



## ■ AGNES MACPHAIL AWARD

# Pastor puts positive spin on youth work

By **NICOLE ROYLE**  
The Observer

Pastor Jim Parker, a “great community presence” who works tirelessly with East York youth, is the recipient of the 2017 Agnes Macphail Award.

Parker, the pastor at Bethany Baptist Church on Pape Avenue, is the founder of East York Strategy, which places youths in team-building sports programs. He will receive the award on March 24 at a ceremony at the East York Civic Centre.

March 24 is the anniversary of Agnes Macphail’s birth in 1890. She went on to become the brightest luminary in East York’s political history — as the first woman ever elected to the House of Commons, and one of the first two elected to the Ontario legislature. Her career was characterized by progressive causes, and in 1994, what was then East York municipal council established an annual award in her name, to be given to a local volunteer doing outstanding community work.

Laura Nguyen is the communications assistant for councillor Janet Davis, who is head of the Agnes Macphail Award Committee. Nguyen explained that the committee discussed all of this year’s nominees to ensure the winner

would not only fill specific criteria, but excel at it. Parker’s work does just that, she said.

“There are a lot of factors involved,” she said. “He has been a great community presence.”

Parker founded the East York Strategy with a team of others invested in the community after learning about initiatives in Etobicoke and Boston designed to get the city’s youths off the streets and into safe and healthy environments. He runs it out of his church, although it is in no way affiliated with religious or other requirements for those involved.

“We decided to do concrete youth programming,” Parker said. “Positive activities, for positive people, in positive places.”

The strategy involves sports leagues for East York boys and girls — the boys’ basketball is the most popular — and an after-school drop-in program every Tuesday evening. The drop-in program is a place for kids of every religious and cultural background to

■ See EAST YORK, page 8



■ PARKER



James Dalgarno /// The Observer

## The picture of concentration

Carter Love, also known as “the Curious Kid Professor,” attends the media preview for the Ontario Science Centre’s new exhibition “Biomechanics: The Machine Inside,” which is open now until May. Turn to page 8 for a story on the exhibition.



Yvano Wickham-Edwards /// The Observer

## Leaping for history

Dance student Tahj Tuitt performs at Centennial College’s East York campus during a Black History Month performance — one of a series of campus observances in February.

## ■ CRIME

# Man, 51, faces murder charges

Victim, suspect knew each other, police say

By **RYAN ORLECKI**  
The Observer

A man has been charged with last week’s murder of a 36-year-old woman in a Dawes Road high-rise.

Police and paramedics were called at about 8:30 a.m. on Feb. 16 to a reported assault in a 10th-floor apartment at 500 Dawes Rd. They found the apartment’s tenant, Michelle Riley, without any vital signs.

“In regard to what led to her death, I don’t have the coroner’s report on that,” Const. Allyson Douglas-Cook told the Observer.

But later that same day, police charged a 51-year-old man who they say was also in the apartment when they found Riley.

Brian Williams, 51, of Toronto made his first court appearance last Friday, charged with second-degree murder.



Andre Saunders /// The Observer

**A memorial has been set up near the apartment where Michelle Riley, 36, was murdered last week.**

Police say the two involved in the incident knew each other. “I don’t know the nature of their relationship, but it was reported that they were roommates,” Douglas-Cook said.

Published reports quote earwitness accounts of a loud argument in the apartment prior to the murder. Those reports also say neighbours described the victim as volatile but generous — especially to street people, whom she

would open her home too.

Const. Douglas-Cook said Riley’s death is the city’s 10th murder of the year.

The building where the murder occurred features regularly in reports of issues related to rental accommodation in Toronto. The imposing white 14-storey high-rise was opened 50 years ago, and city ledgers show it consistently racking up a high volume of tenant complaints.

## POLICE & FIRE

### Man charged after stabbing in East York

An assault investigation is ongoing after a stabbing in the area of Donlands and Torrens avenues on Feb. 15. A 40-year-old Toronto man has been charged after a 49-year-old woman was slashed numerous times. The victim did not suffer any life-threatening injuries. Brian Hafeez, 40, of Toronto, has been charged with conspiracy to commit an indictable offence and aggravated assault.

### Arrest follows kidnapping

Police arrested a Toronto man on Feb. 14 after an investigation surrounding the kidnapping and robbery of a man, 22, and boy, 16, on Dec. 8. Police say the pair were kidnapped and robbed at gunpoint in the Don Mills Road and Eglinton Avenue area in a drug deal that went sour. The pair were held for three hours, and threatened with harm to their families if they reported what had happened. Charged is Mohamed Arif Ashaqzai, 18.

### Thieves make off with furs

Police are looking for two people suspected of breaking into a business in the Danforth Avenue and Playter Crescent area on Jan. 31. Thieves stole fur clothing worth more than \$60,000. The Toronto police ask anyone with information to contact them at 416-222-8477.

