



■ COMMUNITY



Krystal Reynolds/// The Observer

Nicola St. John wrote the message "All for one for all" in chalk on the pavement during a public meeting on Saturday at Stan Wadlow Park. Attendees addressed the issue of racist posters that had appeared in the area.

Alt-right posters prompt protest

By **KRYSTAL REYNOLDS**
The Observer

Farah Mawani couldn't stand idly by. She had to act.

"All of these incidents hit very close to home," she said.

During a public meeting at Stan Wadlow Park, near Cosburn and Woodbine avenues, she spoke in response to the appearance of white nationalist posters on park property.

"I did experience racism growing up in Toronto and I do experience it now," she said at the Saturday meeting. "But this community shaped me in such significant ways and has been home to me."

The white nationalist posters included such phrases as, "Hey, white person," and then urged residents to "join the Alt-Right" movement.

Mawani spoke at the meeting, organized by the neighbourhood group East End Anti-Racism Collective; it has campaigned against racism, violence, transphobia, xenophobia and other hate acts.

Mawani, who lives in East York, received The City of Toronto's Access, Equity and Human Rights (AEHR) Award in 2015 and serves as an advisory board member of the Toronto Youth Cabinet.

She said she wants children and adults living in the community to

feel a sense of inclusion and safety.

"I hope that together, we can fight racism and exclusion at systemic, community and individual levels by coming together," she said.

East York resident David Kidd spoke at the meeting about the importance of social integration.

"We are a country and city of immigrants besides First Nations," he said. "We are proud of East York and its great tradition.... We're going to continue to stand proud and tall."

University of Toronto student and youth activist Ali Chatur told the group that he's "openly gay, Muslim, a young person and

person of colour." In the wake of recent events in the U.S., he thinks of those who are not as privileged.

"Women and members of the trans community and those with lower income (are enduring) fear," he said.

Mawani was delighted to see a great deal of youth in attendance.

"To all of you who are here, I hope that you lead us in creating inclusive world that you want to be a part of," she said. "Thank you all for being here and standing together in solidarity against hate."

■ **Related coverage**
on pages 5 and 6

Reviews are mixed for redraw of E.Y.'s wards

By **KRYSTAL REYNOLDS**
The Observer

The modifications to municipal wards across Toronto are getting a mixed reaction from East York's councillors.

On Nov. 9, Toronto city council passed a motion to slightly modify some wards and heavily redraw others — even inventing three new city wards outside of East York. That increases the number of wards and councillors by three, from 44 to 47.

While originally not in favour of the expanded council, Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth councillor Mary Fragedakis ultimately voted in favour of the proposed 47-ward option — that will include a significant westward expansion of her ward, well into Toronto's midtown core.

■ **FRAGEDAKIS**

"I (originally) voted for the 44-ward option," she said, but she ultimately concluded that the expanded ward option is "fairer and more democratic."

Ward 26/Don Valley West councillor Jon Burnside, whose ward will be essentially unchanged, explained that the new ward system tries to address disproportionate representation that stemmed from population disparities.

"Some (former) wards only have 40,000 people, whereas other wards have over 100,000 people," he said.

But Ward 31/Beaches-East York councillor Janet Davis said that the new 47-ward format will make representation among councillors much more challenging.

"Currently my ward spans from Danforth in the south (to) Victoria Park in the east and (to) Coxwell in the west, (and) those boundaries will remain the same," she said. "But the northern boundaries will change and follow the Don Valley Parkway in the west and it will go as far north as Eglinton."

So these new boundaries will add three new North York neighbourhoods to Ward 31.

"It means I will have four legacy municipalities that are in the ward — Toronto, East York, North York and Scarborough — because Victoria Park is managed by the Scarborough district," she said.

Fragedakis has other worries around where lines are drawn.

"Some East York residents have (told me) that the proposed new boundaries would water down the voice and unique nature of East York," she said.

New boundaries to reduce congestion at school

By **BIANCA QUIJANO**
The Observer

Parents of students from St. Anselm Catholic School have approved boundary changes designed to reduce overcrowding in East York schools.

They were invited to a meeting of the Toronto District Catholic School Board (TDCSB)

Monday, where they voted on a proposal to reduce St. Anselm's neighbourhood boundaries and expand Canadian Martyrs'.

After deliberations stretching back four years, St. Anselm's principal Richard Walo said he's pleased that the community has come to a decision.

"It's been a pleasure working with the community and the other

schools in the board for the benefit of all our students," he said.

St. Anselm, on Bessborough Drive in the Bayview Avenue-Millwood Road area, is already over-capacity — and condominium

■ **WALO**

development in the area likely means even more schoolchildren. Meanwhile, Canadian Martyrs, on Plains Road near Woodbine Avenue and O'Connor Drive, has room to spare. So as early as next fall, the school will begin to take in students who previously belonged in St. Anselm's district.

■ **See BOARD, page 5**

POLICE & FIRE

Man charged in sex assaults

Toronto police credit members of the public for assistance in the apprehension of a suspect wanted in a sexual assault investigation. Police say a man identified himself as a Bell employee to residents in the Woodbine Gardens neighbourhood, around Dawes Road-Gower Street, and he is then alleged to have committed sexual assaults. Charged is Ibrahim Kalil, 44 years old, of Toronto. He was scheduled to make a court appearance this week.

Missing senior has been found

Toronto police say an elderly man who was the subject of a missing person alert in the East York area has been located. The 80 year-old disappeared on Nov. 16, but was located the following morning.

