

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

DECEMBER 2023

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Volunteer Spotlight—Marje Fletcher

Marje Fletcher is another one of our volunteers that has been a member of the REAL from its very beginnings – over 35 years ago.

At that time Marje worked for the Lanark County Board of Education, first as a library assistant at Duncan J. Schouler, and then as an office administrator at Montague, North Elmsley and Spooner schools. She helped establish paper recycling at North Elmsley School, organized litter walks, and helped students raise money to sponsor a down-town garbage receptacle. Marje was an active volunteer in the recycling depots started by the Interchurch Women and later assisted by REAL, back before the blue box program began. Marje is always willing to take a shift at REAL events.

She later completed a graphic design program and worked for Southam News in Ottawa, and was a gallery coordinator for St. Lawrence College in Brockville. She used her artistic skills many times for REAL making event posters for what was our annual Christmas band concert, and creating REAL's first promotional brochure. She helped us assess art being donated to the REAL Deal and investigated other ways to sell the more valuable pieces. Through her a connection was made with a Merrickville Gallery to sell some of the pieces for commission. As an artist, Marje works does plein air oil painting – meaning she paints outdoors, directly observing landscapes, and is a member of the Merrickville Artists Guild. Marje can also make butter-tarts from scratch in only 8 minutes (it's been timed), and other members have very much enjoyed them at various gatherings such as the Annual General Meeting.



When the call went out for suggestions on how to celebrate REAL's 30th anniversary, Marje suggested the monarch butterfly garden as a visible and lasting demonstration project. Along with Donna McKenna, she is a co-leader of the Monarch Committee, and planned the two gardens planted in front of the REAL Deal store in 2019 and 2020. Marje was also very involved in planning the two pollinator gardens that were planted at "Town Square" as part of REAL's 2021 Depave project, when REAL volunteers removed part of Daniel street. But she's not done!

(continued inside)



Marje Fletcher—continued

Another phase of pollinator gardens is going in closer to our Community Garden. The form was built and will be filled mostly with native medicinal plants starting in the spring of 2024. REAL's spring rain barrel sale raises money to fund the gardens, and of course Marje usually takes a shift on sale day.

Marje and her husband Bruce settled in Montague Township in the early 70s. Marje has even volunteered Bruce to help REAL. He recently re-designed and coordinated the building of the new yellow REAL and REAL Deal sign on William St. W, and built the obelisk that is a focal point of the monarch garden.



Marje was at the planting of the "Depave Gardens" at Town Square in 2021.

Asked why Marje chooses to be involved in REAL, she says she very much believes in grass roots organizations, that everyone can make a difference, and everyone together can create environmental change. Taking an action, like planting a garden, helps deal with the stress of hearing about negative environmental changes. She feels good that she has done something productive and even inspired others to take action, like attracting pollinators in their own yards. And who know the seeds of interest she has inspired in the students she dealt with decades ago to take more actions in their daily lives? Marje is proud to be part of the REAL community.

Note: The garden committee welcomes new members. The group plans weekly work sessions during gardening season to maintain the gardens at 85 William St. W. and downtown. It is not necessary to be there every time. Experience is not required, and this is a good chance to learn. Contact [Donna](#) or [Marje](#) if you are interested.

Remembering Libby Toop

We were saddened to hear that long-time member Libby Toop passed away in November at the local hospital. She and husband Ron (who died in October 2022) were at the inaugural meeting of REAL back in 1989. Libby and Ron carefully proof-read this newsletter for well over a decade. Her many involvements in this community included teaching at the Perth and Smiths Falls Alternative School and the Friends of the Smith Falls Public Library. We will miss her keen observation and interest in the world. Read more about her life [on the Lannin Funeral Home site](#). Our sympathies to her children Gary, Gael, Brenda and extended family. We thank the Toops for suggesting REAL for any in memoriam donations.



