

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

JULY 2022

Inside this issue:

Triumphant Return
of Pitch-In 2

Shoreline Cleanup
April 30 3

Countertop
Composter an
Option for Many 3

Community
Connections 5

Household
Hazardous Waste 6

REAL's Greenspaces 6

In REAL Life 7

Recyclables Accepted
at REAL Deal 8

Tool Library Looking for Certain Garden Tools

REAL's Tool Library is ready to move into its next phase – lending out garden tools.

REAL opened its tool library at the REAL Deal Reuse Store last fall. For a membership fee people can rent any of the 100 or so tools for a week at a time. Most of the tools are geared towards home handyperson projects. To date our most popular rentals have been a palm sander, a table saw and a tile cutter.

REAL has been tracking area residents' requests to see if there are other tools they would appreciate borrowing. We evaluate those requests for practicality, cost, ease of transport, storage requirements and maintenance needs. We would like to add some specific garden tools to our inventory, and would like to see what we could acquire via donation. If you have any of these items in your garage and/or basement and are not using them anymore, perhaps you would be interested in contributing them to a local environmental organization tool library where you know they will be used. So far we have come up with a lopper and a manual post hole digger.

Right now REAL would be interested in acquiring: hedge clippers, a mini rototiller, a pole pruner, a power washer, an electric lawn dethatcher, a spreader, and a cultivator. We are aiming for electric or battery operated rather than gas powered appliances.

Please contact Bill or Nancy Hamilton at (613) 340-0038 if you have any of those items to donate. They will

arrange a time to come take a look and if it is suitable, pick it up. They will also discuss if, in the event that we receive multiples, you are comfortable with it being sold in the REAL Deal store. Also on our ongoing wish list is a wooden or metal shed to increase REAL's overall storage capacity.



The REAL Tool Library is seeking donations of certain garden tools to include in its collection. Manual, electric or battery operated tools only. Call (613) 340-0038.

The REAL Tool Library is open Wednesday through Saturday. More information, including our tool catalogue, is available on REAL's website, www.realaction.ca. Just select the green tool library button on the top row. Or drop by the store and someone will be happy to show you what we have available.



The Triumphant Return of Pitch-In

by Shannon Hicks

With the lessening of COVID-19 restrictions, we were pleased to be able to organize our annual springtime Pitch-In clean-up once again, after taking a pause the past two years. REAL has been participating in Pitch-In since 1989, and organizing community wide cleanups since the early 2000s. This is the 55th year of Pitch-In cleanups taking place across Canada. We are proud that our community continues to take part in this nation-wide effort to protect and preserve our environment for future generations.

About 25 individuals, families or groups picked up their Pitch-In supplies at the REAL Deal over the two weeks leading up to the cleanup. From April 16th to April 30th, our Pitch-In volunteers set out to clean up areas around their homes, workplaces, and locations across Smiths Falls most affected by litter. Some locations of note are the lot between Walmart and Scotiabank, behind the LCBO, Ferrara Drive, throughout Lower Reach Park, behind Giant Tiger, and down both sides of Beckwith St.

The 2nd Smiths Falls Scouting Group (including Beavers, Cubs, and Scouts) led by Neil Looby, conducted three cleanups across town. The library organized a cleanup involving their Get Outdoors Club. Chimo Elementary School and SFDCl cleaned up their yards and surrounding streets. This was the first year that Le Boat took part in Pitch-In, cleaning up around the lockmaster's house, Lower Reach Park, and behind the Giant Tiger, collecting over 25 bags of garbage.

In addition to hearing just how much stuff participants managed to pick up, it is always interesting to hear their most peculiar finds. Found this year were Christmas lights, a car battery, a bike rack, a muffler, broken glass bong, a flannel shirt, a couch cushion, a microphone, and a high voltage sign. Interesting finds are part of the fun of Pitch-In!

Regarding the items found most frequently, you may not be quite so surprised. The usual suspects – coffee cups and lids, plastic bottles, glass bottles, broken glass, cans, food wrappers, grocery bags,

dog poop bags, and cigarette butts - were found at most cleanup locations. You may have also noticed a new offender as of late... face masks! The Scouts reported finding roughly 100 face masks beside the Walmart parking lot alone. While doing our part to slow transmission of COVID-19, we should try not to neglect the environment, and dispose of face masks and other PPE properly.

