

Annual Report

Feb. 1, 2022—Jan. 31, 2023



RIDEAU ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION LEAGUE

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment.

REAL is pleased to present this annual report summarizing our activities for the past year.

Through public awareness and small scale local projects, REAL encourages residents to make environmentally responsible decisions and provides opportunities for them to participate in environmental activities in their own community.

We acknowledge the assistance of members, volunteers, customers, the online community, donors, board members and supporting municipalities, who have all played a part in our success.

We hope our projects inspire you and encourage you to become more involved. Together we can do so much more to use water and energy wisely, reduce waste and tackle the pressing issue of climate change.

Katie Hoffman, President

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THE REAL DEAL REUSE STORE

Our **REAL Deal store** continues to grow and play an important part in waste diversion in our community, diverting 43 tonnes of materials. Donations and sales are strong, and we continue to attract customers from further afield, especially on Saturdays. We are especially grateful to our donors who take the time to bring us all their wonderful used items; the store couldn't exist without them.

Staff. The store operates with a mix of paid and volunteer staff. We have benefitted from subsidized OnTrac placements several times, and an HRSDC grant that allowed us to hire two summer students. Dan Cunningham is our Store Manager. We have two cashiers now, Heather and Bev, and Chester works four hours a day doing cleaning, ewaste and electronics testing. In the yard, we usually have at least two of Tim, Jim, Arnold and Greg on every day. Shawn and Nick come in as needed. A couple of long-time staff members, Tim and Tiffany, have moved on. Aira and Jonathan were our summer students.

Volunteers. In the store we have volunteers Donna, Margot, Pegi, Penny, Una, Julia, Lori, Brenda and Barb. Barb and Donna also oversee the REAL Deal store on behalf of the Board, and Dan, Katie and Diane join them on the REAL Deal Committee that meets to discuss store issues and plans.

Challenges. Challenges this year included weather and security. At times it has been too snowy, too cold or too hot for the yard to operate effectively or the store to remain open. There has been unauthorized access to the yard on several occasions, as well as theft, which has been very frustrating. This was a year of various capital purchases and improvements: a new cover for the tent; the washrooms were painted; new floor mats, heaters, and door ramp; a donated snowblower and so on. We have also had some maintenance issues like a leaky roof and broken furnace that were dealt with quickly.

Promotions. We have limited control over what comes into the store, so usually have a promotion going on to move these items along. Larger items of course need to move along to save space: furniture, lighting, doors, windows and trunks. And some things aren't so big or valuable but we hate to throw them away: cookbooks, photo frames, and vases are some. Moving framed wall art along is a constant challenge. We do feature seasonal items, and have become a popular Christmas destination because we have such a great selection.

Electronics Recycling.

The electronics waste bin next to the REAL Deal continues to be a popular destination for area residents, although total weight collected is declining. We are seeing fewer of the super large old style TVs, and electronic devices in general are becoming more compact. EPRA has given the go ahead to accept additional materials with a plug or cord. This and some additional promotion should bring our numbers back up. In 2022 we collected 26.5 tonnes, generating \$4,000 for REAL Deal operations.



Other Items Recycled

REAL collects other materials from the public for recycling. Customers can use the labeled bins just inside the store entrance.

- Outer milk bags
- Writing instruments
- Print and toner cartridges
- Batteries
- Christmas lights
- Scrap metal
- Pill bottles, crayons and glue sticks
- Used stamps

Spring Garden Fundraiser

May 14 was a busy day at the REAL Deal as we distributed the rain barrels that had been pre-ordered by area residents. We took this opportunity to sell seeds gathered from our gardens, pollinator-themed items and composters as well. Proceeds were directed to our monarch gardens. Trinity United Church sold mushroom compost from our property that day, and continued to do so over the summer. Fifty additional barrels were ordered to sell at the REAL Deal throughout the summer. In total 150 barrels sold and are helping people conserve water and treat their gardens.



