



UPDATE QUARTERLY

December 2024

**Free
Webinar**

Save the Date – Thursday, May 1, 2025, 7:00 to 9:00 pm

How to be Hopeful in a World of Climate Doom

The climate crisis, COVID-19, armed conflicts - the collective impact of these global issues impacts our own feelings of well-being and those of the people we love. With problems deemed more newsworthy than solutions, we are awash in a 24/7 news cycle that reinforces the myth that it is already too late or that climate issues are too big or too broken to change. It's only natural to feel overwhelming emotions of anxiety, fear, or anger. But at the same time, it is critically important

to engage with sources of evidence-based hope that are already happening and that we need to amplify. Hope, not fear, is our most powerful tool for tackling the planetary crisis!

On May 1, 2025 the Nith Valley EcoBoosters will be hosting a free webinar featuring Dr. Elin Kelsey whose topic will be: "How to be Hopeful in a World of Climate Doom: The Practice of Evidence-Based Hope". Dr. Kelsey is an international thought leader, scholar and science communicator on

climate emotions and the role of evidence-based hope. She is the author of *Hope Matters: Why Changing the Way We Think is Critical to Solving the Environmental Crisis*. Recognizing the crucial role of climate emotions to climate engagement, she works on a range of collaborative projects with researchers, artists, journalists, educators and youth.

Dr. Kelsey is passionate about bringing science-based stories of hope and multi-species resilience to

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New Youth Advocate Will Introduce *Climate Corner* Column

Ashley Ropp is a new member of Nith Valley EcoBoosters (NVEB). She is involved in re-launching the NVEB Youth Advocates with fellow members Grace Locke and Em Sterman. Also, she will soon be writing an NVEB column called *Climate Corner* for the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette.

Her articles will discuss environmental topics about how individuals can make everyday activities more sustainable, as well as how we can collectively promote environmental wellness. "This column is definitely different from anything I've done before and I admit it's nerve-racking when I realize that I'll reach a much larger audience than I've ever had before." Ashley says, "It's an amazing opportunity that I'm excited to have." "Currently, I work full time in



Ashley Ropp

hotel housekeeping. I don't plan on staying in hospitality long term, but what I do plan, is still up in the air. There are so many things I'm passionate about — I love the environment, helping people and being creative, especially through music. No matter what my future, these passions will always drive my life. My passion for the environment and the desire to promote environmental wellness is why, after meeting NVEB members at a community workshop last June, I joined Nith Valley EcoBoosters. Being a part of this group — even for a short time — has made me realize how much work goes on behind the scenes to plan events and actions that may appear simple. It's clear that I have much to learn from this group of amazing people."

Author Doug Tallamy Brings “Nature’s Best Hope” Message to Wilmot

by Al Junker
This article first appeared in the October 10
issue of the Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette

On Wednesday, October 2, best-selling author Doug Tallamy brought his message of “Nature’s Best Hope” to Wilmot Township in a presentation organized by Let’s Tree Wilmot. The Nith Valley EcoBoosters were one of a number of local organizations who helped to sponsor the event.

Tallamy spoke to a full house at Shantz Mennonite Church with a folksy charm that enabled his audience to enjoy his talk and still appreciate the seriousness and urgency of his message.

Tallamy pointed out that nature is in trouble and since we are responsible, it is up to us to correct the problem. He used the term, “food web,” to describe nature’s integrated relationship which exists in our own yards.

For many of us, our yards consist of a weed-free manicured lawn, paved driveway, a sidewalk and a bunch of ornamental trees, plants or shrubs. As far as nature is concerned, this is a desert as it offers no sustenance for the food web.

It’s a known fact that the number of birds is in drastic decline everywhere and Tallamy uses the little chickadee as an illustration as to why. Chickadees feed insects to their young when they are born and the primary insect is caterpillars. In order to raise one clutch of young chickadees, their parents must catch 6,240 to 9,120 caterpillars. In order to find caterpillars, butterflies and moths need to have native plants, trees or shrubs on which to lay their eggs. These native plants are

referred to as host plants. Caterpillars eat the leaves of specialized plants. Some caterpillars may feed on their host plant while others may need to crawl to their specialized plant to survive.

As Tallamy puts it, “Nature is a series of specialized relationships.” All birds need to feed caterpillars to their young. While pointing out the problems facing nature is a part of his message, Tallamy does offer a solution that is available to all of us in a concept which he has termed the “Homegrown National Park.”