~ Julia Tillaeus



Bambang Badewo // Toronto Observer

**Adrienne Dunn, 42, and her two daughters, Claire Bond, 11, and Molly Bond, 9, were in good spirits after the girls' swimming lesson at the S.H. Armstrong pool last week. They're not so happy, however, about the city's plans to cut the pool's funding in 2017.**

## City cuts public pool funding

By **BAMBANG SADEWO**  
The Observer

Just before bedtime one night earlier this month, Molly Bond, a student at Duke of Connaught Junior and Senior Public School, asked her mother once again for an update on the city council meeting that would decide the fate of the S.H. Armstrong pool adjacent to the school.

It wasn't until the morning that Adrienne Dunn told her daughter the result — and it wasn't the good news that she was expecting to hear.

"She was very upset," Dunn said, remembering the nine-year-old's reaction when she learned that her swimming lessons would likely not continue past June due to budget cuts within the City of Toronto.

She wasn't the only one. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) trustee for Ward 15/Toronto-Danforth, Jennifer Story, was quoted in published reports as being "disappointed" with the city's decision to end its subsidies to some pools operated by the school board. Among those

targets is the TDSB pool at the S.H. Armstrong Community Centre, next to Duke of Connaught on Woodfield Road.

"They learned how to swim and take all of their lessons here," the mother of two said. "It's frustrating to think that it's not valued enough to maintain the programs."

The motion to keep city-run programming at the pool failed to garner enough votes during the city's final budget meeting at city hall on Feb. 15. Mayor John Tory voted against it.

Earlier, the city had decided to cut budgets for another in-school pool serving the East York area: the one at Don Mills Collegiate Institute on the Donway East, just outside East York's northeast corner.

Referring to the pool at Duke of Connaught, neighbourhood resident Angie Law said, "I think what's really upsetting the community was the lack of consultation."

She lamented what she predicts will be the breakup of the tight-knit swimming club that has been training together for

years, her young son included.

"I imagine the waiting list is going to be quite long to register for the next session," Law said.

Ward 31/Beaches-East York councillor Janet Davis also regrets the cuts.

"Eighty-five thousand dollars is well worth the investment to make sure hundreds and hundreds of kids who go through that pool throughout the year learn to swim."

But the "battle of the pool" isn't over yet, because the City of Toronto and the TDSB might renegotiate the funding agreement in June.

For that reason, Davis urges the community to keep fighting for their pools.

"Form a larger and stronger coalition of parents who are determined to protect school pools," she said. "There's power in numbers."

For her part, Law said she's not giving up. To her, there's more to the community pool than just a place for children to swim.

"It's also about catching up with friends, neighbours."

## Former borough 'was a very real place'

By **JUAN ROMERO**  
The Observer

Almost two decades have passed since Metropolitan Toronto became the City of Toronto — when Conservative Mike Harris' government created what some called the "mega-city" in 1998, almost literally over the dead bodies of the six autonomous municipalities that had made up Metro.

The Ontario Tories overrode the results of a 1997 referendum on the merger — that saw Torontonians vote against amalgamation by an average three-to-one margin (four-to-one in East York).

Citing a rationale of cost-savings, the Harris government used its majority at Queen's Park to enact the mega-city anyway. And with that, East York as a municipality officially disappeared.

Many say that the former borough has done a remarkable job of maintaining a sense of its own identity. But others would lament that East York is slowly but surely getting lost amid Toronto. Long-time Torontonian Stephen Wickens was

not in favour of the amalgamation of the city. And now he has joined veteran local critics in pronouncing the mega-city as ungovernable.

Wickens has written for publications such as the Toronto Star and Globe and Mail. As well, he maintains a website called "WorldWide Wickens."

"My main concern was that, what we now call the 416 was quite urban and also quite suburban," Wickens said in an interview.

"To try to put it all under one government in my view (makes) it sort of un-governable."

When amalgamation happened, he explained, East York lost the protection of independent municipal governments. He added that East York then began to become known to many people as a neighbourhood of Toronto, and not a borough. If you need proof, he suggested, just ask people today where the boundaries of East York are.



■ WICKENS

"People try to pretend that East York never existed, but it was a very real place that had its own culture," he said.

Wickens has allies in East York stalwarts like Alan Redway. Redway was mayor of the borough between 1977 and 1982, and then an MP representing the community in the House of Commons between 1984 and 1993.

In 2015, Redway published a book called "Governing Toronto: Bringing Back the City that Worked." In it, he argued that the amalgamated Toronto was dysfunctional.

"Individual citizens had much better access to the services that were provided locally," he said in an interview, "and they also had control over the planning process, which we don't have anymore."

Redway's book has been a call for something like de-amalgamation. He met with Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne about a year ago to talk about a possible un-mega'ing of the mega-city.

According to Redway, the premier understands the situation and may consider changes when the time is right.

## WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

### Local women to raise funds

The first annual meeting of 100 Women Who Care will take place this coming Tuesday, Feb. 28, at Globe Bistro, 124 Danforth Ave. The goal is for more than 100 women of East York to meet and raise money for local charities over the course of a year. Registration is at 7:15 p.m. and the meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. Each member will be asked to write a cheque for \$100, turning it into a \$10,000 overall donation.

### Start March with music

The East York Music Festival will be taking place next weekend, March 4-5, at Don Mills United Church. The festival will feature performances from students at Lippert Music Centre, as well as other local musicians. Tickets are \$5 for all ages, and the event starts at 9 a.m.