Time to donate to Toys for Tots

Police assigned to East York's 54 Division have issued a wanted bulletin... for donations to buy children's toys. On Nov. 17, they partnered with Canadian Tire staff at 1901 Eglinton Ave. E. to launch the "Toys for Tots" event. For the next month, the store will be accepting donations of cash and Canadian Tire money that will be used to buy gifts. Last year, the annual event raised over \$10,000 to help and support families in the area.

~ John Morta



Staff // The Observer

Magnetized

Teens at one of the craft workshops that make up S. Walter Stewart library's "Get Inspired" fall series left with magnets they'd made themselves — to adorn the inside of their school lockers.

It's not too late to butt out

By NATALIA ALBUQUERQUE
The Observer

Michael Garron Hospital has just wrapped up a fall series of seminars designed especially for older East Yorkers — and the unique health challenges that they face.

Last month, the topic was "Butt Out Today! You're never too old to quit." The organizers acknowledged that older adults may sometimes feel resigned to their addiction after so many years tethered to tobacco.

But on Oct. 19, the hospital, formerly called Toronto East General, held a mini-conference specifically for senior smokers, to refute that sense of resignation. The meeting was led by Dr. John Abrahamson, the chief of medicine at Michael Garron, and Laura Istanboulian, a nurse practitioner at the hospital.

"Dr. Abrahamson and I are going over some of the basics of smoking addiction and what are some of the tools when thinking about trying to stop, because it has its value in any stage, any age," Istanboulian said.

Abrahamson added: "Smoking impacts



Natalia Albuquerque // The Observer

Dr. John Abrahamson and nurse Laura Istanboulian address the meeting attendees.

on everything, in so many different aspects of health. You're inhaling thousands of chemicals multiple times a day. The best thing is having primary prevention; not getting into trouble in the first place."

But Abrahamson and Istanboulian acknowledged a variation of the old saw that if the best thing is never to start, the second best thing is to quit. Especially considering that many smoking seniors are already experiencing significant health issues as a result of their use of tobacco. To be precise, almost a third of the patients at MGH who are on the respiratory floor are either

active smokers — or they were smokers for long periods in the past. Now they're left with residual lung disease.

"It's a huge topic for our community, and as practitioners we have lots to improve on in the way we engage our patients to work on quitting. It isn't a one-step shot," Istanboulian said.

The "Butt Out Today" seminar was one of three mini-conferences — complete with a light lunch — organized by MGH for seniors in the East York community this year. The series was called "Seniors Lunch and Learn 2016."

Baby boxes give new mothers a boost

By BIANCA QUIJANO
The Observer

Samantha White, 24, was in the final year of her environmental studies degree at York University when she found out that she was pregnant. She and her boyfriend lost their jobs just before their son was born.

"We had less than \$100 when we were in the hospital," she says.

Without help from her friends and family, White says she would not have made it through the past 13 months.

"I didn't realize just how much babies need until I was there with this baby in my arms," she says.

White completed her degree and is now enrolled in the Public Relations and Corporate Communications program at Centennial College's East York campus. On Nov. 16, she and other students from her program hosted Be the Village, a fundraiser for The New Mom Project. They raised over \$1,700 from the event.

The volunteer-run, Toronto-based initia-

tive provides baby boxes, a starter kit for underprivileged new mothers. Each box, which doubles as a bassinet, contains clothing, diapers, toiletries and other supplies that a baby may need during his or her first year. The project was founded in 2014 by Gwen Broda, a 37-year-old nurse and mother of three.

"We think of Canada as having this fantastic maternity program," Broda says. "But there are a lot of loopholes that women can fall into and get missed."

During her first pregnancy, Broda worked full-time at Michael Garron Hospital — the former Toronto East General — and qualified for maternity leave and benefits. During her second and third pregnancies, she worked part-time and wasn't eligible.

"Students in particular, women who don't work and self-employed women don't qualify for those benefits," Broda says. "We're not taking care of our women and children as much as we think we are."

After learning about the government-issued baby boxes in Finland, Broda decided

that it was something mothers needed here in Canada. Now, The New Mom Project sends out an average of 600 baby boxes each year, working with major hospitals, midwife clinics, homeless shelters and other public health programs. These organizations refer their clients to Broda and her team, which helps new mothers connect with their community, she says.

"It builds this relationship between the mom and the agency that they work with," Broda says. "They will go back to that agency and continue to get healthcare and to participate in programs. They know that agency can connect them with people like us."

The initiative recently moved out of Broda's home into a new office, allowing clients to select their own supplies. In the future, Broda plans on offering prenatal classes and other programs.

"It will grow into a parenting education centre," she says.

To find out more about baby boxes and how to help Broda's cause, visit www.newmomproject.ca

WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

Learn to knit with fingers

Have you ever wanted to learn how to knit without needles or a loom? If you're between the ages of 11 and 18, Toronto Public Library has the workshop for you. Today, Nov. 25, come to S. Walter Stewart Public Library at 170 Memorial Park Ave. to learn how to knit with only your fingers. The Get Inspired Workshop is free and will run 4-5 p.m. To register, call 416-396-3975.

Church bazaar offers gift ideas

Holy Name Church will kick off the holidays with its annual Christmas Bazaar. The event will be held at the church, located at 606 Danforth Ave., tomorrow, Nov. 26, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Check out more than 30 local vendors selling handmade wares — everything from greeting cards to jewelry to baby gear. There will also be a bake sale to raise funds for the church's refugee family.

Drink in some exciting films

Come see this year's acclaimed films at the Videorunk Film Festival. It will take place at the Social Capital Theatre from Dec. 1 to Dec. 3. The lineup will feature 44 exciting films from around the world. The showcase will include Academy Award-nominee 'Back Track' and 'Snatched,' best short film at the Raindance Film Festival. Guests can purchase tickets at the door for \$5 or on EventBrite for a reduced price.