Evergreen Avenue

This group continues to maintain the shaded memorial walkway in Victoria Park, but the maintenance of the native plants featured there is now done by the town. After several postponements, a dedication event for 29 new memorial stones took place at the Legion in September 2022.

MONARCH AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

Volunteers were kept busy maintaining the two monarch garden beds in front of the REAL Deal Store. The plots continue to attract a lot of interest from visitors, many of whom took the opportunity to take photos. Butterfly activity seemed to be down from our first year.

The beds at town square, created as a result of the Depave project in 2021, were in kept in good shape, despite the chaos around them. Bandstand construction was delayed again un-

til May 2023, which meant the paths, benches and lighting had to wait also. REAL still plans to add four native trees to the site.

The twelve community garden plots were rented out quickly. People pay \$25 to have the use of a plot for the season. REAL Deal staff looked after grass cutting and trimming, and filling the water barrels, so gardeners could concentrate on planting, tending and harvesting their plots. Groundhogs and other animals continued to be an issue.

COMPOSTING



REAL took part in a pilot project of the Town of Smiths Falls that made the FoodCycler countertop composter available at reduced cost. The device reduces organic kitchen waste to about 90% of its volume over a 4-8 hour cycle. REAL purchased one and then four REAL members took the device home for three weeks each to use and provide comments.

After the 12 week study, REAL's FoodCycler was made available to other residents to borrow to see if it fit their lifestyle. It seems that for people with

access to backyard composters and larger household vegetable consumption it is not as useful, but it might be appropriate for apartment dwellers.

For the first time, REAL brought in a shipment of Earth-Machine composters to sell through the store. We charged just \$50 and included a \$10 REAL Deal gift certificate as an additional incentive to give backyard composting a try. We sold about 25 so will continue to make them available in 2023.

COMMUNITY

Available to Borrow from REAL

Killawatt Meter—to measure the electrical consumption of plugged in appliances

Radon Meter—measures radon, an odourless gas that seeps into homes

Air Quality Meter— we have a meter that measures particulate matter, carbon dioxide and formaldehyde in your home

Food Cycler—borrow our countertop electric composter for three weeks



Elva Corless: Community Builder

REAL was pleased to nominate Elva Corless for Heritage House Museum's Remarkable Women exhibit. Elva, a founding member and past president of REAL, was a tireless advocate for recycling and environmental causes in Smiths Falls.

Our organization is pleased to be able to help out other non-profit organizations by lending or donating excess materials. The list is long, but some examples are a portrait donated to Heritage House Museum, the medical equipment we give regularly to the Civitan Club, a vintage wheelchair to the Health Sciences Museum in Kingston, books to libraries, grocery bags to the Food Bank and lending props to theatre groups. We also benefited from contributions made to us, such as wooden racks from Canadian Tire, woven milk bag mats from a VanHorne resident, and houseplants planted in upcycled containers.

REAL contributes a wreath to the Legion's Remembrance Day services each year. We are particularly happy to assist youth organizations. We donated prizes for the Merrickville-Wolford Eco-Champions contest in the spring, and prize money to the Rideau St. Lawrence District Fair, including an award for best Environmental Project.

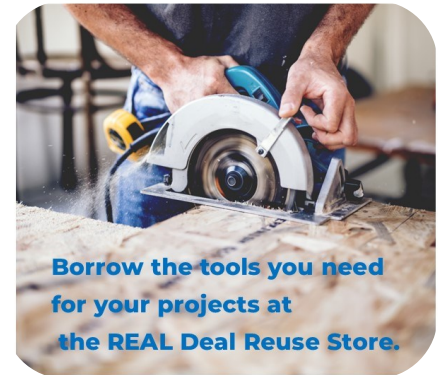


PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS

We are pleased to support the efforts of other local environmental organizations, and have partnered with the Rideau Roundtable on three projects this year. REAL helped get the biochar project off the ground with supplies needed for turning municipal green waste into biochar at the Smiths Falls municipal compost site. A demonstration shoreline planting project on Turtle Island saw 200 native shrubs and 30 native trees planted by volunteers. Some larger trees, in honour of some environmental leaders, were planted on another day. REAL's contribution will be used to purchase the necessary signage. And third, REAL was able to help the Roundtable offer free voyageur canoe wetland tours through the swale two Saturdays in August. Many local residents do not normally have the opportunity to get out on the water and learn to appreciate this valuable resource we have in our own backyard.