### Pancake time

St. Barnabas Church will be holding a pancake supper this coming Tuesday, Feb. 28, from 5 until 7 p.m. Tickets are \$3 for children (under 13) and \$7 for adults. The event will be held at the church, 361 Danforth Ave.

### Curtain up

The East Side Players' two-week run of the Steve Martin play "Picasso at the Lapin Agile" opens tonight, Feb. 24 at 8 p.m. in the Papermill Theatre on Pottery Road. For information and tickets, call 416-425-0917.

~ Farheen Sikander

# Parking tax off the table for now: Tory

Tax on parking in Toronto one of 12 revenue options sidelined by Mayor Tory

By NEIL POWERS

The Observer

At Si's Café on Broadview Avenue near the Danforth, parking is already hard to find during the day, and so patrons have mixed reviews of a proposed parking tax, withdrawn for now, to help address Toronto's budget shortfall. They're not sure what they would get in return from the city.

"I don't mind it," said barista Jennifer Mendelsohn about the proposed tax. But she has concerns about it being possibly too high. Mendelsohn talked of going to the Air Canada Centre and spending \$20 for parking, so she would feel the pinch of yet more money spent on a new tax on top of what she's already shelling out.

"Rates are ridiculous as it is," she said. So Mendelsohn plans on taking the TTC more, as driving becomes increasingly expensive.

"If there were a tax on paid parking, it should go to public transit," said Sheila Miller, a Si's patron.

As she leaves the café, another patron calls for any proceeds from a new parking tax to help pay for infrastructure.

The City of Toronto has just passed a balanced city budget, after threats of service cuts in 2017 to deal with a \$91-million budget shortfall. A new parking tax wasn't part of the settlement. But while it's been moved to the back-burner, the tax is hardly off the stove; after all, the city still faces an over \$30-billion shortfall for long-term capital projects.

Toronto looked at several options to avoid cutbacks in city services in 2017; two parking-related ones impacting consumers were a sales tax on paid parking and a levy on owners of commercial parking spaces. City manager Peter Wallace has said that the city is not keeping up with rising costs of providing services and there are major shortfalls for infrastructure and transit expansion in coming years.

To take up the challenge of rising costs with a growing population, the city hired consultant KPMG last April to look at new revenue potential. In June, KPMG presented the city with 12 revenue options.

One proposed option was a five- to 20-per-cent sales tax on Toronto's approximately 195,000 paid parking spaces. For example, a 10-per-cent tax on your \$10 parking charge would total \$11. This would add about \$65 million a year to city coffers.

Another option is a parking space owner levy on each of Toronto's roughly one million commercial parking spaces. KPMG said a 50-cent levy on each commercial parking space per day would generate about \$192 million and a \$1.50 levy would generate about \$575 million a year.

"The city is in need of revenue," said Toronto



File photo by Fotolia

**Toronto is examining several fiscal options to avoid cost-saving cutbacks in city services. One proposed option is a sales tax on Toronto's paid parking spaces.**

city councillor Joe Mihevc.

He is interested in the potential for hundreds of millions in new revenue with a parking levy, but acknowledges some pundits who suggest that it might not be as lucrative.

He talks of what happens if a growing Toronto does not keep up with needed revenues: "Dramatic cuts to services... We would not be able to afford city services that people expect."

The Real Property Association of Canada ("REALpac") is a national association of large owners and developers of commercial real estate. Its manager of government relations and policy, Brooks Barnett, opposes a parking levy. He sees it as "extremely hazardous for retail," because "it would be passed on to tenants" of commercial businesses.

"In the back end, tenants and consumers will pay," he said. Acknowledging ongoing budget shortfalls, Barnett said there are "better ways to solve the city budget." He points to looking for cost savings as one option.

To Barnett's point, Mayor John Tory and all but 10 councillors voted last summer to ask city departments and agencies to find 2.6 per cent in cuts for 2017.

Barnett leaves the door slightly ajar on the parking sales tax option, describing it as "more fair." He sees the parking sales tax as "different" because the "tax is passed to drivers" who use paid parking.

"To a large extent, current finances rely on what has been a windfall revenue gain from a buoyant

real estate market," Wallace said in his report on city finances.

Nearly one half of the city's unfunded capital projects are for transit expansion, which the city approved over the next 15 years.

Councillor Paula Fletcher expressed interest in the parking tax and levy.

"It (provides) good revenue generation. It is fairly low and will not hurt too much," she said.

Fletcher is "concerned lobbyists will upset the apple cart" in recommending against revenue increases.

"We'd be cutting things," said Fletcher, when it comes to what happens without new city funds. "All revenues keep the city running." She does not want to see library hours and other key services cut.

"We need (more) transit," she said.

The city's budget process evolves over several months. In late fall, Mayor Tory decided against proposing any of the 12 KPMG options for the city raising new revenue.

Last December, Tory won council approval for an option to raise funds via tolls on vehicles using the Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway. The tolls, subject to Ontario's provincial government agreement, were expected to raise up to \$300 million annually to help pay for transit infrastructure projects.

But the city's proposed tolls hit a dead end. Last month, Premier Kathleen Wynne rejected the proposed tolls on vehicles.