~ Cherry Liu

Children suffering in child poverty capital

East York neighbourhoods divided by vast differences in living conditions and opportunities for children

By **CHANGHONG (CHERRY) LIU**
The Observer

The crowd inside the small office of Thorncliffe food bank is nearly outside the door as it opens for service on Thursday. Zeeshan Modi, food bank co-ordinator, works to put together baskets of food to give to the waiting families — food that they can pick up once a month, but only lasts them a week at most.

Toronto continues to be the capital of child poverty in Canada with 27 per cent of all children living in poverty, according to a report released on Nov. 14.

The report, called “Divided City: Life in Canada’s Child Poverty Capital,” was compiled by Family Service Toronto, Social Planning Toronto, the Children’s Aid Society of Toronto and Colour of Poverty-Colour of Change.

The social agencies examined child poverty in 140 neighbourhoods and found that Toronto is a “deeply divided city” in terms of living conditions and opportunities for children.

“When you cross Laird Avenue to go from Leaside to Thorncliffe, the rate of child poverty rate increases from four to 52 per cent,” said Jessica Mustachi of Family Service Toronto in a media release.

Modi sees over 1,000 food bank visitors every month and gives them equal amounts of donated food such as cereal, pasta, oil and juices, but it’s not nearly enough.

He cited unemployment, low income, the increasing cost of food and an abundance of newcomers in Thorncliffe Park as key reasons for the high rate of child poverty.

“There are very skilled immigrants who come into Canada and language is an issue, cultural integration is an issue and the employer expectation could also be a barrier to access meaningful employment,” said Nawal Al-Busaidi, manager of family support services at the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office.

Seema Naeen experienced these issues firsthand when she came to Canada five years ago from Pakistan with her two-year-old son.

“We didn’t have anything,” Naeen said. “My husband did his Masters in London and he was



Changhong (Cherry) Liu // The Observer

Thorncliffe food bank co-ordinator Zeeshan Modi sorts food and daily use items for food bank clients. The food bank sees 1,000 visitors every month and provides them with food donated by the community.

a marketing head in Pakistan, but when he came to Canada he started working in the call centre.”

This situation is compounded by the fact that family dynamics in Thorncliffe Park demand at least a moderate income level.

“Thorncliffe has four to five children in each household, compared to Leaside, which is between two to three,” Al-Busaidi said.

Early learning and recreational participation levels of Toronto children are dependent on family income, according to the report. Half of the children with a household income below \$30,000 do not participate regularly in extracurricular arts or sports, compared to just seven per cent in families with incomes over \$100,000.

Such disparity has long-term effects on children’s development.

“Children who grow up in poverty lack the opportunity to be creative, to think outside the

box, and to be able to dream big; to dream of a better life for themselves,” Al-Busaidi said.

“We have a large number of youths who get engaged in crime and illegal activities to gain quick cash, and that comes out of devastation; it comes out of lack of resources and lack of opportunities.”

Children suffer not only physically and mentally in these living conditions, but also emotionally, said Naeen, whose sons are now aged seven and three. “They don’t know what’s going on or what their parents are dealing with. All they know is that they’re a kid and they want their toys, but their parents aren’t giving it to them.”

“I was depressed, my husband was depressed, and of course that affects the children too. When you’re happy, your kids are happy; when you’re tense, your kids are tense.”

The community of East York has taken steps to support its less affluent neighbourhoods

such as Thorncliffe Park. Al-Busaidi said Leaside has been a great neighbour.

“They’ve been there for the community through the holidays, through the times of need and they’ve really stepped up in their support to show neighbourly compassion.”

But she stressed that poverty is a systemic issue, and no single community can help another become financially comfortable.

All levels of government have a responsibility to reduce poverty, and the report called for immediate action from the city.

“Now is not the time to reduce services or raise fees for already unaffordable or inaccessible housing, transit and child care,” the report said.

“Rather, now is the time to move forward with fair and equitable taxation measures to fund the investments in affordable housing, transit, child care and recreation to ensure that every child has the chance to succeed.”



Staff // The Observer

Girl Guides brighten park

Kim (left) and Alexandra Abell, 10, earn Alexandra’s tree-planting badge for Girl Guides with a fall expedition to plant purple flower raspberry shrubs with Toronto Urban Forestry at Taylor Creek Park on Dawes Road.

Dentists offer free care

By **DANIEL MCKENZIE**
The Observer

East York residents who haven’t been to the dentist in a while might want to mark an upcoming Friday morning on their calendar.

On Dec. 9, the East York Dental Centre is holding its second annual Free Dental Care Day.

From 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., patients can choose between a free cleaning, filling or extraction.

Office manager Voula Rossi said the event was inspired by Dr. M. I. Rana, who wanted to do something to give back to the community in a more personal way.

“He likes to do charity but he wants to do it one-on-one, not just do fundraisers and that type of thing,” Rossi said. “It was steady last year from when we opened until close. This year we have an extra doctor joining us also.”

Rossi said their regular patients don’t come during the event so that as many

patients as possible who don’t have insurance can take advantage of the offer.

“It’s basically for people who don’t have any other means to pay for their dental that we’re gearing this for,” she said. “(Last year) there weren’t a lot of families, it was more individuals that came in. It was so busy so you didn’t have a chance to sit down and talk to them for a long time, but from their comments, they were all thankful.”

At East York Dental, an average cleaning can range from \$110 to \$220, while a filling or extraction could cost up to \$300 or \$400 respectively, depending on individual circumstances.

