

# REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

DECEMBER 2022

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## Thinking Outside the Box for Gift Giving

There are lots of ways to modify your Christmas gift giving to have a more positive environmental impact. Besides looking for eco-friendly and socially responsible gifts, here are some ideas for thinking outside the box.

- **Shop locally.** For gifts or anything else you may be purchasing (food, decorations, clothing), see what you can find locally before venturing into the city. Our local businesses need our support.
- **Entertainment experience.** A great alternative for someone who doesn't need more stuff. Possibilities include tickets to a community theatre production, a sporting event, RVCA pass or a Film Night International pass.
- **Gift certificate for personal care.** Manicures, spa treatments, massages, hair care and the like might be just the thing for someone who would like a treat and wouldn't spend the money themselves.
- **Classes.** Maybe there is something the recipient has been itching to try: art, music, yoga, an exercise class, flying etc.
- **Food and drink.** There are lots of local food delicacies that would be nice done up in a gift basket, or presented as a hostess gift: maple syrup, sunflower oil, mustard, cheeses, charcuterie, craft beer, chocolate, you get the idea.
- **Restaurant gift certificates.** A voucher for their favourite local restaurant, or even gift certificates for fast food, or a loaded up Tim's or Subway card.
- **Shop second-hand.** There are Lots of choices in Smiths Falls, including the REAL Deal, Salvation Army Thrift Store, Jewels, The Score and others.

(continued)



### Gift Giving (continued)

- **Local handicrafts.** Craft fairs, year-round gift stores and the Heritage House Museum gift shops are a good place to find gifts that support local artisans.
- **Your Time or Services.** Prepare a coupon or gift certificate for babysitting, car washing, lawn care, wildflower bouquets, knitting, cooking, handyperson services or anything you are good at. This might be a good option if funds are tight.

For the people who have everything or live far away you could consider:

- **Giving from charitable gift catalogues.** Several big charities have catalogues from which you can choose to fund needs of developing communities, from chickens, to bed nets, to trees to wells, in every price bracket. Check World Vision, Plan International and Canadian Feed the Children websites.
- **Any charitable gift.** You can give a gift in someone's name to any charitable cause (but you will be named on the charitable receipt.) Some local ideas might be LAWS, Lanark County Interval House, Big Brothers Big Sisters, or REAL. Some charities may provide a card or ecard for you to present with your gift. If you are short of time, check out CanadaHelps.org. You can make several donations at once or specify an amount that the recipient could donate to the charity of their choice.

You may choose to rethink gifts altogether, and concentrate on enjoyable Christmas experiences. Take in a Christmas event like a carol service, take a tour to see the lights, go tobogganing, make a special meal, bake cookies or do a craft together.

### Fond Farewell to Ron Toop

REAL lost a long time member, [Ron Toop](#), in mid-October. Ron and Libby Toop were at the inaugural meeting of REAL back in 1989. Ron participated as a Board member, and in many other capacities, particularly communications, often contributing stories to our newsletter. He was the coordinator of the REAL Actions column that ran in the Smiths Falls Record News around 2005 and 2006. He and his wife Libby have carefully proofread every issue of the REAL Update for well over a decade. Many in the community will remember Ron from his teaching years at the Smiths Falls Alternative School (now TR Leger) and volunteer work with RNJ Youth Services. Our sympathies to his wife Libby and family. We thank the Toops for suggesting REAL be a recipient of any in memoriam donations made in Ron's honour.



*Ron is second from the left in back row of this very old board photo, likely from the mid 2000s. In the back are Peter Au, Ron Toop and Larry Manson. In the first row are Barb Hicks, Elva Corless, Karen Schecter, Carolyn Fraser and Environmental Projects Manager Sue Brandum.*

## EcolceGrip an Alternative to Road Salt

EcolceGrip is now available at the REAL Deal Store. When applied to packed snow and ice, it is an effective environmentally friendly alternative to salt. And it is locally made! Staff have used it at the store with great results.