City manager Wallace has talked of concerns in relying on a booming economy and the Municipal Land Transfer Tax (MLTT). It provides the city revenue from a tax on the sale of property. In 2016, the city budgeted \$526 million in projected revenue via the MLTT. The revenue surpassed that goal, for a total of \$640 million. The booming real estate business is expected to add at least \$724 million to the city coffers this year via the MLTT.

At issue is whether the MLTT will be able to bridge gaps in the city's overall budget if the economy falter this year.

Councillor Gordon Perks made a motion to raise property taxes by 4.26 per cent. An average home would have paid about \$62. Perks wanted a tax hike to be used to support vulnerable people and affordable housing efforts. His motion failed 10-32.

Then the councillors passed a 2017 balanced city budget in a 27-16 vote. The property tax hike was held to two per cent.

But council may still hear Wallace's fall warning ringing in their ears: It is no longer feasible to delay a decision on how to raise substantial new revenues.

Still, there is not yet a consensus for parking-related taxes, or any other of the KPMG's recommended options for new revenue to the city. It is unclear if these (or any other yet-to-be-proposed revenue options) will be more of a factor when Toronto's economy slows.

## COMMUNITY

# Celebrate black history, Chinese heritage in February

By RYAN ORLECKI

The Observer

Most of us associate February with Black History Month.

But this time around, public school students in East York and throughout the Toronto District School Board have also been celebrating Chinese Heritage Month for the first time.

"This month will provide a very good opportunity where we will reflect upon contributions of this important group in our community," said Manna Wong, TDSB trust-

ee for Ward 20.

"One of my proudest moments as a trustee when I saw Chinese students and non-Chinese students learning and celebrating together about Chinese Heritage Month," said Ward 17 trustee Ken Lister.

Students have been learning the lion dance, taekwondo, producing art and dancing.

According to Wong, Chinese-Canadians make up around 10 per cent of the population in the GTA.

February is also Black History Month, with observances already established for

several years.

"We will highlight the contributions people of African descent have made in the field of science, technology, engineering and math," said Ward 14 trustee Chris Moise.

Moise said it is important that all students gain insight about African history.

"When we celebrate African heritage this month, it's important to see the intersections of our identity and culture in multiple lenses," said Ward 18 trustee Parthi Kandavel.

File photo by Fotolia



# Firm donates books to children in need

First Nations School in East York benefits from donation of 1,000 books

By **TEMI DADA**  
The Observer

The head of an agency promoting youth literacy says books in the hands of children can change the future.

On Feb. 10, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), in partnership with First Book Canada, hosted a reading event at the First Nations School of Toronto — located in the old Eastern Commerce Collegiate high school building at 16 Phin Ave., in the Donlands-Danforth neighbourhood.

The event acknowledged Tata's donation of 1,000 new books to the First Nations School, which opened last month as the province's first K-12 school for indigenous students.

Wayne Cochrane, the director of operations for First Book Canada, explained the importance of the gift.

"I think the biggest barrier to literacy is lack of access to books," he said. "Kids who don't have access to books won't be able to read, which affects their performance at school, which could affect success in their future. This is why we do what we do."

First Book Canada donates about a

million books a year to schools. In its partnership with First Book Canada, Tata provides the finances for events such as the one at the First Nations School, explained Sarah Matheson, head of sustainability for Tata, in Washington D.C.

"It is part of our ongoing 10-year relationship with First Book Canada," she said. "We have given more than 400,000 books to educators and students in U.S. and Canada. The intention is to give books to students who would not have access to books. Hence the name First Book."

Twenty employees from TCS, as well as two representatives of First Book and Doris Burrows, the librarian at the First Nations School, co-ordinated the event. About 50 students from the school's kindergarten through Grade 4 classes attended.

Susan Hughes, an award-winning children's author, spoke to the students about creativity. Then she read a few stories from her own books for the children and the volunteers.

"Having my ideas turned into actual books and shared with real kids is phenomenal," Hughes said. Then she praised the school's professionals.

"I really respect teachers and librarians because their job is so difficult and they leave a huge impact in the lives of these kids," she said.



Temi Dada /// The Observer

**Tata Consultancy Services recently sent volunteers to the First Nations School of Toronto to read to students there. Award-winning children's author Susan Hughes was also on hand to talk about creativity.**



Michael Linnenen /// The Observer

**Rick Pearson sings the Beatles' "Blackbird" at the East York Historical Society meeting observing Black History Month.**

## Singing the Beatles for Black History

By **MICHAEL LINNENEN**  
The Observer

Rick Pearson is still learning about the music he performs, and that includes at this special time of year.

When he recently sang Paul McCartney's lyrics, "Blackbird singing in the dead of night; take these sunken eyes and learn to see; all your life; you were only waiting for this moment to be free," he discovered that the song wasn't about birds at all. As McCartney himself has suggested, the former Beatle "was thinking about the civil rights movement at that time he wrote it," Pearson said. "He wrote it in 1968."

Pearson loves songs from the 1960s. So, as part of the East York Historical Society's meeting and observance of Black History Month in February, he performed several songs from the '60s and '70s.

