

# REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

DECEMBER 2021

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## Shoreline Cleanup Addresses Plastics in Waterways

Over 20 volunteers came out for a Rideau River Shoreline Cleanup on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, organized by Jake Wilson on behalf of REAL. While the weather was a little wetter than people would have liked, over 370 pounds of garbage were retrieved.



The morning group started at the Bascule Bridge and also did cleanups at Turtle Island, Lower Reach Park and behind Heritage House

Museum. The afternoon group started at the boat launch near the intersection of Jasper and Eric Hutcheson Roads and also worked on the other side of the river along Highway 43, near the Edmonds Lockstation overflow dam. The work was done on foot, but one participant used a canoe to get some garbage in the water near the Hwy 43 site.

Plastic garbage in inland waterways flowing out to sea is contributing to large patches of plastic waste in the world's oceans. Plastics are having detrimental effects on all forms of marine wildlife, and have been well documented in phytoplankton, sea turtles, seabirds and fish. Eventually plastics break down into smaller pieces, becoming microplastics and nanoplastics. Microplastics have been found virtually everywhere in our environment – oceans, arctic ice, fish, air, drinking water, shoreline sediments and more. The health effect of humans ingesting plastics is still not well understood.

This was the year to draw attention to the plastics problem. Back in March, Jake gave a presentation, "Plastics in our Waterways", a collaboration between REAL's Journey to Sustainability committee and the Rideau Roundtable. Jake covered why it is important to protect our waterways, the problem of plastics in our rivers and lakes, and simple ways for everyone to help in their daily lives. [See a recording of the zoom presentation.](#)



### Shoreline Cleanup (continued)

A similar presentation was given to the Rotary Club of Smiths Falls, and started the discussion about a potential cleanup. Unfortunately, the COVID situation led to the cleanup being postponed until the fall. A summary of the project was presented to Smiths Falls Council on November 15.

Jake also organized a shoreline cleanup over four days in October 2020, which gathered 392 pounds of garbage. Shoreline cleanups used to be a regular event for REAL. In the mid 2000's REAL did several fall cleanups in the river behind the Chambers Street Mall. A group of scuba divers would snag junk (including many shopping carts) which would be pulled up by volunteers on shore.

Thanks to everyone who participated in this year's cleanups.

Some ways to address the plastic problem:

- Clean-up the garbage from river banks and beaches. Picking up garbage from ditches or the streets is also effective, because that plastic will likely flow into the waterways when large rainfalls happen.
- Dispose of trash properly, ensuring that all of your personal trash ends up in either recycling or the garbage can where it will be properly handled and brought to a landfill.
- Reuse and recycle whenever possible, and avoid buying single-use plastics.
- Stop buying polyester clothing made of plastic, and instead buy cotton or other natural-fiber clothing materials.



### Tool Library Progressing

The REAL Tool Library is still gaining traction. Everyone we tell about it seems to think it's a terrific idea, so that is encouraging! We have enlisted 15 members so far, and most have opted for the 6 month plan for \$25 (a year costs \$45). Members may borrow from our collection of about 75 tools for a week at a time. There is the option to extend the borrowing time if no one else has requested the tool.

We have already added tools since we began, as people hearing about the service have come forward with donations. An oscillating sander, paint sprayer, drill press, laser level and a cordless scissors/cutter were added to our collection in this way. The full catalogue is available on our website. We are also encouraging people to complete a little online survey so we can get a better idea of what people are looking for. Just remember we have some pretty serious space limitations!

People are encouraged to use the tool library between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. when there is a dedicated volunteer available. Our thanks to Nancy Berthiaume, Barb Hicks, Katie Hoffman, Jim McVeety and Aira Sarmiento for being available during those times. The REAL Deal staff will do their best to help you at other times. We still welcome additional volunteers who are knowledgeable about tools to join the team.