There has been increasing concern about the effects of road salt on the environment. As salt dissolves, the chloride enters waterways through leaching and runoff. Eventually the concentrations become toxic to aquatic plant and animal life, and affect drinking water quality. Many jurisdictions are searching for inexpensive, effective alternatives to salt. You can help by using alternatives to salt, such as EcolceGrip on your own property

EcolceGrip is sold by the bag and looks somewhat like brown woodchips. The chips are very light and can be spread by hand or spreader. They provide good traction for pedestrians and is also safe for pet paws.

A 20 L bag weighs just 7 kg so is easy to handle.

Their promotional materials say: "EcolceGrip's traction chips are abundant and renewable. Low in salt, they are pH neutral, noncorrosive to metal and concrete, carpets, flooring, footwear or clothing". And unlike salt, it will not contaminate surface or groundwater. Ecolce is cheaper than road salt, sand or gravel because there is less need for multiple applications. One application can be effective for up to six days at temperatures down to  $-37^{\circ}\text{C}$ . At winter's end, the chips can be left to biodegrade, or gathered and used for compost, or mulch, or burned in furnaces.



The REAL Deal will be selling 20 L bags of the product for \$13.27 plus tax, which will come to \$15.00. The product will be in the yard in front of the dome, but please remember all payments must be made inside the store at the cash.



## Bring Us Your Used Stamps

Your used stamps can help Oxfam Canada raise funds to stamp out poverty! The program will gladly accept foreign stamps, Canadian stamps and commemorative stamps. Just deposit them in the collection can near the cash at the REAL Deal Store. You can donate the entire envelope if there are clearly identifiable town/village postmarks or registered/special delivery postmarks. A REAL volunteer will make sure the stamps get to Oxfam's Ottawa office. If you have an entire stamp collection to donate, please contact OXFAM directly.

Oxfam volunteers sort and sell the stamps to collectors. Last year they raised nearly \$30,000 for their COVID-19 response around the world. OXFAM's mission is to build lasting solutions to poverty and injustice with a focus on improving the lives and promoting the rights of women and girls. For more information on Oxfam and their very successful stamp program, see <https://www.oxfam.ca/take-action/support-oxfam/stamp-out-poverty>.



The REAL Deal accepts Christmas lights for recycling, as well as any other electrical cords. Just place them next to the big black electronic waste bin.



## Online Auction Raises \$3,800

Another successful online auction is behind us. Between November 16 and 26 participants had the chance to bid on some great items to help support the work of REAL. Most of the items were gently used treasures that had been donated to the REAL Deal store throughout the year and set aside for this auction. But we also had some great contributions from the community, including a getaway package at the Rideau Hotel, a gift certificate for the Blue Door Spa, tickets to the Aladdin musical at the NAC, Smiths Falls Community Theatre passes, as well as Mighty Valley Coffee and a Laketown Brewery package (see list). In all there were 100 items to bid on.

One hundred and sixteen people registered to bid in the auction hosted by 32auctions.com. It's a fun activity to participate in as people can bid from the comfort of their homes or on the go, and receive notifications when someone tops their bid so they could try again. There were some last minute battles leading up to the auction close at 9 p.m. on Saturday the 26th, when the top bidders were notified by email. People were advised to come to pay and pick up their treasures at the REAL Deal Store during store hours.

Our auction total surpassed our goal of \$2022, with bids totalling \$2328.50. The last minute upsets increased the amount raised by several hundred dollars, so thank you for staying involved until the very end. You can still log on to 32auctions.com/REAL2022 to see what the various items raised if you are curious. Thanks to Donna McKenna for preparing all the items for the auction.

Sponsorship added to our fundraising total. We sincerely appreciate the support of the individuals and organizations who have supported REAL with a \$50, \$100, \$150 or \$250 donation, and especially to those who have continued to support us in this way through Central Band concerts, local foods dinners and now this auction. (See the list on this page.) Our sponsorship total is currently \$1500 but we might not be done yet! We already have some interesting items set aside for next year's auction.

Our sincere thanks to the following for their generous contributions of auction items.