"Black history and music history

are so tied together, and I am thankful for it because of the music I love to play and the (rhythm and blues) influences like James Brown and Marvin Gaye," he said.

Pearson explained that all of the songs he performed have meaning for the contemporary social environment.

For example, he also performed the song "Abraham, Martin and John" by Dion. He explained that the lyrics are about Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy — who were all leaders for social change and civil rights. Pearson said the song effectively captures the tragedy of losing those people.

Pearson also sang Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On?" It was a response to the race riots of the 1970s:

"Mother, mother; there's too many of you crying; brother, brother, brother; there's far too many of

you dying," Pearson sang — and later explained: "Both in the race riots that went on in Detroit and in the south at the hands of the Klan, and in Vietnam, it wasn't just the black brothers (dying), but it was all the brothers.... I just let it address issues that were contemporary and sadly still are."

Pearson offered other examples illustrating the relationship between black music and black history.

"Tap dancing wouldn't exist if there hadn't been slavery," he said. "Now that doesn't celebrate slavery; it celebrates the culture that they accidentally brought with them when they brought these slaves; they didn't realize they were bringing in a rich, sophisticated culture, the spirituality, athleticism, all of the riches of a human being," he said.

"They were bringing something that is considered to be a powerful force in North America."

### ■ COMMUNITY

## Local hospital named one of city's top employers

Institution takes pride in 'creating health and building communities'

By **AHMED-ZAHI HAGAR**  
The Observer

Michael Garron Hospital has been named one of Toronto's best employers.

The East York hospital, formerly Toronto East General, received the award recently in recognition of its workplace culture. It was also named one of Canada's Top 10 Admirable Corporate Cultures.

Phil Kontanidis, human resources director at Michael Garron, said the hospital takes pride in "creating health and building communities."

"We know that a positive culture is created and cultivated by everyone and is key to patient and employee satisfaction," he said.

"We have built a culture of excellent patient care, centred around our values of courage, accountability, integrity and compassion."

In total, the hospital has recently received nine awards, ranging from Employer Award of Excellence from the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario to the Workplace Benefits Mental Health Award from Benefits Canada.

Kontanidis said the hospital is

"honoured" to receive the recognition and that the awards are "an external validation and recognition for a culture that we have always been proud of."

Greater Toronto's Top Employers, created by Mediacorp Inc., assesses companies by their overall work environment, along with factors such as skills development and community involvement.

According to Mediacorp's website, Michael Garron was selected for its "onsite amenities" for its employees, as well as for its investment in "personal and professional development."

Waterstone Human Capital, an executive search firm, named Michael Garron one of Canada's top 10 in the broader public sector. The winners, according to Waterstone, "demonstrate the importance of culture" and its impact on organizational performance.

Kontanidis said the hospital is taking steps to become a more inclusive workplace through such initiatives as education and training focused on LGBTQ inclusion and workplace violence prevention.

"Our employee population is as diverse as the patient population we serve," he said. "Recognizing this allows for the hospital to ensure that we are meeting the needs of all of our employees through a variety of positive workplace initiatives."





Photos courtesy of Dalibor Dejanovic

At right, East York artist Dalibor Dejanovic looks at ease with his easel during the ‘Brush with the Highlands’ painting competition. But Dejanovic’s focus is apparent in his renderings of scenes that he finds right outside his door — like the one shown in his painting of an alleyway (left).

# Artist captures quiet beauty of East York

‘There’s something about the light that influences the place,’ painter muses

By JON LAMONT  
The Observer

For some, finding beauty in the mundane and the everyday is a difficult task. Too often, we pass by rows of houses and shops on our way to work, and we don’t pause to admire the world around us. For artists such as Dalibor Dejanovic, however, finding the beauty around him is crucial.

Dejanovic, 37, lives in East York with his wife Mihaela, daughter Ava and son Damian. He’s the co-ordinator of the Animation 3D program at Centennial College’s East York campus on Carlaw Avenue, and he free-

lances as a visual development artist. In his spare time, he paints.

“Professionally, I was an animator,” Dejanovic says. “Drawing and painting — that was a passion.”

However, he was not always a painter.

Dejanovic grew up in Croatia. In 1990, his world was thrown into disarray by the Croatian war. He lived in a city called Petrinja that was on the frontlines of the war and, for a few years, there was little food and no electricity. The final attack in 1995 forced those living in the region to abandon their homes. Dejanovic had to leave behind his brother and stepfather, who were in the army.

After fleeing the city, Dejanovic found himself in a refugee camp in Bosnia. He stayed there for 10 days, before finally being reunited with his

brother and stepfather. They were forced to go to Serbia; they couldn’t go back home, and they couldn’t stay in Bosnia because of the war.

They stayed in Belgrade in Serbia with an old family friend for a few weeks at first, but had to move on. There was nowhere to stay in Serbia, as almost half a million refugees had come into the country. Dejanovic was told if he and his family went to Kosovo, they could find a place to stay.

They boarded a train to Kosovo with nothing but the clothes on their backs. They found a place to stay in Kosovo at workers’ barracks in a gypsy village. Dejanovic stayed there for six months, before moving to Canada in 1996 to start a new life.