Canvas Totes Make a Nice Gift. Looking for a unique, inexpensive, environmentally friendly local gift for someone on your Christmas list? This canvas tote has sturdy cotton webbing handle, a magnetic snap closure, is a generous size (18"W x 5"D x 14"H) and promotes your favourite environmental organization!



Just \$7
(taxes
included)
at the
REAL
Deal cash.

REAL Deal News

Staff have been busy preparing the yard for winter and are now ready for the snow!

Sales were very good in early November, not entirely typical for the time of year, but appreciated. Sales of Christmas items have been brisk ever since we started putting it out in early October. This year we put more of the larger things towards the back of the store which seems to help keep down the clutter. But at some point the race is on to unload it all before the Christmas shutdown and it goes anywhere we can find a spot. Christmas merchandise will be 50% beginning Wed. Dec. 13.

When the kids book / photo album shelf collapsed we starting wishing for a new book shelf and lo and behold one came in that was perfect for the job. A few days later another “perfect” shelving unit came in, which so far has been used for Christmas stuff.

A new sign should be installed soon on the centre garage door reminding people that there is lots more to see outside in the yard and dome. It has not been obvious to newcomers, who stand looking out the windowed doors in curiosity until we tell them it is OK to go out there for doors, windows, outdoor lighting, sports, garden stuff and so on.

We still have a crazy amount of chairs and lamps, so please do come take a look before buying those things new.

Please keep an eye on Facebook to learn of any upcoming promotions. We also put some more unique items on Facebook Marketplace. Please note that we are still in person sales only. If you seem something you like, you will need to come to the store to purchase it, and we are unable to set it aside for you. We do remove the postings quickly once an item is sold.



On any given day there are two yard staff on duty to accept donations and help customers. These are some newer staff who have joined Arnold, Jim and Tim “out back”.

Top Row: Marshall, Joel and Andrew. Bottom Row: Two high school students are earning their Community Service Hours. Owyn is helping out inside the store, and Nick helps outdoors.

Looking to Volunteer in 2024?

Most of you realize that REAL is volunteer powered. While the manager, cashier and yard guys at the REAL Deal are paid staff, many of the other people you see, particularly those that sort incoming donations, are volunteers. And everyone participating in other REAL activities (like Evergreen, the gardens, and Journey to Sustainability) are volunteers as well.

The Economic and Community Development Department for the Town of Smiths Falls organized a volunteer fair for November 8 at the Community Centre. REAL volunteers were there with a display to talk to potential volunteers. In preparation, we made this list of some particular volunteer positions we would like to fill. If you are interested in discussing any of the jobs mentioned below further, please see the full document and write to info@REALaction.ca, and we will have someone more familiar with that position connect with you.

Tool Person

- At least one half day a week (Wed. Thurs Fri or Sat 10-1 or 1 – 4.)
- Keep tool library organized, test tools that come back from loan, assess incoming tools
- Needed: knowledge of tools

Board Member

- 10 - 20 hours per month year round for a two year term.
- Board members provide direction, guidance and support to the board, committees, membership and volunteers of REAL in fulfilling the mission, vision and goals of the organization.
- Needed: interest in environmental issues and the desire to work for environmental change

Gardeners

- Two hours a week during garden season May - October
- Work with a team to maintain the monarch gardens at REAL Deal site and at Town Square
- Needed: physically capable, but no specialized garden knowledge required



Social Media Person for REAL Deal

- Two hours a week or so
- Take photos of interesting items at store at least once a week and post
- Needed: cell phone and computer literacy

Delivery Person

- One trip every three weeks or so
- Occasionally REAL needs someone to deliver recyclable materials elsewhere
- Needed: Access to a car

Volunteer Volunteer Coordinator

- Roughly two hours every week
- Administer REAL's volunteer program.
- Needed: must be well organized and like to work with people

Handyperson

- Two hours a week or special projects
- Do minor repairs and building at the REAL Deal store
- Needed: experience in repairs and building.