Lois Andison  
The Blue Door Spa  
Katie Hoffman  
The Hotel Rideau  
Laketown Brewery  
Nancy McFadyen  
Mighty Valley Coffee  
Alan & Cindy Olson  
Ted & Marion Outerbridge  
The REAL Deal Store  
Rita Redner  
Karen Schecter  
Smiths Falls Pickleball Club  
Dave Thornley

*We truly appreciate these cash contributions to our fundraiser.*

### **Platinum (\$250)**

**Andress Independent Grocer**

**Allison Gibbons**

**Smiths Falls Optometrists**

### **Gold (\$150)**

**Daisy and Peter Au**

**Lynda Ferguson**

**Greg and Judy Fournier**

### **Silver (\$100)**

**Anonymous**

**David and Katie Hoffman**

**Marg Loney**

**Karen and Jack Schecter**

## REAL Deal News

**Staff Changes.** There are a few new faces around the REAL Deal this fall. Bev Frizell is our new relief cashier, and is usually at the store Wednesday and Saturday mornings. She will also be available to substitute for our regular cashier, Heather Warren. In the yard we have newcomers Tim Saunders, Jim MacPherson and Shawn Murray. They join existing yard staff Greg Charette and Arnold Price. Between the five of them we should have at least two people to assist customers and receive donations on any given day. Chester Tarkowski works four hours a day doing cleaning, managing our ewaste, testing electronics and other tasks, but you may see him helping in the yard also.

**Business is Good.** Business at the REAL Deal has been very steady through the fall, with some excellent sales days. Things are slowing down now that December has arrived, which is typical of this time of year. Christmas merchandise has been moving very quickly, which is great to see, because we had lots more than usual this year to pass on to customers. We expect we will be marking all Christmas items down to 50% starting December 16, as we really want to get into other people's hands before the Christmas shutdown begins December 24. Staff and volunteers will have a well-deserved vacation, and the store will reopen Wed. Jan. 4, 2023.

**To Watch for in January.** The winter months are often fairly quiet, so we will be extra happy to see your donations then to keep our shelves full and our staff and volunteers busy! The slower pace gives us a chance to clean and reorganize a bit also. We are planning to come up with a better way of displaying all the wall art that is donated to us. Once that Christmas aisle is cleared we take advantage of the space to display some things we don't usually have room for, including silver and silver plate pieces, orphan china cups and saucers, and miscellaneous lids. We will also be repeating the popular best selling books sale we did in the summer.



*Clockwise from top left: Bev Frizell, cashier; Jim MacPherson, Shawn Murray and Tim Saunders, yard associates.*

**REAL Deal  
Christmas Shutdown**

We close over the holidays to give  
our staff and volunteers a break.

**Last shopping day  
before Christmas:**  
Friday, December 23.

**Store closed:**  
Sat. Dec. 24 to Tues. Jan. 3

**Reopening:**  
Wednesday, January 4.  
Please save your donations  
until then!

### **Greener Homes Merging with Enbridge**

Some new developments for the existing home energy renovation incentive programs will be taking effect January 1.

John Appleby, our certified Registered Home Energy Advisor (REA) has been performing home energy audits within the K7A postal code region for almost a year now. He will now accept bookings from a wider area, postal code regions K7C and K7H, as well as the rural areas KOG. These translate roughly to Carleton Place and Perth. Depending on location, a mileage charge will be necessary, which will be established at the time of booking.

Behind the scenes, the existing Greener Homes Program and the Enbridge HER program have been rolled into one program called HER+. The program is available to all Ontario homeowners, regardless of fuel type and whether or not they are a Enbridge Gas customer. Non-Enbridge customers are eligible for up to \$5,000 for retrofits, and Enbridge customers are eligible for up to \$10,000. Residents starting with the program will register using the Enbridge portal (the Greener Homes portal is no longer necessary.) Those interested in the home energy efficiency rebates should start by contacting the organization or auditor they would like to use, who will guide them through the process.

