't enough vegetation at the site to prevent or minimize further erosion. With climate change, he said, precipitation is a lot heavier, causing more run-off, shoreline erosion and poorer water quality.

The Roundtable aims to create more appreciation of the cultural and ecological aspects of the Rideau, so that they can engage citizens to protect the river. The group intends to involve young people in all phases of this restoration project.



The next step is for the Town staff to report on the feasibility of the project. If it gives approval, Parks Canada will be approached next, as well as RVCA since it involves an alteration to the shoreline.

For more details, see Evelyn Harford's August 19 [Inside Ottawa Valley story](#).

**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
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

Fall Harvest Online Auction October 1-17, 2020



A fun alternative to the silent auction at our Local Foods Dinner!

Just provide your name and email, and you can view and bid on dozens of items, many of which have been gently used and donated to the REAL Deal Store. You are notified by email if someone tops your bid, and you can bid again. At 9 p.m. on October 17 the auction will close and the top bidders notified by email.

www.32auctions.com/REAL2020



Top bidders will need to pick up and pay for their items at the REAL Deal Store between October 20 and 24 during store hours, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. .

Payment can be made in person by cash, debit, Visa or Mastercard , or by e-transfer to payments@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.

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

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Best time to reach me

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