Special thanks to Nancy Berthiaume and Bill Hamilton for working so diligently to get our tool library off the ground. They cleaned out and reorganized the space, built shelving and a service counter. They sourced all the tools, and located any missing batteries and chargers, developed our procedures and much more. They are one dynamic duo! We are hoping that by spring of next year, we will have enough members to justify moving towards a more electronic system, and branching out into renting other useful items.

Members can reserve a tool by calling (613) 283-7999 or emailing [ToolLibrary@REALaction.ca](mailto:ToolLibrary@REALaction.ca). We also have some rack cards if you would like something in writing to pass out to people you know, or if you have a place that would be agreeable to having some on their counter or bulletin board.



## Online Auction Hits its Mark

REAL is delighted that this year's online auction was a financial success! By the time bidding closed at 9 p.m. on Sat. Nov. 13 the high bids totaled \$2007, which was very close to our goal of \$2021. Over the 13 days 124 people bid on 98 items. There was intense bidding on some items and many last minute upsets. In the end 45 people were the highest bidders and earned the right to purchase assorted collectibles, art, garden, housewares, appliances, services and Christmas items.

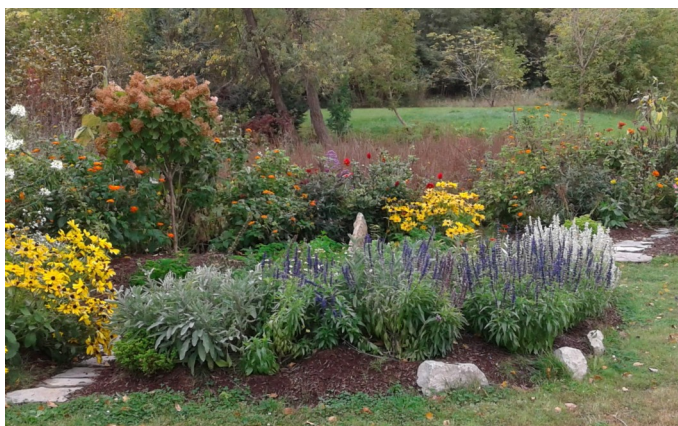
Participants were asked to pick up and pay for their treasures at the REAL Deal Store the week of Nov. 17 – 20. It appears many people were very keen and came to get their purchases the first day. Many were also new to the store and took the time to shop, and said they'd be back, so the auction was a great promotional tool, too.

While most of the auction items were gently used goods donated to the REAL Deal over the past year, we had many donations from our members and the local community. Our sincere thanks to: Alan Loucks, Barb and Dave Hicks, Daisy Au, Diane Bennett, Donna McKenna, Garden Market, Gord Commodore, Jill Spear, Karen Forbes, Lauralee Merkley, Lois Andison, Margot Allen, Marje Fletcher, Mercedes Steedman, Nancy McFadyen and the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority for their auction donations.

The contributions from sponsors were stellar as well, and totaled \$1800, bringing revenue for the event to \$3800. REAL is very grateful for the enthusiastic support of our work by this community.



Our fall local foods dinner has been on hold the past two years, so this was a way of making up for that lost revenue. One thousand dollars will go directly to REAL Deal operations, and the rest will enable us to continue projects like shoreline cleanups, the monarch and community gardens and, sustainability workshops.



**Our Monarch Garden.** A view (at left) of the monarch garden on October 5 of this year. The garden continued to look very healthy well into the fall. An obelisk was added in between the two lobes early in the season. We had many visitors to the garden, often hoping to capture some butterfly activity on their cameras. Aphids continued to be a problem, especially for the milkweed plants, which are of course the favoured food of monarch butterflies.

Seeds were collected from some of the plants in the fall, as we intend to package them to sell in the spring, possibly in conjunction with the rain barrel sale. The team did not proceed with a third bed over by the community garden as originally planned, as the group were preoccupied with planning and planting the Depave gardens downtown, but there is always next year!

## Rethinking Reuse

When you buy a used item, you are doing far more than saving yourself money. There are more wide-reaching benefits.