For families with multiple children, the free service could provide a big money-saver. It will be offered on a per-person basis so a parent can get a cleaning for each of their children and themselves, for instance. Patients will be seen on a first-come, first-serve basis.

The office is located at 957 Coxwell Ave., and potential patients can call 416-422-1500 for more information.



Ashley Bruzas /// The Observer

(Left) Councillor Janet Davis (on platform) unveils the new Coxwell Laneway mural alongside members of the community. (Right) A closeup of the mosaic mural, called 'Pods Through Time,' which looks at the past, present and future of East York.

New mural is a mosaic of East York

Piece of art showcases community's promising future and rich history

By **ASHLEY BRUZAS**
The Observer

A mosaic that stretches along the Coxwell Laneway will elevate the quality and experience for people who take transit, park their car or simply take a shortcut, organizers say.

Members of the public, art community and transportation agencies that contributed to the consultation and development of the project gathered in the Green P lot behind the Coxwell TTC station on Danforth Avenue earlier this month to present it.

"This mural began as an idea several years

ago and it got folded into a bigger project with many partners who are talking about how to make our public spaces more beautiful, accessible, safe and attractive," said Janet Davis, city councillor for Ward 31/Beaches-East York.

The project was the brainchild of the Danforth East Community Association (DECA), which came up with the idea of a charrette — a chance for the community to come together and share their ideas about what would make this public space better.

It later became part of the City of Toronto's StART (StreetARToronto) program, which works to add beauty and character to neighbourhoods while counteracting graffiti vandalism.

"This is one of the 17 projects that we're undertaking this year as part of our street art partnership program," said Elyse Parker, director of the public realm unit at StART. "It is one of our street art programs for transportation services."

The mural would not have been possible

without Cindy Rozeboom, managing director of East End Arts, who worked with the creators and volunteers under the watch of artist Cristina Delago.

"When I first met the team, I knew this was going to work out, even through we only had four weeks to complete this project," Delago said. "But they worked really hard and didn't mind the heat, coming out on weekends or staying the extra hours."

Artist Cristina Delago shared insight on the project and how the design was determined.

The title of the mosaic is 'Pods Through Time.' After studying the history of the wall and its significance to the area, the three sections helped determine the design.

Each apex contains pods that are bursting with seeds that indicate whether they come from the past, present, or future. In the past, the pods are organized to represent the historical background of East York, including the Brick

Works, Coxwell trolleys and stables and the former Toronto East General Hospital.

"The wall of the present has pods that have seeds of different sizes which represent our diversity in this community," Delago said, "and the last wall represents the future, showing pods that are bursting with seeds that are showing the potential for this community."

The top border that outlines the mural includes three emblems from the East York crest, including the beaver, bulldog and white rose. The group decided to incorporate two quotes by Agnes Macphail, the first woman elected to parliament and a part of East York's history.

"It's been a pleasure for our staff to co-ordinate with the landowners, the city, the TTC and the TPA (Toronto Parking Authority)," Elyse Parker said. "The TTC will replace the chain link fence and install an iron one, as well as signage, and Toronto Parking Authority has provided a planter and will upgrade the parking lot."

Two schools get injection of funds from province

By **ROSE HETHERINGTON**
The Observer

Monarch Park Collegiate and Danforth Collegiate and Technical Institute are getting funds from the province for refurbishing.

The money is to be used for renovations to create a better learning environment for students. The funding announcement came as part of a 10-year plan to build and improve school buildings. Monarch Park is on Hanson Street,

in the Greenwood-Coxwell area. Danforth Collegiate is on Greenwood Avenue, near Donlands and Danforth.

"Building new and improved schools is one of the many ways our government is supporting improved student achievement and well-being," said Arthur Potts, Liberal MPP for Beaches-East York, in a news release.

"The investment announced today will have a strong impact on students' learning experience and



■ **POTTS**

in Toronto alone. Across Ontario, 23 schools are being expanded or renovated and 28 new schools are being built.

This amount will grow to \$12 billion over a decade for school

boards across the province. The money is also going toward schools in areas with high growth.

The repairs and additions to school infrastructure are aimed at creating learning spaces that are conducive to better student well-being and achievement.

"High-quality schools are the heart of our local communities and the foundation of our publicly funded education system. We know that better buildings support better learning," said Mitzie Hunt-

er, the minister of education, in a release.

"The funding announced today is a strategic investment in student achievement and well-being, and in the long-term prosperity of our province."

Over the next two years, the province is providing \$2.7 billion to schools. The investment in school infrastructure is part of the government's efforts to help students, as well as create jobs and help the economy.



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NEIGHBOURLY NEWS

Highlights from the pages of the East York Observer.
Wednesdays at 8:30 a.m. and Fridays at 4 p.m.
On CJRU/AM 1280.



Krystal Reynolds /// The Observer

East Yorkers rallied at Stan Wadlow Park on Saturday as a counterpoint to racist posters found around the park.

'Those views will not be tolerated'

Alt-right posters spur woman to create messages of peace

By **SADIAH RAHMAN**
The Observer

When Madeleine Keesmaat-Walsh saw the news about alt-right posters around East York's Stan Wadlow Park early last week, she said she felt hopeless.

She sympathized with the minorities who would eventually see the posters and feel they were in danger.

So she decided to do something about it. She made up her own 'counter-posters' and put them up.

Later, sitting at The Only Café with an interviewer, she gestured outside. "There's a mosque right there. There's a lot of Muslims in this neighbourhood and a lot of immigrants."

"This is something that affects my neighbours. I know the faces of the people who this is against."

