

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

APRIL 2026

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Our Volunteers are the REAL Thing!

In honour of National Volunteer Week April 19-25, 2026, and 2026 being International Volunteer Year, in April we are bringing attention to REAL's volunteers. A series of Facebook posts is highlighting our many volunteers and the projects they are involved in. We have tried our best to mention everyone who was involved this past year, but acknowledge we may have missed a few. Our apologies if you are one of them! REAL sincerely appreciates the help of everyone, from a two hour one time task at a special event, to the committee members who see a project through from start to finish, to the ongoing year-round commitment required of our board members. You are what makes REAL an "Action League" and keeps our environmental actions happening.

The posts are being made to our "REAL – Rideau Environmental Action League" group page, shared to the "REAL Deal Store" page, and are accompanied by a few photos of the projects and if we are lucky, some of the people named. Order to be determined!



Garden Team. The garden team meets weekly during the garden season to look after the monarch gardens on the REAL Deal site, the gardens at Town Square, and have helped with the mini-forest as well. Thanks to Joanne Constantine, Carol Lalonde, Carol Kelly, Lori Nichols, Ginny Toffanello, Elizabeth Tucker, Beth Graham, Betty Couch and coordinators Marje Fletcher and Donna McKenna.

Evergreen Avenue. Evergreen Avenue is a shaded walkway through Victoria Park that features commemorative granite stones for specific veterans and community builders as well as native plantings. Thanks to Keith Anderson, Jay Brennan, Stephen Robinson, Ken Manwell, Gary Garland, Stephanie Clark and Co-Chairs Ken Graham and Peter Au.

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Dates to Keep in Mind

It's a busy time of year in the REAL world! Watch for more details on our website and Facebook pages.

Saturday, Apr. 18 – Saturday, May 2

Pitch In Smiths Falls

Various locations

Saturday, April 25, 3 – 4:45 pm

Small Changes Big Impact

Smiths Falls Public Library

Sunday, April 26, 10 am – 3 pm

Sustainable North Grenville Sustainability Fair and EV Show,

North Grenville Municipal Centre, Kemptville

Saturday, May 2

Shoreline Cleanup Smiths Falls

Meet at Bascule Bridge 10 am or Jasper Rd 1 pm

Wednesday, May 6 and onward

TUC Mushroom Compost Fundraiser

REAL Deal Parking Lot

Saturday, June 6, 10 am – 2 pm

Rain Barrel and Native Plant Sale

REAL Deal Store, 85 William St. W.

Sunday, June 7, 1 pm – 4 pm

Evergreen Dedication and Environmental Awards Presentation

Legion Br 95, Smiths Falls

Wednesday, June 17, evening

REAL Annual General Meeting

More details coming!

Saturday, June 20, 9 am – 4 pm

Rideau Paddlefest

Lower Reach Park

Saturday, Aug. 15, 8 am – 1 pm

Tay Watershed Discovery Day

Perth Farmer's Market

Pitch In and Shoreline Cleanup

Plans for our annual community cleanup are well underway. See the poster on the back page of this newsletter for key details, or our website's Pitch In page. Supplies will be available at the REAL Deal Store beginning Wed. April 8.

Here are a few things that are just a little different than previous years.

Recyclables. The Town cannot guarantee recyclables will be separated. A clear plastic garbage bag will be included with the supplies if the volunteers would like to gather any clean bottles or cans, and take them home to include with their own curbside collection.

Yellow Bags. Pitch In Canada did not supply yellow Pitch in bags this year so we only have a limited quantity left over from previous years. So the buckets of supplies will only have or two yellow pitch in bags, and some other unmarked yellow garbage bags.

Stories. This year we are suggesting young people (under 18) submit a one or two paragraph description of their Pitch In experience. We will include some of these stories in our July newsletter. This could be why you decided to participate, where and what garbage you found, something unusual you found. - anything goes! Please email your story and or pictures to pitchinsf@realaction.ca. We enjoy seeing photos of participants as well. Here's one submitted by Jenny Chapman last year:



REAL Volunteers (continued from cover page)

Board. A dedicated group of five people make up REAL's board and oversee our non-profit organization's operations. As a working board, they handle a variety of background tasks and also lead REAL's other projects. We would welcome new board members to lighten the load and ensure the group's future. Thanks to Karen Schecter, Donna McKenna, Dave Thornley, Barb Hicks and Founding Member, Peter Au for all that they do.