Tallamy defines the mission of the Homegrown National Park as follows: “To motivate millions of people to regenerate biodiversity by planting natives, removing invasives and building a culture sympathetic to the needs of conservation.”

To achieve this mission, Tallamy outlines four steps: shrink your lawn; plant keystone plants; reduce light pollution; and landscape accordingly. He expands these steps by suggesting we establish

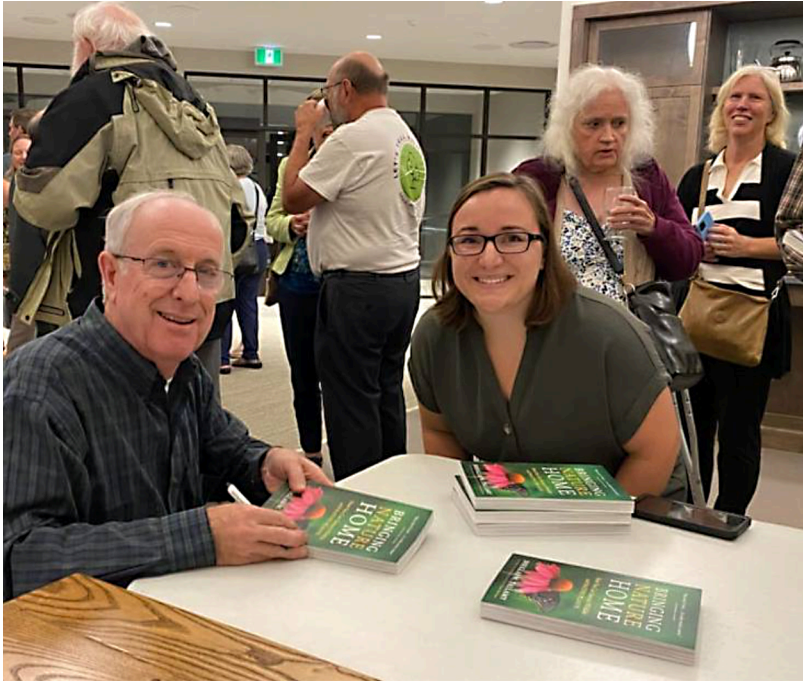
a goal of reducing our lawn by 50 per cent and to stop spraying as it kills everything, not just the “bad things.”

Keystone plants are the ones that serve as the hosts for the most caterpillars. Some examples are oak, cherry, willow, birch, cottonwood and elm trees plus asters, goldenrod, milkweed and sunflower plants. They will offer the biggest impact. Since home-security

lights are deadly to nocturnal insects, in particular moths, installing motion detection lights with yellow LED bulbs is highly recommended.

In addition, most insects pupate under trees, so we should locate our flower beds under our keystone trees. Tallamy also urges us to leave the leaves and to not cut down stems as many pollinators over-winter in these stems. Tallamy endorses getting rid of all invasive plants from our property as they crowd out the native plants which form an integral

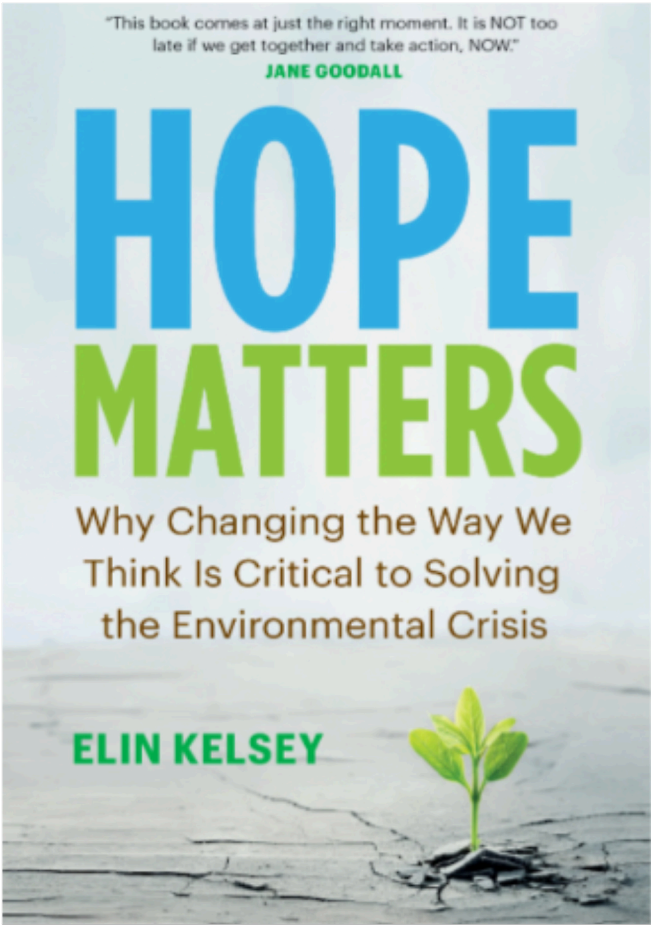
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Author Doug Tallamy left
signs a copy of his book.