Keesmaat-Walsh said she usually assumes the best in people, so it came as a scare when she realized that white nationalist rhetoric existed within her community.

She said she worries especially for members of the younger generation, who have yet to learn about the real damage from hate speech.

"I just see all these kids, from all different backgrounds," she said. "They're all so happy, they get along fine, they play with each other in the playground great. I don't want these kids to grow up in a neighbourhood where hate speech is happening and where they realize the world is not as accepting a place as it should be."

So she typed out "Hey Humans of The World" — a play on the original poster's opening line, "Hey White Person."

But unlike the original, Keesmaat-Walsh's message is a peaceful and welcoming one. Then she printed up copies and started posting them around the neighbourhood.

She acknowledged that there are racists everywhere, even if they do not appear to be as prevalent in Canada as in other places.

"They are becoming public with their views in a way they haven't before and I think we've been seeing that a lot since the (American) elections," Keesmaat-Walsh said.

Janet Davis, the councillor for Ward 31/Beaches-East York, said the original alt-right posters came as a shock to her. But she emphasized that they don't represent the views of the

East York community.

"I worried about whether or not the American election and the rhetoric — divisive, hateful, language and actions — would give licence to people who have those views in our community," Davis said.

She's been reassured, she added, by the backlash to the posters.

"I was pleased to see the voices of our community coming through. It's very reassuring to see that the people of our community won't let that kind of divisive intolerance rhetoric be the voice of their community," Davis said.

For Keesmaat-Walsh, it's all about spreading peace and making sure people feel welcome in her East York community.

East York is a place she herself moved to from a small town, and she said it showed her nothing but love.

As for the alt-right posters that spurred her to action, she said, "In our community and in this city, those views will not be tolerated. They are not reflective of the values of our community. Toronto is different. We have built a city that's based on respect and inclusion. I'm either very naive or I have great faith in our community that we'll come together and stay a city that stands up."

Board reworks boundaries to ease crowding issues at school

Cont'd. from page 1

"We're here to serve the students," said Canadian Martyrs principal Donato Dipaolo. "If we can accommodate more students, that's what we're prepared to do."

Due to structural limitations, expanding St. Anselm is not possible, said superintendent John Shanahan. The school also sits on a small lot — so adding permanent portables is impractical.

The TCDSB considered converting a portion of a residential property and a local church, but the project was turned down by the city. Building an entirely new school, with a capacity of 600 students, would cost \$16 million.

According to the TCDSB, the boundary review is the best option.

Courtney O'Leary's three children, who are in junior kindergarten, Grade 3 and Grade 5, attend St. Anselm. She said the boundary review is long overdue.

"If nothing were done, my (youngest child) would continue doing gym class in the classroom," she said. "My other child has half a library because they had to split it to make a classroom, and my eldest would continue to play in a schoolyard that is packed with 160 kids over-capacity."

Students affected by the boundary change will be those who are already being bussed to St. Anselm.

According to Shanahan, the boundary change is a long-term solution, but will not significantly ease current overcrowding.

"It will take time for families to grow and move in," he said.

In the meantime, short-term relief solutions such as the addition of temporary portables will be implemented as early as January.

"Lines have to be drawn," O'Leary said. "This community is just going to get bigger and bigger."

Local homeowners break ground of their future abodes

By **JOHN MORTA**
The Observer

Homeowners got a chance to literally break ground themselves this week on the foundation of their future homes.

Options for Homes hosted a ceremony on Wednesday to welcome 275 condominium buyers to the Village by Main Station in East York. The organization, the largest non-profit home ownership housing developer in Canada, has already delivered 525 units in the GTA this year, with another 116 to be constructed in 2017.

"Clients and partners describe Options as welcoming, open, helpful, trustworthy, stable and nurturing," company CEO Heather Tremain said at the ceremony, which coincided with National Housing Week (Nov. 21-25).

Beaches-East York MPP Arthur Potts, who moved into the neighbourhood this year, attended the ground-breaking ceremony, where he greeted the new home purchasers.

"Congratulations. Shovels are in the ground, building is starting to happen and I'm looking forward to welcoming you all

into your new suites as soon as we can get this job done," he said.

Mary-Margaret McMahon, a city councillor from the Beach neighbourhood, was also at the event. She has lived in the area for 24 years and gave her new neighbours a warm welcome.

"I am so excited, because this is the first affordable home ownership area in our ward in my time," she said. "So I am thrilled to keep supporting Options for Homes."

New homebuyer Visha Gandhi, who eight years ago was a student struggling with debt, was invited by the company to speak to those in attendance.

"I took a long, hard look at my finances and decided I would have to let go of the dream of ever owning a home," Gandhi said of those earlier days. "The day I signed my purchasing agreement in the offices of Options, I cried."

At the event, the crowd was treated to live music from homebuyer Jessica Speziale, who performed her rendition of the song "Home" by Phillip Phillips.

The new condos are expected to be finished in 18-24 months.



Austin Owens /// The Observer

New homeowner Jessica Speziale performs a cover of "Home" by Phillip Phillips at the condo groundbreaking ceremony.

■ EDITORIALS

The darker side

Canada has become a haven for many — and we like to flatter ourselves by saying that includes some Americans who are ready to leave the U.S. since the presidential election.

But that's not really the case. First, Americans may talk about pulling up stakes and heading north. But they've talked that way before, and the actual numbers show that few actually do.

Second, while we indulge a narrative that Canada thrives on multiculturalism and immigration, there's another, darker side — and posters found around Stan Wadlow Park in East York bear that out.

"Hey, white person."