Truck Driver

- Occasional
- We are unable to offer regular pickups and drop-offs to customers, but occasionally we need to take advantage of opportunities that arise, or need large items picked up
- Needed: Access to a truck

Online Auction Surpasses Expectations

We were delighted that this year's online auction collected \$3389.50 in bids, exceeding our goal by 67%. In fact, we had reached \$2023 after only three days. There was some very intense bidding going on in the last hour which increased the total, but unfortunately only one person can be the top bidder on an item! We had 153 people sign up to bid on the 155 items, and in the end, 67 people had the top bids (some people got multiple items.)

Between November 15 and 25 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 to the Hotel Rideau which includes breakfast at C'est Tout, donated by Mike Shelley. (See a list of all the donors on this page.) We sincerely appreciate the many contributions made.

The items that got the most bids included a bread making collection, a milk glass pitcher, a friar tuck table set, a milk glass pitcher, a set of vintage pyrex bowls, a Bolga basket with yarn, and a Kenmore serger. These last two items along with the Hotel Rideau package were the biggest money makers. You can still log on to [32auctions.com/ REAL2023](https://32auctions.com/REAL2023) to see what the various items raised if you are curious.

Sponsorships are an important part of our fundraising, and those \$50, \$100, \$150 or \$250 donations will take the total auction proceeds even further. Sponsorship money is still trickling in, so a full list will be provided later. But a big thank you to those community members and organizations who have already responded.

Thanks everyone for your tremendous support. This was our big fundraiser for the year, and it will go a long way to supporting our many projects and administrative expenses.

Thanks to Donna McKenna for preparing all the items for the auction. We already have some interesting items set aside for next year's auction.

Silent Auction

Donors 2023

Jan Turner
Dave Thornley
Gloria Pavey
Brenda King
Karen Schecter

Nancy McFadyen
Mike Shelley, Hotel Rideau
Bev Frizell
Marina Quattrocchi
Michele's Doorway to Splendor

Gwenda Kinch
Trinity United Church
Marje Fletcher
Railway Museum of Eastern
Ontario
Rideau Valley Conservation
Authority

Smiths Falls Station Theatre
Donna McKenna
Lauralee Merkley
Marian Forster

Every Christmas Brings Surprises

We had an incredible pile of Christmas items to unpack and price this year, more than we have ever had. Yet every Christmas seems to be a little different.



Some of the many cute decorations donated to the REAL Deal.

This year there seemed to be fewer gnomes, large outdoor decorations, tree skirts, tinsel, Christmas dish sets and Christmas pictures. We didn't see a single ceramic Christmas tree, popular in the 60s and 70s. We had five our first year in operation.

The books, music CDs and Christmas cards in our

possession are multiplying as people are using email, google, and downloadable music.

We always have far more mugs, candleware, glass ball ornaments, VHS movies, ornament hooks and fabric items (stockings, runners, tablecloths etc.) than we can ever expect to sell. The baskets seem to be moving not too badly.

Wreaths and trees, including table top trees, sell well, and are very inexpensive compared to the natural versions. Tree stands continue to multiply, so it appears more people are giving up on real trees.

Some people are still looking for incandescent Christmas light bulbs, and at least two customers stocked up with 50 or more. People like their outdoor Christmas lights. We get a lot but they usually all go by the end of the season.

In past years the baby Jesus was frequently missing from nativity sets, but thankfully so far this year the infants have been accounted for.

We have learned that people don't seem to want ornaments or plates with the year on them. And it is clear that artificial garlands and trees do break down and start to shed – if you find one on the free table that may be why.

Please make sure you check your Christmas cards and gifts carefully before donating them, as we occasionally find gift cards and cash inside.

We are trying to avoid plastic where we can, so have been more creative with packaging: string, elastics, shoelaces, boxes, gift boxes, fabric totes etc. If you get a nice clear plastic bag, please reuse it.

We make a point of putting Christmas bits and pieces that we don't feel will sell on the free table, and they do go quickly. Christmas merchandise will be offered at 50% off beginning Wed. Dec. 13. After Christmas expect to see some of it on the free table. But we do pack some of it away to give it another chance the following year!