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the public through workshops around the world. In her presentation, Dr. Kelsey will be sharing research findings from the new academic discipline of climate emotions - and climate justice solutions trends - in ways that honour our feelings and empower us to engage with the crises we face through the practice of evidence-based hope.

A Question & Answer period will follow Dr. Kelsey’s presentation. This is a free webinar but registration is required. A link to register for the event will be available on our website in March 2025 (nvecoboosters.com).



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part of the food web. He advocates replacing plants, trees and shrubs that have been introduced from outside our region with ones that are native to our area.

Tallamy’s talk was both interesting and informative. In a conversation I had with Tallamy following the event, we talked about the concept of stewardship and how we are the caretakers of our property for the next generation and it is our obligation to practice good “personal responsibility for good Earth stewardship.”

To learn more about Tallamy’s solutions, read

Nith Valley EcoBoosters Participate in Community Safety Day

The New Hamburg Community Centre was the site for the **Wilmot Fire Department’s** second annual **Community Safety Day** which was held on October 5. NVEB participated in the event in two unique ways.

The first thing we did was contact Wilmot Township elementary schools about 1 month before the event to encourage students to create posters that illustrate one or more situations related to emergencies, emergency preparedness, or home safety. Students from Holy Family Catholic Elementary School, Sir Adam Beck Public School, and Baden Public School participated and produced a total of 130 posters that were on display next to NVEB’s booth during Community Safety Day. The posters featured many colours, creative artwork, and important messages covering topics such as what to do if there is a tornado warning and what should be in your home emergency kit.

In addition to the poster event, NVEB developed a new **Bee Ready! Bee Safe!** board game which adults & children played at our booth. The game challenged attendees to answer emergency and safety related questions and was an effective way for families to interact and learn together.

In addition to NVEB’s booth, the event featured live interactive safety demonstrations, lots of kids’ activities, and free food! This was the second year for the Community Safety Day and attendance was estimated to be over 300, a significant increase compared to 2023.

See photos on pages 6 and 8

his award-winning, best-selling book, *Nature’s Best Hope, A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard*. A copy of this book has been donated to the Region of Waterloo Library by Garden Wilmot.

In Tallamy’s words, “We can save our insects, our birds and nature itself ... but we’ll have to change the way we landscape to do it.”

For those who missed the event but want to hear his talk at another event, go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBWhaTbe_x0&t=618s

Photo Right: Wellesley and area volunteers have been controlling invasive Norway maple at Erbhaven Trails near the new arena. In 2023, Mavis Kerr, left, and Murray Schlueter were using the Pullerbear tree wrench to remove mature seedlings and young saplings. In November 25, 2024, another uprooting was scheduled, to include removing four larger European buckthorn, time permitting.



Photo Below: Nith Valley EcoBooster members Linda Lackey, left, and Larry Kryski (not visible) delegated to the Wellesley Township Council in November 2024. The purpose of their digital slide presentation was to bring the township council up to speed on the nine-year history of EcoBoosters and emphasize the value and utility of the group to monitor and educate residents on local environmental developments and trends. EcoBoosters has held 18 public educational events since its inception. Wellesley council regulations restrict delegations to seven-minute presentations.



NVEB Responds to the Wilmot Land Assembly Project

by Dorothy Wilson

The Nith Valley EcoBoosters (NVEB) group continues to demonstrate opposition to the Region of Waterloo’s plan to purchase 770 acres of farmland in Wilmot Township in order to own a large piece of land that would be “shovel ready” for an undetermined future development. Our opposition is focused on our concern that the land chosen contravenes the Region of Waterloo’s Official Plan that designated employment lands and protected farmland. In addition, we are concerned about this land assembly project because of its potentially negative impacts on local water sources, food security due to loss of farmland, and natural areas which are important for carbon capture and wildlife habitat. Since our initial responses to the land assembly project last spring, our group has sent a second letter to the Wilmot and Region of Waterloo Council members plus Mike Harris MPP requesting that they stand with local citizens and say no to the land assembly project. Individuals in our group have also written letters to both local politicians and the papers. The NVEB has provided financial support to the Fight For Farmland group and a number of our