First, there are the environmental benefits. When an item is reused, you have avoided, or at least deferred, that item going into a landfill. You have avoided the environmental cost of trucking the waste and operating a landfill site. If you used an item again, you are making better use of all the energy, materials, labour and other resources (water, chemicals etc.) that went into the original manufacture of the product. And you have reduced the resources and the greenhouse gas that come from the manufacture of a new product.

Frequently, reusing an item means you have an opportunity to have something unique that is no longer available in stores, or is not available in your area. Older items may have been handcrafted or made by an outdated process, and may have appreciated in value.

You may be able to use the item in another way: mason jars to store decorative items, muffin tins for desk drawer organizers, old boots as planters - the possibilities are endless. Repurposing is a chance to use your creative abilities.

Reusing can be a link to the past, your family or loved ones, even if it is not a full fledged antique. Using grandma's old meat grinder may bring back fond memories for you, or using an outdated piece of machinery for a paperweight reminds us of days gone by.

Using the reuse market, or the refurbishing, renovating and repair services that make older items reusable, maintains and creates jobs in our communities.

Reuse supports local community and social programs. Materials like clothing, building materials and business equipment may be donated to people, near or abroad, who need them. Or a reused item can provide an affordable alternative to people who cannot or prefer not to buy new. Many reuse centers provide volunteer or work placement programs, or assist disadvantaged groups such as the handicapped or at-risk youth.

There are many opportunities for you to give goods a second chance. Most products used by individual consumers can be reused: clothing, tools, hardware, furniture, books and music, appliances, business equipment and office supplies, sports equipment, building supplies, kitchenware, decorations and packaging. Second hand stores, non-profit stores, consignment



*This lovely wooden bowl was made by REAL Deal customer Gord Commodore from various wood items sources at the store. It sold in our recent online auction for \$17.00.*

shops, flea markets, second hand stores, antique shops and auction services are a place to start. Make use of online exchanges like Freecycle, eBay, Kijiji, or Facebook Marketplace. More informally, there are swaps and exchanges, sharing with friends and neighbours, garage and yard sales. Or do your own investigating when you have something useful to donate - could your church, daycare, youth centre, shelter or other community organization make use of it?

So don't let anyone call you cheap for shopping reused - you have broader social, economic and environmental goals in mind!

*Does this story sound familiar? It's been reused! It was originally a submission made to the Record News in September 2009.*



## REAL Deal News

**Staffing.** We welcomed a new staff member, Arnold Price, to the REAL Deal team in October. He will be working primarily Wednesdays and Thursdays in the yard. A new cashier, Brittany, will start training with us shortly. Cole still volunteers and fills in on short notice when needed. Regulars Tim, Aira, Chester, Tiffany and Heather are the more familiar faces! Julia



Arnold Price is the latest addition to the REAL Deal yard staff.

Babcock has started volunteering with us one day a week, mostly in smalls. Joel and Emma are completing their high school community service hours with us. Justin and Kevin from Lanark Community programs enjoy helping a morning a week as well. Brenda, Donna, Margot, Pegi, Penny, Una and Barb still keep the donation in smalls moving.

**Christmas.** The smalls focus in October and November has been getting all the Christmas donations priced and on the shelves. The REAL Deal has become a popular Christmas destination in our area. Christmas village pieces, glass sphere ornaments and larger tabletop decorations in particular are being snapped up quickly. The materials we had been storing all year were all out by late November, and by then new Christmas donations were coming in the back door. This year we had an unusual number of mugs and Christmas tins, probably because they did not sell well last year, and more individual Christmas ornaments than in the past. For whatever reason, garlands of any kind were not plentiful, and there wasn't one ceramic tree to be seen! Every year is different. Watch for all of our Christmas merchandise to go on sale December 10th.