REAL Deal Smalls. Ours smalls volunteers each take a regular weekly shift at the REAL Deal sorting, pricing and displaying incoming donations to the REAL Deal Store. Thanks to Margot Allen, Nancy Andison, Julia Babcock, Edwige Friard, Brenda King, Christine Must, Lori Nichols, Diane Pearen, Una Pugh, and to Donna McKenna and Barb Hicks who oversee the REAL Deal on behalf of the Board.

REAL Deal—Others. We have a lot of shorter term volunteers that pass through the REAL Deal. Many are young people getting their high school community service hours, but there are many others who might help in the yard, in smalls, or at the cash. This year we welcomed Liam Brown, Nick Davidson, Andrew Harris, P. Konnaas, Ronnie Martin, Kevin McDougall, Evan Merkley and Devin Wansborough. These people and smalls volunteers contributed over 2500 hours in 2025.

Journey to Sustainability. The Journey to Sustainability team organizes presentations for local residents that will inspire them to learn ways to reduce their environmental impact and move toward a more sustainable lifestyle. Thanks to Jenny Davis, Bill McLean, Vanessa Bernicky and Chair Peter Au.

Pitch-In and Shoreline Cleanup. Pitch In, a community litter cleanup, is probably REAL's longest running project. Pitch In and the Shoreline Cleanup were organized this past year by Cathryn Davidson, Basil Flanagan, Barb Hicks, Brenda King, Donna McKenna, Christine Must and Ginny Toffanello. And residents from across the community volunteered to pick up litter and make Smiths Falls look a whole lot better.



Mini Forest. REAL planted its first mini forest at Hyland Park in 2024. While the small forest will be self sustaining eventually, this past year the group monitored it, weeded it twice, replaced a few plants and arranged for watering due to the prolonged summer drought. Volunteers from the start of the project include David Andrew, Peter Au, Gerry Baker, Joanne Constantine, Barb Hicks, Dale Horeczy, Donna McKenna, Nate Morris, Craig Sinclair, Ginny Toffanello and Coordinator Dave Thornley. We also appreciate the assistance of Joyce Hostyn, Carol Lyng, Steve Rauche, and Rick Milette, and all of the 60 volunteers from across the community that helped on planting day in 2024.

Rain Barrel and Native Plant Sale. People start months ahead to plan special events like the rain barrel and native plant sale, and extra hands are called on to make the day run smoothly. Last year's sale had the help of Joanne Constantine, Betty Couch, Marje Fletcher, Beth Graham, Barb Hicks, Dale Horeczy, Nancy McFadyen, Donna McKenna, Lauralee Merkley, Dina Ortis, and Ginny Toffanello.

Tool Library. We thank Phil Kennedy for getting our Tool Library in shape over the past year. Phil is moving on, so we could use some more volunteers to run the service. This would be a good opportunity for a retired handyperson, as we can keep someone busy with fixit tasks at slower times.

Other Help. Though not traditional volunteers, we would like to thank Gwenda Kinch, our bookkeeper, and Chris Woods, our website person, for going above and beyond what they are paid for to help REAL run smoothly. Katie Hoffman, Past President, has been a great help to us with her community connections. Basil Flanagan has helped us with some technical issues.

Proceeds
to REAL's
Monarch
Gardens!

RAIN BARREL AND NATIVE PLANT SALE

SAT. JUNE 6, 2026
10 AM - 2 PM.



Native plants
support local
butterflies,
birds and bees
are easy to
care for.

Preorder and pay for barrels online at
rainbarrel.ca/REALDeal by May 31 for
pickup June 6

Native plants from Natural Themes,
Frankford

Mushroom compost sale by
Trinity United Church

Please bring cash!



REAL DEAL STORE
85 WILLIAM ST. W. SMITHS FALLS

WWW.REALAction.ca

REAL Deal Numbers—Feb 2025 to Jan 2026

REAL’s financial year runs from February 1 to January 31. The 2025-26 year, which ended January 31, 2025, was not a banner year for us, sales were down by about \$8,000 from the year before. However, the 2024-25 year was our best since we began operations in 2006. Most of our expenses have increased, particularly wages, propane and snowplowing.

Buyers	8920
Materials donated	39 tonnes
Ewaste collected	38 tonnes

The number of customers dropped by 7%. The weight of incoming donations has declined to 39 tonnes but the amount of ewaste collected has increased by about the same amount to 37 tonnes. When we record the municipality a donor or buyer is from, we note anyone from outside of Leeds and Grenville as “other”. This includes people from Ottawa, Kingston, Sharbot Lake, out of province etc.)