That's what you would have seen if you had come across this poster. It invited readers to "join the alt-right" and listed websites that promised to provide "news" from a "pro-European" perspective. The links promoted white nationalism and Donald Trump.

And this incident involving xenophobic posters does not stand alone. The pathology behind it isn't restricted to East York or Toronto. A day before the U.S. elections, a swastika and KKK were spray-painted on a school in Ottawa.

These are just examples of underlying racist attitudes that have been around far longer than the campaign of a certain U.S. president-elect.

News outlets have been reporting the city's outrage at this explicit racism, as that outrage has appeared on social media and elsewhere — but it's failed to mention those who saw no issue with the poster. Because while many began ripping down the posters and speaking out against these racist sentiments, some thought the posters were not racist at all and agreed with the attitudes expressed.

That's disheartening to people of colour. We now see that what was an issue only for 'other places' is an issue in our own backyard. But we shouldn't be surprised. Even multicultural East York has had its history of white nationalism: the Heritage Front that operated here in the 1990s. The Nationalist Party of Canada operating today with its Coxwell Avenue postal address. On top of all that, just this past summer, Canada Post was ordered to stop delivering a free east-Toronto newspaper called "Your Ward News." The paper had been criticized by some as anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi.

Racism exists, and it is a very real issue, even in East York.

To ignore something is to help legitimize it by default. It's important that we confront and denounce these views.

~ Melisha Ratnarajah

Let's do better

Earlier this week, Toronto's Tapestry Opera company concluded its run of the opera Naomi's Road at St. David's Anglican Church on Donlands Avenue. The production was the Toronto premiere of the work, which has been touring B.C. and Alberta for a decade. It's based on the novel by Joy Kogawa, about a young Japanese-Canadian girl's internment in a camp for so-called "enemy aliens" during the Second World War.

When Tapestry's artistic director announced a month ago that the production was coming to St. David's, which is the East York home of the last Japanese-Canadian Anglican parish in Toronto, he was positively prescient.

"In a time when certain factions in Canada and the U.S. are reacting to the fear of terrorism with xenophobia and the call for exclusionary and divisive laws, Naomi's Road is a keen reminder of the human impact of these biases," Michael Hidetoshi Mori said.

Hidetoshi Mori was speaking in October. Here we are in November, with U.S. President-Elect Donald Trump, and a sudden spate of small, ugly, racist incidents stretching from the United States all the way up to Toronto — and into East York.

One very recent example of racial discrimination happening in Toronto is the case of a man hurling racist comments at another man aboard a St. Clair TTC streetcar, right in the vicinity of East York.

Smartphone videos shot by other passengers on the streetcar show a white man berating a man of colour. Other passengers can be heard asking him to get off the streetcar, telling him he's in the wrong.

The victim of this verbal abuse doesn't fight back or get into an argument with the perpetrator; he just merely stands there in silence. Probably the practical response; when victims of verbal abuse cannot really escape the situation, all they can do is endure it.

Outraged viewers of the video can be forgiven for weighing the alternative — wishing the victim or other riders had stood up to this bully rather than unwillingly absorb all these racist comments.

But as Toronto Mayor John Tory said afterward, while such sentiments are commendable, we also have to be careful.

In published reports, the mayor added that the city and its residents clearly have more work to do in confronting racism. But for every discouragement, like the TTC incident, there's encouragement, like the message of Naomi's Road. By reminding us of how prejudice and fear have stained Canadian history, the artists who were onstage and backstage at St. David's strengthen our resolve to make things better.

~ Charlotte Pun

■ COLUMNS

Colour your perspective

To simply call the "Hey, White Person" posters that have been found in East York racist and disgusting would be easy. More accurately, we should consider them advocacy for white supremacy and an expression of racial privilege.

Their complaints about "political correctness" — which is meant to protect those with social disadvantages (like minorities) — best exemplify this. Those complaints actually make the poster quite ironic, considering their own twisted correctness.

To ask why 'white' countries are becoming more multicultural and why diversity, in the poster-writers' eyes, only means fewer white people shows how ignorant these people are.

Looking at the world, the majority of so-called

First World nations are white, while most Third World nations are predominantly non-white. The motivation behind most immigration is to improve one's life by moving to a part of the world that makes that possible; so of course white countries are going to become multicultural.

As for the inference around diversity meaning less white people, let's take a look. As of 2011, Statistics Canada said that 19.1 per cent of Canada's population was comprised of visible minorities. While that number jumps significantly more in the GTA, to 49.1 per cent, it shows that the majority is still white — especially going further out into more rural regions.

The biggest chuckle probably comes from the poster's concern about being told 'you're racist for celebrating your heritage.' Unless that heritage is of a culture that has historically racially oppressed others, the claim comes off as laughable, given the ambiguity of 'heritage.'

Even if we indulge the creators of this poster and accept their premise that 'white culture' is somehow an identifiable entity, it's still hard not to laugh — given how much white culture has appropriated from others over time.

For instance, one of the biggest Canadian stereotypes (something many are proud of) revolves around our collective obsession with Tim Hortons coffee. But consider the origins of coffee — in countries like Ethiopia, Turkey and other Middle-Eastern and African regions.

What these posters boil down to is nothing more than the ravings of a childlike mind in a tantrum, whose view needs to be corrected, not ignored.

Paolo Maquiraya

Hot phones ignite fear

It confounds me that a company as big as Samsung could try a solution as small as 'the green icon means you're safe' when some of the phones it was selling were essentially exploding in people's pockets.

This summer saw the release of Samsung's newest phone, the Galaxy Note 7. It was the hottest phone in the world, for a few weeks. And then that turn of phrase gained a whole new meaning.