**Other Donations.** There seems to have been a dip in donations this fall, possibly related to the COVID situation, but we have lots of inventory and had some great sales days regardless. We have had several

loads of really nice furniture donated, including antique furniture, which generated a lot of interest in the store and on Facebook Marketplace.

**Holiday Hours.** Per usual we will be shutting down between Christmas and New Year's to give everyone a break. The last shopping days for the year will be Wed. and Thurs. Dec. 22 and 23. The store will not reopen until Wed. Jan. 5, 2022. Please save your donations and electronic waste until we return. It is really important that we move as much of the Christmas stuff before we close, as January 5 will be too late to begin a post Christmas sale.

**COVID Precautions.** Unfortunately, there have been a number of people in the store who have to be reminded that face masks are still necessary, and they must be worn over the mouth and nose. Masks are an absolute necessity until our local Health Unit advises otherwise. If you notice someone not complying, please feel free to bring it to our Manager, Dan Cunningham's, attention. Those refusing to wear a mask will be asked to leave. Mask wearing is such a small inconvenience to keep other shoppers, our staff and volunteers safe.

**Policies.** Please note these REAL Deal Store policies that are posted on the bulletin board behind the cash.

- All sales are final.
- No refunds or exchanges.
- For a 20% down payment we will hold an item for 24 hours. If you need to arrange transportation, but have paid in full, you have 48 hours to pick up your item. If purchased on a Saturday, you have until Wednesday to pick it up. If you do not pick the item up within these time frames your payment or deposit is non-refundable.
- If an item that does not work as expected (for example an appliance) we will be happy to issue a store credit, but no refunds will be given.

To be clear, we cannot store your purchase for you. It is simply not practical given our limited floor and "out of the weather" space. If we have no contact with you we can only assume you have changed your mind or forgotten about your purchase. Please ask to speak to the manager if you need clarification.

## Two New Signs Installed November 8



**REAL Deal Sign.** Our sorely dilapidated REAL Deal sign has been replaced, and the new one was installed on the original 2008 base and post next to William Street. We deliberately did not include store hours in case they change along the way, but the four blades can be removed or new ones added as necessary. Thanks to Bruce Fletcher for designing the sign and making all the arrangements, and to Andre Arcand for the production. Bruce is still experimenting with solar lighting options to be added later. We may also plant something around the base come spring.



**Depave Paradise Sign.** Thanks to Linda Henderson-Myers for her patience during the design process, to AJ Photography and Charlotte Pragnell for the use of their photos, the Town of Smiths Falls for the installation and the Ontario Trillium Foundation for their funding. The sign is closer to the Beckwith St. bed and was situated with the path locations in mind. It features a QR code so that visitors can immediately get information about the Depave program at [depaveparadise.ca](http://depaveparadise.ca). The REAL Board is still open to doing another Depave in 2022 or 2023. Two sites are under consideration, but all suggestions are welcome.

## REAL DEAL Holiday Hours

Usual Hours until Thurs Dec 23:

**Wed, Thurs, Fri and Sat**  
10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Last Days to Shop in 2021

**Wednesday, December 22 and**  
**Thursday, December 23**

Closed Dec. 24 - Jan. 4  
(yes, 12 days of Christmas!)

Reopening  
**Wednesday, January 5, 2022**

## BioChar for Gardens and Climate Change

Nathaniel Morris gave an enthusiastic zoom presentation on biochar December 2<sup>nd</sup> to 20 participants. Biochar is a new concept to many of us but was being using in the Amazon in the 1500s. The substance is made by burning plant material at high temperatures in a low oxygen environment, leaving the carbon to harden in place. When incorporated in soils it can continue to sequester carbon for thousands of years, so is a possible tool for combating climate change. On a smaller scale, using biochar in a garden attracts nutrients, increasing soil fertility.

Nathaniel also described how the Rideau Roundtable has entered a WWF science competition called the Nature X Challenge. The team is using biochar to get young people involved with quantifying carbon in nature.

A recording of this Journey to Sustainability presentation will be available on REAL's website.