Litter has a detrimental impact on our waterways as well. This year we incorporated our shoreline cleanup into the Pitch-In timeframe. Living in the "heart of the Rideau Canal", Smiths Falls residents have a responsibility to keep the Rideau River and shoreline clean too. As one of our participants aptly wrote, *"Our litter ends up mostly in our water systems, which means it ends up in our food/water, which ends up in us. Gross"*. Let's continue to try to keep the beautiful shorelines we are so lucky to enjoy in Smiths Falls pristine! (See Jake Wilson's report on the cleanup in this issue.)

Several other thoughtful responses came from volunteers who completed our Pitch-In Response Form and BINGO card this year.

"...if we keep on littering, we might need to live on Mars (Mars has no air)."

"If you keep littering, we'll have to wear masks outside to not breathe in garbage air smell."

To those who continue to litter, *"Wish you could clean up after yourselves."*



Thank you to our members, volunteers, and contest participants - we hope to see you pitching in again next year!



Shoreline Cleanup Winds up Pitch In

by Jake Wilson

The 2022 REAL shoreline clean-up event took place in Smiths Falls on Saturday, April 30 as part of Pitch-In.

It started at 10 a.m. with ten helpers from the area. Volunteers collected garbage along the shoreline of the Rideau River. Seven of these helpers started the morning session around the Bascule Bridge along the shoreline and park area, and three helpers started the morning behind the Heritage House Museum along the side of the Rideau River near



Old Slys Lockstation.

The second phase of the clean-up started at 1 p.m. at the boat launch near Edmonds Lockstation off Jasper Road, near its intersection with Eric Hutcheson road. Nine community members came out to help with this part of the clean-up.

Great effort was put forth by everyone involved. We worked hard and filled many garbage bags. Everything put together totaled 436 pounds. One of the most unusual finds was a microphone on a rock. Another unusual find was three bags of garbage dumped by the boat launch off Jasper Avenue. These three bags totaled 155 lbs! It certainly contributed to increasing our total weight. Thirty three bags were gathered in total, along with other miscellaneous pieces of trash including tires and other pieces of plastic and metal.

The garbage was separated into garbage and plastic/aluminum recycling and was disposed of by the Town of Smiths Falls.



Spring Garden Fundraiser

If you weren't able to participate in our May 14 Garden Fundraiser, there are still lots of products available.

- Rain Barrels. We had 150 rain barrels delivered to us at 5:30 p.m. the day before our sale. Ninety were pre-orders, and another 60 were ordered to sell at the REAL Deal throughout the season. Proceeds from the pre-orders will support the monarch garden, and the others are considered REAL Deal sales. We have already sold all of the \$45 grey "ugly ducklings", but have about 15 of the terracotta barrels available for \$60 plus tax.
- Composters. We still have lots of the Earth Machine composters left. They are \$50 and include a \$10 REAL Deal gift certificate. We REALLY want you to give backyard composting a try!
- Mushroom Compost. Trinity United Church (TUC)

made great headway on selling their bagged mushroom compost. There is still lots there. now just \$5 for a 30 L. bag. If you would like to purchase some, REAL will set the money aside for TUC.

- Seeds. There are still packages of seeds collected from last year's REAL Deal garden, \$2 a package. We have tithonia, zinnias and two varieties of milk weed, as well as some Trail of Tears bean seeds donated by a friend of REAL.

In the end we made a little over \$1000, so the fundraiser was definitely a worthwhile venture. Thanks to our volunteers for being available that day: Joni and Dave Thornley, Mia and Neil Rowlands, Cathryn Davidson, Beth Graham, Donna McKenna, Lori Nichol and Athens DHS students Daniel Blair and Izzy St. Denis. And thanks to REAL Deal staff who stayed late with Barb Hicks to unload the barrels the night before: Greg Charette and Heather Warren.

Countertop Composter an Option for Many

If you have been curious about the FoodCycler appliance offered by the Town of Smiths Falls in the spring, your chance will be coming soon.