For those of you unfamiliar with the phone, the Note 7 was lauded as one of the best phones Samsung ever created. But just over a week after its Aug. 19 release date, rumours were flying about the phone. Stories of batteries catching fire. Whispers of an impending recall.

That recall came on Sept. 12. The rest is history. Samsung sent out some replacement phones. Those had battery issues as well, causing more explosions and more damage.

The Note 7 was laid to rest on Oct. 11, 2016, when Samsung announced it was ending production of the phone.

The issue, however, is not that the phone could catch fire, but that Samsung's attempts to deal with it also went down in flames. That first recall

apparently happened before Samsung understood the issue. They thought it was the battery in certain phones. Those phones had their batteries made in a different country, and they largely went to North America.

Samsung recalled those Note 7s, and sent out repaired phones. Any phone that had a 'safe' battery was given a marker on the box, and a green battery icon on the screen instead of the standard white battery icon.

On top of this, there wasn't adequate partnership with product safety commissions in Canada and America to initiate an official recall, meaning many people were free to continue using the potentially dangerous device.

And just to confuse things further, retailers didn't exactly sort it out well either.

I personally work for one of many mobile stores in

Canada, and I saw an immense amount of confusion among staff. Mixed messages were everywhere. Some customers were told to go to Samsung with their exploding phones. Others were told to go to carrier stores. Carriers sent customers to us. It was, quite frankly, a mess. A bigger mess than should ever be seen when it comes to many thousands of people wandering around with the potential of little firebombs in their pockets.

Quite frankly, I shake my head that the Note 7 even made it out to the public with such a flaw.

It's ludicrous that now, a little over a month since the phone disappeared from store shelves, we've largely forgotten that a trusted brand sold a product with such a defect, and that we have yet to see adequate steps to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

It's ludicrous that we're complacent. We shouldn't be.

Jon Lamont

Memories of Todmorden Village



Courtesy of City of Toronto Archives

The Observer continues its look back on East York history through photographs from the City of Toronto Archives. These two pictures both recall Todmorden Village a century ago. That stretch of East York, a narrow strip running up the east side of the Don Valley between Danforth Avenue and O'Connor Drive, looked a lot different in 1911 — when the photo on the left was taken. The dirt road heading off to the north is what would later become Broadview Avenue. The picture on the right was taken 19 years later, on April 22, 1930, and depicts four girls, all identified as Todmorden residents, showing off their entries in a model airplane contest. Their names (presumably left to right, but the archivists aren't certain on that point): Bessie Purvis, Helen Breeze, Winnifred Red and Helen Buck.

Finalists chosen for design of patient care tower

Three companies shortlisted for opportunity to design hospital's eight-storey patient care centre

By EDEN DEBEBE
The Observer

The redevelopment of East York's Michael Garron Hospital continues apace, with the selection of three finalist designers for the new patient care tower.

MGH, the former Toronto East General Hospital, is working in tandem with Infrastructure Ontario to build and finance the massive addition to the hospital — which is scheduled for construction starting in 2018 and completion in 2023.

A request for qualifications has now been issued, signalling the official start to the project.

Teams have bid on the chance to design the new structure, and have had their submissions reviewed by MGH.

On Nov. 4, the hospital and Infrastructure Ontario announced EllisDon Infrastructure Healthcare, PCL Partnership and Walsh Toronto East Health Partners as the three companies shortlisted to design.

Located at the corner of Coxwell and Mortimer, Michael Garron Hospital is planning to add roughly 550,000 square feet, with an eight-storey tower and three-storey connection. With the redevelopment, including the replacement of old beds, an upgrade to the mental health units, and an internal reworking of the original building, the hospital is working to both add and improve.

According to a press release issued by Infrastructure Ontario, "the redevelopment project will enable the delivery of efficient, accessible,

high-quality patient care, while replacing some of the oldest spaces in the hospital."

For Hannah Ward, communications co-ordinator and head of development at the hospital, this redevelopment will help meet the needs of patients, staff, and the greater community.

"The Ken and Marilyn Thomson Patient Care Centre is being built to replace crowded and inefficient clinical and inpatient spaces within the older wings, which will allow us to continue providing high-quality care and specialist services to the residents of the south-east Toronto community," Ward said.

This project is one of many being funded by the province of Ontario. Over the next 12 years, \$160 billion is being put toward public infrastructure. The province says that it's the largest investment in the Ontario government's history.

The choice to fund Michael Garron Hospi-

tal, for Bob Chiarelli, Minister of Infrastructure, "demonstrates our government's commitment to the East Toronto community. Michael Garron Hospital's redevelopment will ensure improved access to high-quality health care for residents, while creating countless employment opportunities."

In recent years, hospital wait times have risen at dramatic rates. And with most hospitals physically aging, there have been challenges to the quality of care. The hope of many, including Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, is that the MGH redevelopment will amend this for East York.

"High-quality, accessible health care is a priority for all Ontario families," Hoskins said. "The new patient care tower project at Michael Garron Hospital will enable more East Toronto residents to access quality healthcare services."

East York residents share 'Cultural Hotspots' with city

By CAVEL BROWN
The Observer

City representatives came to Crescent Town earlier this month to turn up the heat under the "Cultural Hotspot."

The city's Arts Services department wants to show that cultural activities extend beyond the downtown core of Toronto. So between May and October of 2017, East York is getting a turn in the city's spotlight on community arts.

To help prepare, Arts Services held another public meeting on Nov. 3 for community members to share their ideas about East York culture. This one took place at the Crescent Town Club and Community Centre.

Nadira Pattison, a manager at Art

Services, said the city wants to get East Yorkers involved in shaping what the Cultural Hotspot program will look like next year.