“If I had stayed back home, I wouldn’t have done animation. I

wouldn’t have had that opportunity,” he says. “I also doubt I would’ve discovered art. It was coming to this country that allowed me to do and explore that. That opportunity that you can do anything, here, in this country.”

Dejanovic’s artistic passions were also shaped and inspired by the work of his peers.

When he saw the landscape paintings of Bill Cone, a Pixar artist, he was moved to make his own.

“I never liked landscapes,” he said. “But when I saw his landscapes, I was blown away. There was something about the way he would capture the light and the situation and the colour. It made me just want to pick up the paint and go outdoors.”

And that’s exactly what Dejanovic does in East York. “I paint here be-

cause I live here,” he says. Besides, his busy schedule keeps him from travelling too far.

“What is the beauty of it? Is there beauty to it? So I started painting what I’m seeing from my deck or porch or yard, or places nearby,” he said.

“And I started seeing things like a garage or an alleyway. It’s not something you’d imagine as an inspiration. But there’s something about the light that can influence the place. And suddenly that old garage becomes interesting because of what light does to it.”

And it’s that perspective that makes East York so special for Dejanovic.

“I see beauty in the normal settings in East York. This is where I am, and I think I’m going to be exploring more of that.”

# Retrospective traces career of painter Helen Lucas



Courtesy of the City of Toronto

Exhibition features selection of works from ‘60s to now by ‘significant Canadian artist’

By CHERYLDEAN PETERS  
The Observer

If you’re looking for a mini-winter break, you may find it as close as the Todmorden Mills Heritage Site over the next week.

The cultural complex’s Papermill Gallery, in partnership with Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections at York University, is hosting a retrospective of the works of Canadian artist Helen Lucas, who is known for her large, vibrant depictions of flowers. The show, Helen Lucas: Roots to the Present, traces her career from the 1960s to today.

The exhibition was curated by York University graduates Jenna Shamoon and Simone Wharton.

Lori Zuppinger, program officer at the Pottery Road complex, said it’s a privilege to host the retrospective.

“(Helen Lucas) is a really significant Canadian artist,” she said. “She continues to produce work, but there’s never been a full retrospective like this for her career, so it’s a real honour for us to house that.”

Lucas lives and works from a studio in King Township, Ont. Because much of her artwork is in the archives at York University, the Todmorden exhibit features an impressive selection of the paintings she’s produced over the years.

“We’re really happy to have Helen’s exhibit here because Helen is a Greek-Canadian artist,” Zuppinger said. “Being here close to the Danforth, and close to a Greek-Canadian community” is a natural fit.

Helen Lucas: Roots to the Present will be on display until March 5. For more information, visit [www.toronto.ca/todmordenmills](http://www.toronto.ca/todmordenmills)

## ■ EDITORIALS

# A Trump 'Baycott'

We've all heard the term boycott. But have you ever heard of a "Baycott?"

Ivanka Trump's clothing line is being sold at the Bay. Some people want Canadians to boycott the Bay, to show their disapproval of the Donald Trump brand. So is the Bay at Eglinton Square, just outside East York's northeast corner, about to go out of business? Of course not. But do the advocates of the Baycott have a point?

Trump has already given Canadians reason to be angry with his weeks-old presidency. And his tattered reputation has filtered down to the rest of his family. That includes his daughter Ivanka and her fashion brand.

But why are we punishing Ivanka for her father? Is that fair?

Barbara Walters asked if her father said anything offensive on the campaign trail. Ivanka claimed no. "Very proud of my father who will be a great president for all Americans," she posted on Instagram last month.

That support is offending some Bay shoppers. If Ivanka truly does stand by her father, then she is part of the problem.

But some people disagree. They say that Ivanka is more broad minded than her father. Case in point: Ivanka openly advocates for women having positions of power at the White House.

"At last week's meeting of the White House Business Advisory Council, one of the key items on the agenda was leveling the playing field for women in the workforce including female small business owners — a topic of critical importance," she posted on her social media.

But her behaviour, however, seems to mimic her father's. Ivanka showed that during an interview with Cosmopolitan Magazine. When Prachi Gupta asked Ivanka a question about comments her father made in an interview regarding maternal leave, Ivanka lost her cool.

"Well you said he made those comments," she said. "I don't know that he said those."

Like father, like daughter. So let's send a message. Join the Baycott. But only to encourage the Bay to drop the Trump line.

Then we'll get those HBC cards out again.

~ Divya Rajan

# Time to speak up

Are Canadians more racist than we think?

As the Observer reported at the time, posters were spotted in East York addressed to white people. (The signs read, "Hey White Person.") They included questions like, "Wondering why only white countries have become 'multicultural?'" Figured out that the diversity only means 'less white people?'"

Other incidents have been reported — like a swastika painted on the door of Anna Maranta, a woman who runs a Jewish Centre in Ottawa and a white man in Hamilton saying how happy he is that Donald Trump is president... because he is going to ban Muslims.

Worst of all: the terrible mass murder of worshippers at the mosque in Quebec City.

It does seem like events south of the border — including an attempted ban on people entering the United States from several mainly Muslim countries — have energized racism here in Canada, including in East York. There has been a backlash, of course. After the mosque attack, there were two separate rallies in East York to show solidarity with our Muslim neighbours.