This spring the Town of Smiths Falls was running a FoodCycler Food Waste Diversion Municipal Pilot Program. The countertop composter reduces the volume of waste by about 90%, and reduces the associated greenhouse gas emissions by 95%. Household waste is generally 25-50% organic materials, so this is one way to deal with the rising costs of municipal waste disposal. Smiths Falls made 100 of the devices available to residents at \$169.50, a considerable discount to the \$500 price. So REAL purchased a unit.

The machine looks similar to a bread machine. There is a little bucket that you put your kitchen compostable scraps in. When it is full, you place it in the device, set it going, and within 4-8 hours you have finished compost. It uses about the same amount of energy as a desktop computer, 0.8 kWh per cycle. So not a lot! Depending on household size and cooking habits, you might need to run it every day, or maybe only every few days. The FoodCycler works by drying and grinding the food scraps, so the output is a much smaller volume. The machine includes carbon filters to minimize the smell, but it does smell a little, much like someone is cooking something. So people may prefer to run it in their basement or somewhere removed from living areas.

How the finished product looks depends on what you've been putting in it – could be like fish food flakes, coffee grounds or sawdust. See the before and after photos. You can then use it to fertilize your garden or houseplants, add it to your backyard composter as a brown layer, give it away, or even put in your garbage. That last option is a waste of good nutrients but at least you have reduced your waste volume significantly.

REAL had several people try the FoodCycler for three weeks each. Greg Charette, Dave Thornley,

Peter Au and Donna McKenna all gave it a whirl during the 12 week monitoring period. REAL Board member Karen Schecter had purchased one for her own family's use. The users were asked to record their comments and the number of cycles they ran their FoodCycler. Then Dave completed a survey on our behalf, gathering in everyone's comments. The Au's thought it was an ideal size for a family of two, and they would run it overnight. Donna commented it was not big enough for a family of four eating lots of fruits and vegetables; you would almost need to run it twice a day. Greg was surprised by the odour and how much the volume was reduced. Karen liked the idea of being able to reduce the volume indoors, instead of taking the compostables outside in the winter. Dave was impressed that it handled chicken bones, and commented that even with the volume reduction it would create too much compost to be used on a small property. So the device is certainly a viable option for people without access to backyard composters if you can get past the high initial purchase price.

REAL is prepared to lend out the FoodCycler so others can get an idea if they would find it useful in their household. REAL already lends out air quality meters and radon meters to residents at no charge, and makes Kill a Watt meters available through the store and local libraries. Should there be high demand for the FoodCycler, we will give priority to REAL members and Tool Library members over non-members, but otherwise we will just take requests in order. You do not need to be a Smiths Falls resident. Currently the device will become available the last week of July. If you would like to borrow it or have questions, contact Barb at dhicks11@cogeco.ca or (613) 283-9966. The REAL Deal Store will be the pickup and dropoff point, so that will need to be done Wednesday through Saturday, 10 to 5.



Community Connections

There have been lots of “good will exchanges” with other individuals and groups in our community this spring. In no particular order:

- An interesting portrait of a woman, circa 1900, in wide round wooden frame was donated to the store several years ago. After consulting with several people in the know, we were unable to determine if the subject was anyone local. Heritage House Museum agreed it would be a nice donation to their collection, so this piece of art has found a new home.



- We lent a nice china teapot, cream and sugar set to the Railway Museum of Eastern Ontario for serving tea at a May event at the museum.
- We lent an artist several easels for her art show in Carleton Place.
- Several large boxes of recent, good quality used children's books were donated to the store. We usually give away kids books so put the word out on Facebook. Shortly after a large quantity made their way to the Lombardy Public School Library.
- REAL provided prize packages for the 2021-2022 Merrickville-Wolford ECO Champions contest. The REAL canvas bags and REAL Deal vouchers were a great fit and a great hit!



- A resident at Van Horne Manor enjoys weaving mats out of milk bags, and had accumulated about four garbage bags full. The Activities Director at the residence noticed we collected empty milk bags and wondered if we might be able to get them into people's hands. We have made them available to customers for free and have distributed three bags, about 30 mats, so far.