*In REAL Life*

**REAL Deal E-waste Bin.** We do appreciate your electronic waste contributions because it ensures these materials get recycled properly and also earns the REAL Deal some money. But please note that our black bin is for electronics only, such as TVs, computers, stereos and the like. It does not include general electrical appliances like toasters, microwave ovens and vacuum cleaners, it especially does not include coolant containing appliances like air conditioners or dehumidifiers, and it certainly does not include carpets (where's the plug on that anyway?) and other junk. Please ask if you need to know what to do with those waste items. Also note there is a door on the bin that faces the REAL Deal wall. Putting stuff on the ground in front of that door is just a nuisance. Place e-waste materials beside the bin or against the wall.



**Coffee Pods.** If you have still not given up your Keurig coffee machine, note that we have refillable pods available for you to try free of charge. Just ask at the cash. They are easy to use and cut down on unnecessary plastic and other waste. And thank you for not bringing us your used pods!



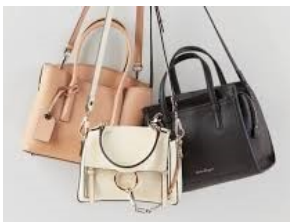
**Book Prices.** Book prices increased at the REAL Deal effective November 1. Soft covered books are now 50 cents or three for \$1.00. Hard covered books are \$1.00 or three for \$2.00. We feel this is still reasonable, makes more effective use of our space, and brings our prices more in line with other used book sellers in town. Kids books, as well as youth, parenting or teacher's books are still free. We do have some books for which we charge more, but they are located well away from the Book Nook to reduce possible confusion. Please do not bring us old text books, encyclopedias or entire boxes of one non-fiction topic, they just won't sell. Recycle them through your municipal program, cause that is what is going to happen if you bring them to us!



**Greener Homes.** We are still on track to have a Registered Energy Auditor available to do the pre and post home energy audits required to benefit from this federal incentive program. It will be posted on our website and we will send a message to our mailing list when John Appleby is ready, as this is likely to happen before our February newsletter issue.



**Lanark County Plastic Bag Ban.** Thank you for respecting our decision to not hand out plastic grocery bags at the REAL Deal Store. If you forget to bring your own reusable bag, we may have some reusable totes (that other customers have made their donations in), paper bags, or cardboard boxes to pack your purchases in, but don't count on it. If you need some reusable tote bags, take a look at the REAL canvas bags on display near the cash. They are just \$7.00. The store is also trying to reduce our own use of plastic bags when packaging items by using elastics, twist ties, small boxes or even plastic food containers. Please do not bring us your plastic grocery bags, as we just have to turn them over to another non-profit organization.



**Purses and Suitcases.** We have recently turned over many large wheeled suitcases to Not Just Tourist Ottawa, who pack medical items in them for tourists to take to destinations in need. We have also turned over several boxes of purses to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lanark County, who will evaluate them for their annual Purse Event.

RIDEAU ENVIRONMENTAL  
ACTION LEAGUE

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

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

**REAL Deal Store &  
Environment Centre**

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

Open Wednesday  
through Saturdays  
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Ask about our  
new Tool Library**

**For Home Energy Audits,  
see our website.**

**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**



**Open NOW!**

Borrow tools for up to one  
week with a membership.

6 months—\$25

12 months—\$45

Must show ID, and must be  
at least 18.

**Affordable tools from your  
local environmental organization.**

Ove 90 tools, and growing!

Saws, grinders, planers, drills, sanders, tile cutter, compressor  
and shop vac are just some of what we have to offer.

See our tool catalogue for a current list.:

[www.REALaction.ca/real-tool-library](http://www.REALaction.ca/real-tool-library)

REAL Deal Store, 85 William St. W, Smiths Falls  
Open Wed to Sat, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
(613) 283-7999  
Email: ToolLibrary@REALaction.ca



**RIDEAU  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
ACTION LEAGUE**

**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 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 .....