Top four donor municipalities (by weight):

1. Smiths Falls
2. Rideau Lakes
3. Montague
4. Drummond North Elmsley



Top five buyer municipalities (by weight):

1. Smiths Falls
2. Other
3. Rideau Lakes
4. Perth
5. DNE



The relative rankings of the municipalities by weight donated has not changed much. Smiths Falls and Rideau Lakes residents make up half of the buyers. The ranking of buyers by weight has not changed..

The interesting part is that people from outside Leeds and Grenville represent 14% of our sales. Last year it was 13%, and the year before it was 12%. That group of people are not big donors of materials however, and it is hard to know how to change that.

Top sales departments (by revenue)

1. Art and Collectibles (13.3%)
2. Décor (11.9%)
3. Housewares (10.6%)
4. Sports and Leisure (8.8%)
4. Furniture (7.9%)
5. Yard and Garden (7.8%)



Antiques and collectibles are our top selling department. The best selling departments rankings haven’t changed much, except that Sports and Leisure is moving up, and Renovation Materials have slipped since last year.

Sales Over the Week

Wednesdays	24%
Thursdays	22%
Fridays	23%
Saturdays	31%



Saturday continues to be our biggest sales day, although it is 4% less than last year – which is fine as those sales are happening on the weekdays. Higher Saturday sales also correspond to the day we see more new faces and people from outside of LLG.

In terms of seasonality, the busy season for donations was March to July, so it started slowing down earlier in the fall than in the past. The top months for sales are a little later than donations, they peaked August to November. Bad weather days (too hot, too snowy or too icy) or simply predicted bad weather has a major impact on sales for us. And we have many days like that over this past year, including a day we did not open at all.

We also record the volunteer hours that go into running the store. There was substantial jump from 1949 hours to 2514 hours this year. This does not include the volunteer hours invested in other REAL projects or by the REAL Board. There is no one explanation for the 500 extra hours.

Gardening and the REAL Deal Store

Within the next two weeks our “garden centre” immediately behind the store should be more usable. We do not typically have plants but have a wide variety of other donated items. We accept and sell plant pots (all sizes), garden accents, bird feeders and houses, tomato cages, hoses, watering cans, hose reels, solar lights, etc. Elsewhere in the yard we often have patio furniture, long handled garden tools (in a stand against the front of the dome), the occasional BBQ and oodles of BBQ tools (hopefully we can find space in the dome this year.)

Plant Pots. But let’s talk plant pots. If they are the lightweight pots or trays you buy new plants in, we will likely be putting them on our free table. They always get taken. More substantial pots are popular and are priced by size. People are always keen to find terra cotta pots, and they sell very quickly. At the end of the garden season people are looking for larger, sturdier plant containers for bringing plants inside for the winter. We also keep a section of gardening items inside the store year round. The section has moved to the back of the store, between the pet section and our sorting areas entrance. It’s a good place to look if you are repotting houseplants.

Recycling. More garden items are accepted for recycling than before January 1 of this year. Plastic plant pots, and the plastic flats they come in can go in your yellow box, Styrofoam is now acceptable, as well as the large bags you might buy soil, compost or mulch in. Put something heavier on top of these things so they don’t blow around. All of the above should be reasonably clean however. Just discard in the garbage if they are really soiled. Ceramics e.g. houseplant pots, are still not acceptable.

Take Pesticides to HHW. If you have old pesticides lurking in your garage or basement, best to take them to the hazardous waste depot. These depots are often one day events, or seasonal at best, so don’t wait to find out what your municipality has available.

Some garden products available at the REAL Deal:

- **Rain Barrels.** We have some rain barrels now at the REAL Deal for \$55. If you want a special type of barrel, replacement parts or accessories,

please preorder by May 31 at [rainbarrel.ca/REALDeal](http://rainbarrel.ca/) for pickup Sat. June 6. We will keep a supply of basic barrels for the rest of the summer.