- The Smiths Falls Horticultural Society donated about fifty plants that were left over after their spring plant sale. We have been selling them in the REAL Deal's “garden centre” at minimal cost.
- A local gardener dividing her perennials donated three batches of plants that quickly sold, including iris, hostas, and lilac.
- The Smiths Falls Canadian Tire store allowed us to take several wooden racks they had used outdoors and no longer needed. They were repurposed into a three bin composter for our Compost Demonstration area. Thanks to regular customer Paul Guerin for transporting them in his truck.
- And an extra big thank you to longtime member Lauralee Merkely for repainting both washrooms at the store. They look so much better! At that time it was suggested that we add a grab bars and shortly thereafter, a pair was donated to the store. They were installed by Tool Library volunteer Jim McVeety.

'Tis the Season for HHW

The REAL Deal does not accept hazardous waste of any kind, but local residents do have access to seasonal Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) depots. This is your opportunity to access safe disposal of dangerous materials that are not accepted in landfills or should not be put down the drain. Your options vary by municipality and require proof of residency. Go before they close in the fall, otherwise you will have to store it until next year!

Items should be in sealed containers, identified, and in a cardboard box.

If you live in Beckwith, Carleton Place, Drummond/North Elmsley, Mississippi Mills, Montague, Perth or Smiths Falls: Use the HHW depot at 128 Patterson Crescent, Carleton Place. Hours are Saturdays 8 a.m. until noon, until Sat. Sept.

3. Consult [their brochure](#).

If you live in Tay Valley Township: Use the Middleville Hazardous Waste Depot, 4686 Wolf Grove Road, Lanark. Hours are Saturdays 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. from Victoria Day Weekend until Thanksgiving Weekend. See TVT's [Household Hazardous Waste](#) page.

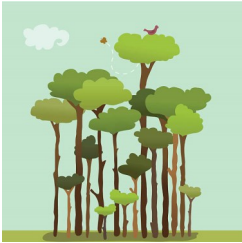
If you live in a Leeds-Grenville municipality (Rideau Lakes, Elizabethtown-Kitley, Merrickville-Wolford etc.) there are four dates and locations to choose from. One is Saturday, July 9 at the [Lombardy Fairgrounds](#). See the [LLG HHW Days Poster 2022](#) for the other dates and times or see the story on our website www.REALaction.ca.



REAL's Greenspaces

It's a busy time and a short season for all of our greening projects. Here is a quick update. Look for more details in our September issue.

- **Monarch Gardens.** The gardens in front of the REAL Deal are coming back to life, assisted by some faithful monarch garden volunteers, who are tending the garden on Monday mornings before it gets too hot. The forms for the Phase 3 Healing Garden will be created later in the season so they will be ready first thing next spring. Feel free to come take a look.
- **Depave Gardens.** The two beds planted downtown between the library and the Visitor Centre are doing well, although the zinnias planted this spring were eaten by some critter, and now we cannot find any more State Fair Zinnias to plant. The band shell will not be completed until late October, so that means the four native trees we want to add to the site will have to wait. A student will be assigned the task of taking a hose over to water periodically.
- **Community Garden.** We thought all 12 plots were allocated, but plans change, so there is one that has not been assigned. It often happens that we have various herbs and tomatoes plants donated to us, so we will have that space available if necessary. The groundhogs have been active, which is of course very frustrating to the gardeners. Chester is keeping the area mowed and trimmed.
- **Compost Demo Site.** We are trying a new tactic for managing the compost demonstration site. Greg Charette has a small contract with us to manage the operation. His first task was to right the compost shelter that blew over in the high winds on Good Friday, and to anchor it with rebar and concrete pads. A new base was laid down, and the four demo composters started with new materials. Greg has also added a three bin composter built with used pallets. The materials people were depositing in the cribs at the near end of the shelter will be redistributed once the snakes are evicted. We have been unable to find a composting guru to do a presentation to local residents, but will keep looking.