"The project will draw new attention to the hotspot areas, to your work, to your art and the culture of this neighbourhood," she said.

The hope is that through marketing and promotional campaigns, people across the city will be more aware of what is happening in East York. Over 50 East Yorkers attended and mapped out areas within the community they think need to be highlighted. Among those at the meeting was Janet Davis, city councillor for Ward 31/Beaches-East York. She said she was happy with the turnout.

"With this cultural hotspot... there



Cavel Brown /// The Observer

Ward 31/Beaches-East York councillor Janet Davis (third from right) works with East Yorkers to map out areas of culture and creativity within the community.

will be opportunities for people and organizations to spark something exciting in this community," she said.

The room was divided into four groups where participants shared

their thoughts and brainstormed project ideas. There was talk of installing more murals, adding features to parks, using archival photos to show development over the years,

highlighting unique bistros and places such as the Goulding Estate, a Dawes Road heritage property.

De Anne Lamirande, a muralist who works with a local business improvement area, also attended the meeting. She said she thinks introducing art in the park would be a great "spark project."

Individuals in attendance were told that each "spark project" can receive from \$500-\$5,000 once approved. The project must support emerging artists, allow youth employment and have a broad outreach.

Andrea Raymond-Wong from Arts Services said funding may come from the Toronto Arts Foundation, ArtReach Toronto and StreetARToronto. East Yorkers have until Jan. 20 to submit their project.



Veronica Agudelo Correa /// The Observer

Four-legged stress relief

With fall semester assignment deadlines and tests upon them, students at Centennial College's East York campus were invited to "Paws Your Stress" in the school's athletics and recreation centre. Therapy dog Boggy helped take the edge off — along with a light snack, stretching, and tips to combat stress offered by counselling staff at the Carlaw Avenue campus.

Councillors call for lower limits

By ALI NAQVI
The Observer

Two municipal councillors want to slow things down along East York's southern boundary.

Janet Davis, the councillor for Ward 31 Beaches-East York, has joined forces with fellow city councillor Mary-Margaret McMahon, to get the speed limit lowered on the eastern stretch of Danforth Avenue, between Dawes Road and Victoria Park Avenue.

The limit would go from 50 km/h to 40 km/h — the same limit that's already in place along the western stretch of the busy street, from the Don Valley Parkway to Dawes Road.

"Council approved speed limit reductions on Danforth Avenue between Don Valley Parkway and Dawes Road as part of the Road Safety Plan in July. Danforth Ave between Dawes and Victoria Park Ave was not included," Davis and McMahon said in a statement asking for community council's support. "This omitted section of the Danforth is a very busy retail area which also supports a number of institutions including seniors' housing, a busy mosque and a retail mall heavily accessed by pedestrians."

Harmonizing a lower speed limit all the way from the DVP to Victoria Park, they said, "will improve safety for all users, reduce confusion among drivers and support consistent enforcement."

In an interview with the Observer, Davis followed up: "The speed limit has to be reduced to protect pedestrian safety. And to ensure it is a top priority, the motion was passed at the East York



■ JANET DAVIS

Community Council."

Referring to Danforth as "very busy," she said, "lower speed limits will prevent pedestrian accidents and aggressive driving."

Now, going forward from community council, the city will be asked to implement the change.

"We want to make sure pedestrians feel safe when they are crossing the road," Davis said.

Chris Tolley, who is a long-time resident of the Danforth neighbourhood, often rides his bike to work.

"Almost every other trip, I have what feels like a near-death experience.... It's easy to make a mistake," he said. "A lower speed limit would (reduce) near-misses, and all other cyclist would feel safe on the streets."

He added: "In an urban environment, commuting tends to be hyper-local. Lowering speed limits is more about safety than it is about expediency."

■ COMMUNITY

The lady is 90 - and she's on a mission

Irrepressible volunteer's next trip will take her to Tanzania to do missionary work for church

By AMY McNEILL
The Observer

Beryl Beard doesn't stop. "You name it, I do it," she said from behind her booth at the Holly Berry Fair at St. Luke's Anglican Church on Coxwell Avenue.

Beard offers her time at every chance she gets, she said.

That extends all the way to international missionary work — at age 90.

Beard goes all over the world with the church and is preparing for her next trip to Tanzania this July.

"We've been nearly everywhere," she said. "Thailand, Bolivia, Peru, Russia, China, Mongolia — you name it!"

After spending 70 years at the church, she said, the best part is the lasting friendships that she has built with both her fellow church-members and the people they meet overseas.

Beard's son is the church's priest. He has been

planning the missions that depart every other year not just to spread the faith, Beard said, but to provide church members with educational travel.

"We meet every month before we go to learn some of the language," she said. "My son and I always go to help people first, but he adds on a learning portion for the volunteers."

Beard came to East York from England after the end of the Second World War. She raised her family just around the corner from St. Luke's and considers Toronto home.

"It's been a very interesting life so far — tough to begin with, but that's in the past," she said. "I want to think of the future, and the future is Tanzania."

The project, Beard said, is to build six churches in one month. The St. Luke's volunteers will also be taking first aid supplies, she said, and will work to set up a free health-care clinic.

For those worried about her age, Beard said that it's the momentum of an active and daring lifestyle that keeps her healthy.

"Taking breaks isn't my style," she said. "I may be 90, but I work hard and paint ceilings to stay active."

Urging seniors to build a more active routine, this relentless sage of a volunteer is truly a force to be reckoned with.



Amy McNeill /// The Observer

Beryl Beard, 90, is getting ready to embark on St. Luke's mission trip to Tanzania in July.