members continue to join protests at both the Wilmot and Region of Waterloo Council meetings. A delegation from the Fight For Farmland group that attended the opening ceremonies of the International Ploughing Match in Lindsay, ON in early October included representation from the NVEB. Premier Ford was well aware of the delegation’s presence and some of the participants were able to speak to him directly. Dozens of “Fight For Farmland” stickers were distributed to the supportive crowd. The NVEB Communications Team has been conscientious about including updates about the land assembly project in their weekly or biweekly items of issues emails. A member of the Nith Valley EcoBoosters is scheduled to delegate regarding our group’s concerns about the project at the November 20th Region of Waterloo Council meeting. It is imperative for all concerned to keep up the pressure on the politicians at the municipal, regional and provincial levels. The loss of this parcel of farmland in Wilmot will signal that no farmland or natural area inn the province is safe from development.



NVEB Activities June 2024 to November 2024

June

- Participated in the Wellesley Community Information Forum which was held in conjunction with the opening of the Recreation Complex. We showcased our group via print materials and a video. We engaged a number of people of all ages in playing our Water Game which is designed to educate about conserving and protecting water.
- Co-hosted a community workshop with Climate Action Waterloo Region, and Waterloo Region Community Energy to educate residents about High-Performance Development Standards. The purpose was to get feedback regarding what standards should be implemented by the Region of Waterloo.

July

- Concluded meetings of our By-Laws working group that reviewed our existing By-Laws and made recommended for some revisions.
- Initiated planning for a new game to be used at the upcoming Community Safety Day.

August

- In response to a request from the David Suzuki Foundation, the Nith Valley EcoBoosters signed an open letter to our local municipalities asking them to update outdated municipal by-laws so that they protect Biodiversity, wild habitat

gardens and community well-being.

- Endorsed an Ontario Nature letter of support for the province’s plan to expand protected areas.

September

- Organized a poster activity for school children and completed the Bee Ready! Bee Safe! Game in preparation for the October Community Safety Day organized by the Wilmot Fire Department.

October

- Two members of the executive met with 3 younger members, 2 of whom are new, to discuss plans for reviving the Youth Advocates Working Group.
- Provided financial support and manpower for the very well attended Doug Tallamy event that was organized by Garden Wilmot and Let’s Tree Wilmot.
- Participated in the Community Safety Day – (See elsewhere in this newsletter for details)
- Endorsed an Ontario Nature letter requesting that provincial wetlands protections be restored and strengthened.
- First meeting of the new 50x30 Working Group.

November

- Participated in the Nature Network’s Great Lakes West Regional Fall Meeting which was hosted by Headwaters Nature and held in Caledon.

- Passed the revised version of the By-Laws at a General Meeting of the Nith Valley EcoBoosters members.
- Presentation to Wellesley Township Council about our group and possible areas of collaboration.

- Participation in one of Level Up meetings (<https://www.welevelup.ca/>) to demonstrate and play our Water Game.

Ongoing

- Participation in Ontario Nature’s Nature Network, WR Climate Collaborative, Ontario Climate Emergency Campaign, Green WR and biweekly meetings of concerned citizens from Waterloo Region and adjacent communities to share information and plan responses to provincial government threats to the environment.
- Sending regular updates re local issues and activities to our contacts.
- Participation in the Fight for Farmland campaign.

Upcoming

- Planning another year of EcoNuggets.
- Initiation of Climate Corner – a column addressing climate/ environmental issues in The Wilmot Tavistock Gazette.
- **How to be Hopeful in a World of Doom: The Practice of Evidence-Based Hope** with Dr. Elin Kelsey on May 1, 2025.

Photo: (l-r) Marlene Knezevich, Linda Lackey and Patty Clarke were part of the team managing the NVEB presentation at the second annual Wilmot Fire Department’s Community Safety Day at the New Hamburg Community Centre.



Climate Corner

Wait! Don’t turn the page!

by Ashley Ropp
Nith Valley EcoBoosters

I know that coming across the word ‘Climate’ can be quick to put people off. Whether you’re scrolling on social media, flipping through the newspaper, or just having a conversation, hearing words like ‘green’, ‘sustainability’, and ‘climate change’, are signs to stop listening. And who can blame you? Nobody wants to hear more disastrous news when there’s already more than enough.... Nobody wants to be guilted or lectured for the endless ways they don’t live ‘sustainably’ ...how much red meat they eat ...the fact that they don’t drive an electric car ...their plastic to-go cups ...or their water usage. The list goes on and on....