REAL Deal
Christmas Shutdown
 We close over the holidays to give our staff
 and volunteers a break.

Last shopping day
Before Christmas:
Saturday, December 23

Store Closed:
Sun. Dec. 24 to Tues. Jan. 2

Reopening:
Wednesday, January 3

*Please save your donations until then.
 Don't leave anything at the gate!*

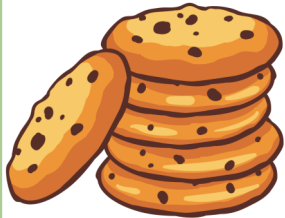
In REAL Life



35th Anniversary. The year 2024 will mark the 35th anniversary of REAL, which was instigated at Halloween 1989. The board will be discussing how best to recognize the occasion. It could be a special event, a special project, reminders all year long of the milestone or something else altogether. The monarch garden came about to make our 30th anniversary in 2019. If you have any ideas to share we would love to hear them!



Snowblower. Our thanks to Russell Wardman who checked over and repaired our latest used snowblower free of charge, so that we will be ready for the snow. We have a business plow our parking lot, but keeping the yard inside the fence clear is something staff do themselves, and of course the snowblower saves a lot of time and energy over shovelling.



Treats. The staff and volunteers are always keen to see June Jarvis come through the door as she comes bearing treats! Jane likes to bake and try out new recipes, so about once a week brings a plate of cookies, muffins or squares for us to try. Everyone looks forward to see what she will bring next. Thanks, June! Jim Macpherson, one of the yard staff, doesn't sleep well so often turns to cooking. We appreciate all the hot meals and baking he shares with staff and volunteers as well.



Used stamps. If you've received some interesting stamps on incoming Christmas cards this year, remember that we have a collection can for Oxfam near the cash. Oxfam Canada raises thousands of dollars every year to stamp out poverty by selling the stamps to collectors.



Christmas Lights. Non-working Christmas light strings are accepted in the REAL Deal electronic waste bin, as well as any other electrical cords. Just leave them against the wall of the building opposite the bin and staff will look after the rest. Remember, no scavenging in the electronic waste, please!



EcolceGrip. Dan, the Store Manager, has ordered in a skid of this environmentally friendly alternative to road salt. The product is sold by the bag and looks like brown wood chips. It's a great alternative to salt, which enters our waterways, affecting aquatic plant and animal life and contaminating drinking water. It is light and easy to handle, good traction for pedestrians, safe on pet paws and non-corrosive to metal and concrete. At the end of the winter you can leave it to biodegrade, use it as mulch, or put in the compost. Well worth a try!



Lending Programs. Please speak to us if you are interested in borrowing a killawatt meter, an air quality meter, a radon meter or one of our FoodCycler countertop composting units. We keep them all at the REAL Deal, with the exception of the radon meters, which can be borrowed by contacting Katie Hoffman at hoffman.katie9@gmail.com or 983-3360.

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,
contact Alan Leonard at:
alanleonard9@gmail.com

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

Reducing Seasonal Waste

Lights

- do smaller light displays
- use LED lights
- use a timer

Wrapping

- use recyclable materials
- avoid glossy gift wrap and foil
- reuse paper, ribbons, trims

Cards

- make your own
- reuse cards for crafts
- try E-greeting or phone call

Electronics

- save old ones for e-waste depot
- set aside batteries for recycling
- beware of phantom power

Entertaining

- try cloth napkins and tablecloths
- use real glassware, dishes, cutlery
- avoid food waste

Recycle

- check what your area accepts
- take alcohol containers to LCBO

Purchasing Gifts

- buy less
- think homemade
- buy local or close to home
- think recycled or natural
- aim for ethically sourced
- look for battery free
- promote green living
- take your bags when shopping

Alternative Gifts

- give an experience
- give to a charity
- support a charitable gift catalogue
- give a coupon for service
- consider reused or regifting

The Tree

- choose a local fresh tree
- compost or mulch after
- consider a live tree and replant



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

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