As always, note that the home energy audit is required before any retrofits are done, and that a followup assessment is required after the renovations are done to qualify for any rebates. So please look into this program sooner rather than later! John Appleby can be contacted using the address [jappleby@realaction.ca](mailto:jappleby@realaction.ca). For more about the reasons for the program changes, [see this news release](#). More details will be available on our website once they are better established.



### **Winter Driving and Mileage**



Winter brings additional challenges to getting the best fuel efficiency for your vehicle. The US Department of Energy says “Fuel economy tests show that, in short-trip city driving, a conventional gasoline car's gas mileage is about 12% lower at 20°F than it would be at 77°F. It can drop as much as 22% for very short trips (3 to 4 miles).”

Some reasons for lowered fuel efficiency: it takes longer for your engine to reach its most fuel-efficient temperature, there is greater aerodynamic drag against colder denser air and tire pressure decreases creating greater rolling resistance. So here are a few things you can do:

- Keep your car in a warmer place, like your garage, to increase the initial temperature of the engine and interior.
- Combine trips so less trips are made with a cold engine.
- Minimize idling. The engine warms up faster being driven. Thirty seconds should be sufficient.
- Use defrosters, fans and heated seats only as necessary.
- Remove roof racks and cargo when not in use, as they increase wind resistance.
- Maintain proper tire pressure.
- Check your manual to see if the manufacturer recommends a different grade of oil for cold weather.

Be aware of the above even if you have a hybrid vehicle as in cold weather fuel economy typically decreases by 20% to 40% in city driving and 25% to 45% on short trips.



## In REAL Life



**Food Cycler for Borrowing.** The electric countertop composting unit is in the hands of the last person on our waiting list. The loan period is three weeks. If you would like to be next to give it a try, contact Barb at (613) 283-9966 or [dhicks11@cogeco.ca](mailto:dhicks11@cogeco.ca). If you want to find out more about the device, [see this page on our website](#).



**Killawatt, Radon and Air Quality Meters.** Just a reminder that REAL has these items to lend to area residents. We have several [radon meters](#), available at the store, as well as one that can be obtained from a member in Perth. The one [air quality meter](#) is at the store. The Killawatt meter measures the electricity consumption of plugged in appliances. We have one available at the store, but there are others [in most area libraries](#). Best to call before you go!



**REAL Canvas Totes.** Looking for an inexpensive eco-friendly gift for someone? REAL canvas tote bags are just \$7. They have a sturdy handle, snap closure, and promote your local environmental organization. The recipient can take it shopping so they'll have something to carry their purchases home in. Or use one to wrap another gift! Find them on a rack at the REAL Deal cash counter.



**Tool Library.** Our Tool Library is a great option for people doing handyman projects. A six month membership is just \$25, and a one year membership costs just \$45. With it you are able to borrow any tools from our collections for a week at a time. Check here to see what we have!



**Journey to Sustainability Presentations.** The J2S fungi presentation has been postponed until March. Look for an energy conservation presentation early in the new year. Most past presentations have been recorded and are available either on our J2S web page or on the "Journey to Sustainability" Facebook page. See our website or Facebook pages for upcoming dates, or sign up to REAL's or the J2S mailing list to receive an email notification.



**Electronic Waste Depot.** REAL gratefully accept donations to our e-waste collection bin during store hours. The computers, stereos, televisions and other assorted electronics earn money for REAL by the weight. Bringing the electronics to us ensures that they are recycled responsibly and valuable metals are recovered. Leave them by the wall or beside the bin but please do not leave materials in front of the bin's doors!



**Biochar at Municipal Waste Site.** The Town of Smiths Falls has approved the Rideau Roundtable's request to create biochar at the municipal compost site, which deals with 150 to 200 tonnes of brush and yard waste annually. Brush will be burned in a trench, then quenched with water, trapping the carbon within the biomass. In addition to sequestering carbon, the material can be used as a soil amendment. REAL contributed financially to the experimentation that took place this past summer at that location. The Roundtable will be applying for grants to move forward on the project next spring and summer. See [Evelyn Harford's story](#) in the Record News for more.

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, contact  
John Appleby at:  
jappleby@realaction.ca

**Find us on  
Facebook 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**



**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 .....