But, regardless of the controversial nature of the subject, regardless of the frustration we’ve all grown to feel within these conversations, regardless of your personal investment in the issue, **climate change is here, and we need to talk about it.** And I don’t just mean talking about far out goals that will continuously be pushed back — lowering whatever percentage of emissions by whatever year. I mean we need to talk about lowering emissions *now!*

What if words like ‘climate’ or ‘environment’ weren’t the signs of a not only divisive, but **intensely grating** conversation coming to life? In a world of increasing political tension, community division, and all-consuming uncertainty, I believe it’s crucial these words make their way into our daily vocabulary so that

we can have **genuinely constructive, productive, and truthful conversations.** I believe we need a new outlook to our climate conversations.



Speaking of what I believe, I should probably explain who the ‘I’ is. My name is Ashley Ropp, and I am a lifelong resident of Tavistock, a lover of art, and someone who has whatever the opposite of a green thumb is. Most importantly, I am committed to learning about the best ways to help those around me — about how to advocate for environmental and social justice, and, currently, about how to write a column for the local newspaper. I am thrilled to introduce my column, *Climate Corner*.

In *Climate Corner*, I will discuss topics about sustainability, the environment, and climate change. I will do it with this new outlook of which I so cryptically speak. For too long, climate action has been presented as something for specific people — it’s for ‘activists’ not ‘regular people’; it’s for people with excess money, those who can afford house renovations and electric vehicles; it’s for people in specific spaces — political spaces, that is. It’s time for a change. At the risk of sounding preachy, I think it’s time we start realizing that **climate action is for everyone, in our everyday lives.** I want to explore, and learn alongside everyone who is willing to read this column. How can we make climate action effective, accessible, practical, and non-divisive, so we can all sleep better knowing our future is bright? ...Bright green, that is!

Youth Advocates is Starting Up Again!

by Ashley Ropp
Nith Valley EcoBoosters

Youth Advocates is a Nith Valley EcoBoosters (NVEB) working group that was originally created to encourage schools within Wilmot and Wellesley Townships to take greater climate action. As many members graduated high school and moved on, Youth Advocates slowly lost momentum.

But fret not; Youth

Advocates is back! The group will now focus on making **Climate Action and Sustainability** accessible and appealing to youth and young adults. While we're finding our footing, there are lots of plans for the future.

We will focus on education about all things climate and environment related — understanding the issues of climate change, how to live more sustainably and take action, how to cope with anxiety that comes with these uncertain times, and how to

connect with nature. Youth Advocates expects to organize a variety of events, that include, but not limited to: trash pick up days, workshops, and fundraisers.

Youth Advocates is open to all youth and young adults in the area. We understand the hectic schedule that comes with school and work, so your level of commitment depends on *your* personal schedule.

Interested in being a part of this group's exciting revival?

Contact us at:

nveyouthadvocates@gmail.com



EcoBoosters' Bee Ready! Bee Safe! game produces smiles at the second annual Wilmot Fire Department's Community Safety Day.

GREEN ISLANDS...

by Dorothy Wilson

Sounds like a great place for environmentalists to go for a vacation. However, the true meaning of “green islands” is much more interesting to anyone who is a nature lover.

I learned about green islands on a recent hike through the Willoughby Nature Reserve following the fall meeting of the Nature Network's Great Lakes West Region in Caledon, Ontario. (<https://ontarionature.org/about/nature-network/>)

The meeting was hosted by Headwaters Nature and I was there as the Nith Valley EcoBoosters' representative for the Network.

It was a cool but sunny fall day with lots of leaves along the path. Our guide picked up a dying leaf and asked us if we knew why there were green markings on it. We learned that the green parts of the leaf are still photosynthetically active and are almost always associated with an insect,

usually a tiny leaf mining larvae of a moth which is eating in that spot.

The obvious conclusion is that the larvae are causing the green islands. However, research has concluded that the larvae have a symbiotic relationship with bacteria living on their bodies. The bacteria interact with the tissue of the leaf and alter the production of cytokinins which inhibit the deterioration of the leaf. Cytokinin production is shut down when the plant goes dormant but the bacteria actually cause increased production of it throughout the tissues surrounding the larvae. The result is that the larvae are able to feed later into the fall.