REAL TOOL LIBRARY

Our [tool lending library](#) is not gaining as much traction as we had hoped, yet everyone who hears about the concept thinks it is a great idea! For a membership fee (\$25 for 6 months, \$45 for 12 months), members are able to borrow any of the library tools for one week at a time. We continue to add to our collection of over 100 tools, mostly through donation. Volunteer Jim McVeety makes sure the tools are in good working order, and stay organized so that other REAL staff and volunteers can handle transactions as needed. We will continue to function with the existing space and a paper record system until volume increases.



JOURNEY TO SUSTAINABILITY (J2S)

The [Journey to Sustainability \(J2S\)](#) team continued to organize zoom webinars to promote awareness of various environmental topics and encourage individual action. “More than Just a Reuse Store” on March 16 covered the other services accessible from the REAL Deal, and Karl Grenke talked about the town’s Tree Canopy Policy in April. Joyce Hostyn from Little Forests Kingston spoke on urban forests and the Miyawaki Reforestation method in June, and Nathaniel Morris presented “Biochar: A Climate Change Solution” in August. Recordings of most of these presentations are available on our website and on the Facebook page.



PITCH IN AND SHORELINE CLEANUP

This year we paid two young people to organize the events. Shannon Hicks planned our late April two-week Pitch-In campaign. About 25 individuals and groups took part. Jake Wilson oversaw a multi-site shoreline cleanup for the final Saturday, when 436 pound of garbage was collected. We were pleased at the community participation this attracted and the volume of garbage removed from the built and natural areas of Smiths Falls.

Home Energy Audits

A Registered Energy Advisor, John Appleby, is available to perform home energy assessments for REAL. The before and after assessments are necessary for homeowners to take advantage of the energy efficiency rebates being offered. The Enbridge and federal Greener Homes programs were rolled into one HER+ program in January 2023. Up to \$5,000 is available to most Canadians, and Enbridge gas customers are eligible for another \$5,000. Also as of January 2023, home energy audits are now available in the K7A, K7H and KOG postal code region.

Online Auction

The Fall online auction raised close to \$4,000 for REAL’s activities. Sponsors contributed \$1600 and bidding over the 10 day period brought in over \$2300. We had some great prizes donated from the community in addition to the gently used items set aside from the REAL Deal over the year. The bidding was enthusiastic, and many new shoppers were attracted to the store.

REAL Board of Directors

Katie Hoffman—
President
Karen Schecter
—Vice President
Barb Hicks
—Secretary
Dave Thornley
—Treasurer
Donna McKenna
Peter Au

Communications

REAL communicates with the community through our website, “REAL Update” newsletter and email notices to members. We maintain several Facebook pages: REAL, the REAL Deal Store, the Community Garden and Journey to Sustainability, as well as using Instagram.

LOOKING AHEAD

Some things we are working on for 2023:

- Pitch In Smiths Falls and Shoreline Cleanup (late April)
- A spring fundraising sale built around rain barrel sales (May)
- Online auction (Nov)
- More home energy audit availability, with another energy advisor
- More Journey to Sustainability presentations
- Four native trees planted at Daniel St. Depave site
- More partnership projects
- Thirty trees planted at area schools

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL FUTURE

If the environment of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville is important to you, please consider supporting REAL, your local environmental organization, with a tax deductible donation.

Cheques can be mailed or dropped at the store. For credit card donations see our “Join” page on our website, REALaction.ca. You can also do an e-transfer to payments@REALaction.ca. To explore how you could include REAL in your estate planning, see our website under the “Donate” tab.

STAYING IN TOUCH



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