In REAL Life

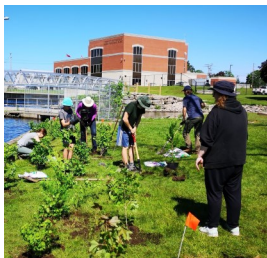
Urban Forest Presentation. The latest Journey to Sustainability (J2S) presentation covered the benefits of urban forests. Joyce Hostyn from [Little Forests Kingston](#) and 1000 Islands Master Gardeners described how their organization is transforming their city one Little Forest at a time using the [Miyawaki Reforestation method](#). In Kingston there have been three urban forests planted: Lakeside, Wolfe Island and a site on Hwy 15. You can catch a recording of the June 8 presentation on the Journey to Sustainability Facebook page. You can also ask to be added to the [J2S mailing list](#) so you will be notified of future presentations.



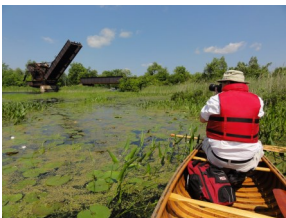
How Well do you Know Your Fridge? We have long suspected that the REAL Deal fridge was an energy hog. We used the kill a watt meter to measure its consumption and concluded it was costing us about \$252 a year in electricity. We have traded it in on a small, newer, more energy efficient model. If you would like to check your fridge, borrow a meter from the REAL Deal or your local library. You will need to use it for at least 24 hours to get an accurate reading.



Community Events. REAL was at the June 11 Paddlefest at Lower Reach Park with a display on the REAL Deal, Depave and our Monarch garden. Thanks to Katie for pulling that one together. We will also be represented at the Friends of the Tay Watershed Discovery Day on August 20 at the Crystal Palace in Perth. Drop by to say hello and enter our draw for a rain barrel or composter—we haven't decided which!



Shoreline Planting at Turtle Island. This demonstration planting was accomplished by some enthusiastic volunteers Sunday, May 29, including several from REAL. In all about 200 native shrubs and 30 native trees were planted along the Rideau. Four benches have been added since then, and REAL will be contributing to the cost of the signage to describe the benefits of shoreline planting. The project, spearheaded by the Rideau Roundtable, involved Trees Canada, the Town of Smiths Falls, RVCA, the Smiths Falls Horticultural Society, Cogeco YourTV and REAL.



Wetland Awareness Tours. Free canoe tours of the swale will be offered on two Saturdays, August 6 and August 20. The intent is to educate people on the benefits of wetlands and the importance of their protection, and inspire people to take action. Voyageur or regular sized canoes will be used. A joint project of the Rideau Roundtable and REAL. Watch for details in an email blast; you will need to preregister.



REAL's AGM. About 18 members and friends of REAL gathered by Zoom for our Annual General Meeting June 29. Our thanks to Phil Mosher, Planner with the RVCA, for covering the need for Urban Stormwater Management. The same six board members will continue to guide REAL in the coming year. A recording of the meeting will be available on the website shortly.



Evergreen Avenue Dedication. A commemoration event is being planned for the afternoon of Sunday, September 25 at the RCL Branch 95 in Smiths Falls, the first time the event has been held indoors. With a couple of missed Victoria Park dedication ceremonies during COVID, there are 29 memorial stones to two community leaders, WWII and other veterans to be dedicated.

RIDEAU ENVIRONMENTAL
ACTION LEAGUE

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

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 in the K7A
region, contact John:
jappleby@realaction.ca

**Find us on:
Facebook 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

Recyclable Materials Accepted at the REAL Deal

In addition to good quality used materials we can resell in our store, we accept these items for reusing, recycling, and earning a bit of cash.



Electronic Waste:
Computer equipment,
TVs, stereos, cell phones
and associated parts.



**Used Household
Batteries.**



**Print and Toner
Cartridges**



**Scrap
Metal and
Wire**



**Pens, Crayons,
and Glue Sticks**



**Outer Milk
Bags**



Pill Bottles:
clear, clean and
empty.

**Note: Scavenging in our
scrap metal, ewaste or
garbage bins is not
permitted.**

**Materials accepted during store
hours only: Wed-Sat 10-5
No unauthorized dropoffs!
Call if needed: (613) 283-7999**

**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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