But as the new American administration pursues policies that appear racist, it has given some people both inside and outside the U.S. a form of permission to vent their own racist views. Clearly there are Americans and Canadians who agree with the new discrimination being inflicted by Washington. And that's scary. The United States no longer seems like home to The American Dream.

The point here is that Canadians can't be too smug. Canadians pride themselves on living in a diverse country that is welcoming of others. So it's especially unfortunate that Trump's presidency is bringing out racism among some Canadians.

Canada has spent 150 years creating peace at home and giving Canadians the opportunity to live life to its utmost potential. Trump and his followers are creating a divide among people and that is taking us back in history.

A Facebook group called East Enders Against Racism was created after hearing about the racist posters that went up here. With nearly 1,000 members, the group's main goal is to educate and promote diversity.

But as a country with so much American culture intertwined with ours, maybe Canadians need to more explicitly reaffirm that Canada is welcoming and supports other religions and culture. Because maybe racism in Canada is a bigger issue than we think.

How can we teach our children to embrace other cultures when some among us are voicing how we think Donald Trump is doing the right thing? Or simply remaining silent?

~ Mursal Rahman

## ■ COLUMNS

# The real power of friends

Walking into Centennial College on Sept. 9, 2015, was terrifying for me. It was the first time back at a post-secondary institution in almost two years. My first class at college felt like the first day in kindergarten. In other words, I was a mess.

My teacher asked me what I wanted to do in life. My plan was to tell her that I wanted to be a sports journalist, but that it might be difficult because I'm a person of colour.

Sounds easy to say, right? Not for me, apparently.

I stuttered trying to make my point, and then a young woman alongside me interrupted and said what took me almost five minutes to say. She looked at me, clearly annoyed, and I felt like I wanted to hide in a corner.

I left school that day, thinking that I should never go back.

Fast forward to now. I could not be enjoying school any more than I am right now. I am in my second year in journalism and I hope to be a sportscaster... that is, until I change my mind for the umpteenth time.

I did not think I was still going to be here at Centennial, but I'm still thriving.

And the people I've met at school have been the biggest reason why.

As crazy as it sounds, it felt weird having good friends in my life. It felt weird not going out alone. It felt weird having a good time for once in my life. This was all new to me; I had never really experienced true friendships before.

And this power of friendship came through at a time when things could have gone horribly wrong for me.

The summer of 2016 was one of the darkest times in my life. A family member of mine had been arrested and I felt like I was about to lose my mind.

And this is where my two closest friends may have saved my life.

The fact that they were there

for me, whenever I needed to vent out my frustrations, meant a lot.

For example, one of them would goodnaturedly make fun of me and we'd end up laughing hysterically. It might not seem like much, but moments like that kept me sane throughout the summer.

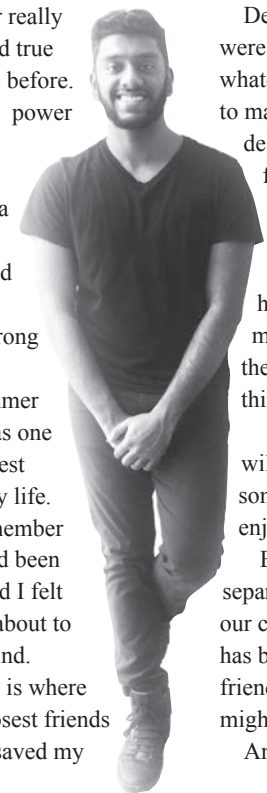
Despite the fact that they were a couple, they took whatever time out of their day to make me feel better. This, despite the many times I frustrated them.

One of the friends is like the brother I've always wanted but never had. The girl that was mentioned earlier? She's the other friend. Funny how things work out sometimes.

Nowadays, when people will see me, they will see someone who is finally enjoying life.

Eventually, we'll go our separate ways and focus on our careers. Sure, the program has been great. But without friends to complement work, I might not be alive.

And so hopefully you can see why I don't want my time at college to end any time soon.



**Kajan Thiruthanikasalam**

# Singing the winter blues

It's still winter. Despite the February mild spell, let's not fool ourselves into thinking spring is here.

I'm fairly certain I've tried almost everything in my power to advance April. Have I tried to picture myself in Cuba by posting Instagram throwbacks from my last vacation? Yes. Have I yelled at snowflakes wafting through the air? Yes. Have I even tried to wear some of my spring clothes to see how I could get away with something that isn't cable-knit?

Check, check, and check. But before I mislead anyone, I'd like to state that I don't hate winter. In fact, there's a short stretch of the calendar when I actually love winter. It's that sweet spot from the end of autumn to the end of December. My problem is really with January and onwards.

I just find winter to be that guest at the party who's the last one to leave. Old Man Winter knows he should leave. He knows that once the holiday merriment dies down,

that his presence is no longer needed... nor wanted. So once Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza and New Year's have come and gone, just about everyone is happy to see winter be gone as well.