How's that for some nature trivia to share with your family and friends. Thanks to Ron Jasiuk of Headwaters Nature and the website <https://www.indefenseofplants.com/blog/2015/10/19/green-islands>



Nith Valley EcoBoosters



Fall program alert

level up

Civic Action & Social Justice Program for Tweens

What is Level Up?

A play-based program for kids aged 9-12 that builds skills in civic action and social justice through games and activities. Perfect for kids with big hearts who want to do something meaningful!

Where & when?

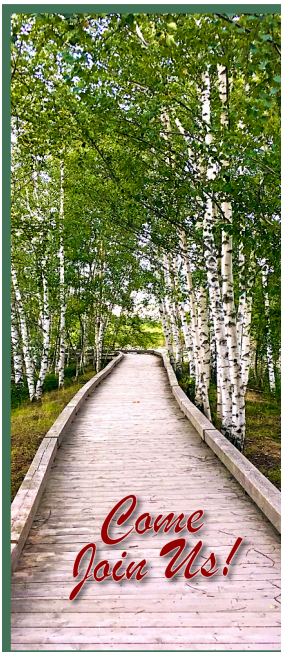
1. Downtown Community Centre
Oct. 23 - Dec. 11, 2024 on Wednesdays from 6:30-8 PM

2. Country Hills Community Centre
Oct. 24 - Dec. 12, 2024 on Thursdays from 6:30-8 PM

Register now!

Sign up for **Level Up: Social Justice Skill Building** on Kitchener's ActiveNet portal!
www.kitchener.ca/activenet





Are You
Environmentally
Conscientious?

**Nith Valley
EcoBoosters
seeks new
members
to take the path
toward a safer
environment...**

nvecoboosters@gmail.com

About Nith Valley EcoBoosters

Nith Valley EcoBoosters (NVEB) is a not-for-profit volunteer organization committed to achieving and supporting long-term healthy environments in Wilmot and Wellesley Townships. Environmental goals are achieved through education, action and collaboration.

Formed in 2013, NVEB was an ad hoc committee at Zion United Church in New Hamburg. In June 2015, the Nith Valley EcoBoosters became a community-based group adopting its current name.

NVEB holds at least two general meetings per year for our members plus we have working groups that meet more frequently to focus on specific activities. One of them organizes our educational events, another focuses on communication, and a new one is working on how to engage our local governments with respect to reducing GHG emissions. We also have a Youth Advocates working group that is made up of youth and young adults

The Nith Valley EcoBoosters has organized or participated in multiple environmental related events each year. It has been an active supporter of most regional environmental groups and activities.

The Nith Valley EcoBoosters is funded by donations, fundraising efforts and grants. There is no membership fee to join.

Contact Information

<http://www.nvecoboosters.com>

nvecoboosters@gmail.com

NVEB 'EcoNuggets' —The Latest Solution



EcoNugget

Introducing the 9Rs of Zero Waste

1. **Rethink** Assess the necessity of purchases. Choose durable, repairable & eco-friendly products & share with others to reduce buying.
2. **Refuse** Say **no** to things you don't need!
3. **Reduce** Let it go if it no longer gives you **joy**.
4. **Reuse** Use an item multiple times. This conserves energy and raw materials.
5. **Repair** Try to fix things first before replacing.
6. **Repurpose** Be creative! Find new uses for things that you might otherwise throw away.
7. **Refill** Refill jars & water & cleaning product bottles to reduce single-use packaging waste.
8. **Rot** Composting organic waste reduces the amount sent to landfills, decreases methane emissions from decomposing organic matter, and recycles nutrients back into the soil.
9. **Recycle** This should be considered a last resort! Prioritize the first 8Rs and practice **pre-cycling** by assessing an item's value, usefulness and recyclability before buying it.

**Reference: Creating a Sustainable House
Through Small Changes (Candice Batista – 2024)**

MEMBERSHIPS

The NVEB are Members of

- **GREN** (Grand River Environment Network), a collective of environmentalists in Waterloo Region that work on a variety of issues.
- **Future Ground Network**—An online organizing resource, associated with the David Suzuki Foundation. It is a convenor & mentor for community environmental groups.
- **Nature Network**—A province-wide network of groups and individuals that are a collective voice for conservation.
- In addition, since 2015, the Nith Valley EcoBoosters have collaborated with the **Waterloo Region Blue Dot Team** to promote the rights of all Canadians to a healthy environment. <https://bluedot.ca>