- **Native Plants.** Also at the June 6 sale will be native plants from Natural Themes Nursery in Frankford, Ontario. We will have a selection for you to choose from, but if you are looking for something you have had difficulty finding, please talk to [Donna](#) about placing a special order..
- **See the poster.** Sale details on are on page 4.
- **Seeds.** We have some seeds collected from our monarch garden for sale, usually \$2 a packet.
- **BioChar.** A locally produced garden supplement made from wood, \$15 for a 1.8 L resealable bag. Just mix it in with your soil at the suggested ratio. .
- **Mushroom Compost.** Trinity United Church will be selling bagged mushroom compost from our parking lot starting May 6 and continuing until it is all sold. Proceeds are to the church’s projects. If a TUC rep is not there when you come, you can pay cash inside at the REAL Deal we will pass the money on to them.



Other Garden Options. If you do not have a garden where you live, consider REAL’s Community Garden. As of April 7 we still have a couple of garden plots available to rent for \$25 for the season. Contact [Ginny](#) as soon as possible. And if you would like to join the gardening team that looks after the monarch gardens by the store and REAL’s Town Square gardens (from the Depave project), contact [Donna](#).

In REAL Life



Membership. You've seen the email, you read it in the February issue...It's time to renew your REAL membership! Please confirm your support by e-transferring your payment to payments@REALaction.ca, sending a cheque to Box 1061, Smiths Falls K7A 5A5 or dropping it off at the REAL Deal Store. New members are always welcome, [See our website](#) for more. We can provide charitable tax receipts if you would like to include a donation.



Pocket Forests. It is now confirmed that we will be planting two or three pocket forests on the Railway Museum of Eastern Ontario (REMO) property this year. Pocket forests are similar to mini-forests in concept, but smaller, minimum 7 square metres. We want to demonstrate that these are small enough to go in a residential yard. The current plan is to lay the forest floor Monday, April 27 and plant in the fall.



Scrap Metal. Yes, we accept scrap metal! Sometimes your items are small and aren't worth a trip to the scrap dealer. We have an open topped bin net to our garbage dumpster, and can take items small enough to be thrown in. Bakeware, watering cans, metal folding chairs, hand tools, bikes are OK, but not large white goods, exercise bikes, lawn mowers and the like. Please check with the yard staff first. Sorry, no scavenging is permitted. We make a little bit of cash for this, so thanks in advance!



Home Energy Assessments. REAL will no longer be offering home energy assessments. If you are in need of one, we suggest you contact Gabriel Nadeault, a Green Communities Canada (GCC) colleague in Kingston. He is willing to venture north for much of the area previously served by Alan Leonard: K7A, K7C, K7H, K0G, K6T, K6V and parts of KOH, KOE and KOA postal code regions. He is also qualified to do heat pump assessments. Contact him at nadeauenergysolutions@proton.me or (343) 262-1783.



Pen Clarification—Some are Recycled. We take pens of all kinds. If they are usable we sell them in our office supply section (now opposite the vintage area) or offer some of them up for free. If they don't work, they can be recycled. Sharpies, highlighters, felt tipped markers, pens and mechanical pencils, along with their caps, go to Staples. The office supply store passes them on to a facility where the plastic is reclaimed. There is a labelled blue bin under the table where you enter the store. If you know a bag of pens you are donating are unusable, try to label them in some way so we don't have to waste time testing them. Same goes for batteries!



Evergreen Event. Evergreen Avenue's commemorative event for 2026 will take place Sunday, June 7, from 1-4 p.m. at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 95, Smiths Falls. Veteran Lee Hitchins and Ontario Supreme Court Judge Mike Quigley will be honoured in this round. Check the website to see a slide show and list of the many granite stones that have dedicated since the project began in 2000.

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
Tool Library**

Find us on
Facebook and
Instagram

Send contributions to the
July issue by June 15 to
dhicks11@cogeco.ca
or call Barb at (613) 283-9966

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

PITCH IN SMITHS FALLS
SAT. APR. 18 TO SAT. MAY 2, 2026

Work alone or as a group to pick up litter. Bags at REAL Deal Store starting Apr. 8. Submit followup survey to be entered in a draw for prizes.

SHORELINE CLEANUP
SAT. MAY 2, 2026

Work as group that day. Choose 10 a.m. at Bascule Bridge and/or 1 p.m. at Jasper Road boat launch. Pre-register at PitchInSF@REALaction.ca. We'll bring the bags!

WWW.REALACTION.CA
Made with PosterMyWall.com

FIND OUT MORE
PitchinSF@REALaction.ca
Cathryn (613) 283-9819

REAL Deal Store:
85 William St. W., SF
Wed - Sat 10 - 5
(613) 283-7999

REAL Facebook Page
#PitchInSF

**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