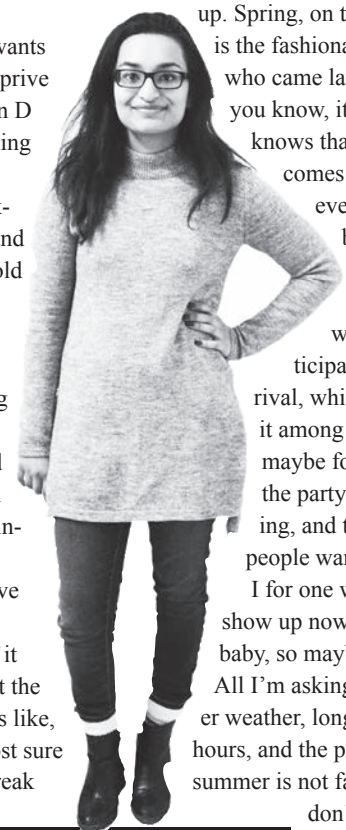
But no, it wants to stay and deprive you of vitamin D — hence making you lazy and sleepy. It darkens the days and makes it so cold that the only reason you would even consider being out is if you were wrapped head-to-toe in your entire winter wardrobe.

I would have no objections with winter if it was the guy at the party who was like, 'Hmm, the host sure could use a break from the chaos; I guess the

party's over.' But no, winter's more like, 'First let's watch a movie, then we can stay up and share secrets and then...'

You get the idea. Winter doesn't know when to give up. Spring, on the other hand, is the fashionably tardy girl who came late because, you know, it's cool. She knows that once she comes to the party everyone will be happy to see her. That some people were even anticipating her arrival, whispering about it among themselves... maybe for days before the party. She's coming, and that's what people want to hear.

I for one want spring to show up now. I'm a spring baby, so maybe that's why. All I'm asking for is warmer weather, longer daylight hours, and the promise that summer is not far along. I don't really think that's too much to ask for. Or is it?



**Fatima Texiwala**

# A look back at East York's rural roots



Courtesy of the 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 go back more than a century, and vividly illustrate the rural character of the community at that time; in particular, the area around Todmorden Mills, the tiny settlement that was near what is now Pottery Road between Broadview and Bayview avenues. The archive identifies the photo on the left as the “Don Valley at Todmorden Mills, from north of Broadview.” The archivists think the picture was taken around 1911. The photograph on the right was taken four years earlier, they believe, in 1907. They call it “Don Valley farmer planting corn,” and add: “Additional information indicates that he is George Tomlin, who for 12 years worked as a farmer for Robert Davies, Todmorden.”

■ COMMUNITY

## West African morsels delight on the Danforth

Restaurant has become a spot for homesick Africans seeking a taste of home

By **TEMI DADA**  
The Observer

There’s finger-licking good. And then there’s tears-in-your-eyes gratifying. And tears was the reaction that East York-area restaurateur Danielle Gueu got from one of her diners last month. “There was a guy that came here,” Gueu remembered in an Observer interview for Black History Month. “I think he lives in the States.” Gueu said she served the diner a dish from “back home known as ‘gaba.’ He had tears in his eyes while eating it... telling me that I didn’t know what I had just done. That

is the kind of reaction that we are looking for.” Gueu is the owner of Le Plato, an African restaurant on the Danforth, between Pape and Jones avenues. It’s the only west African restaurant in the area.

The customer in her story had not had gaba in more than 20 years, because he had not been able to return to his country of birth, Ivory Coast. Then he walked into Le Plato. The restaurant is located at 785 Danforth Ave. — a basement beneath a Korean restaurant in Greektown. It might seem to be an unlikely place for culinary miracles of that sort. If not for the signboard at the top of the stairs, it could be entirely overlooked by passersby. But the restaurant has become a spot for homesick



Africans who want a taste of home, and Canadians who have served or worked in Africa. And Le Plato is also a hub for promoting African food and culture in East York.

“Food was terrible when I just got here,” said customer Ose Okhilua. “It was bland with no spice. So I started searching for African food and I was glad when I found this restaurant with my friends. It helped a lot.” Okhilua is from Nigeria, and is an international student at the University of Toronto. “Weekend nights here are amazing,” said another customer, Ange Djacoure. Referring to the vibrant Danforth neighbourhood around Le Plato, she explained: “The lights, scenery and people remind me of Ivory

Coast, especially with the DJs and the music.” Gueu added: “It helps people to remember where you came from. When you eat your traditional food, it feels like you never traveled, like you are still home and that small moment eating rekindles memories from back home.” Homesickness was actually a factor in Gueu’s startup of the restaurant. After moving with her family from England in 2011, Gueu took on the difficult restaurant business after realizing how much she missed African food. Hence the birth of Le Plato, in 2014. “I was looking for a place to eat myself,” she said. In Europe, we had a lot of options and restaurants for African food, so I thought it was the same here. It wasn’t. When I realized there wasn’t one, I saw the opportunity to start one here, so I found this basement and started the restaurant.”



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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.



James Dalgarno/// The Observer

Acting senior scientist Walter Stoddard talks about “Biomechanics: The Machine Inside,” a new exhibit that opened earlier this month at the Ontario Science Centre.

## Welcome to the machine

Animals, plants explored as machines built for survival in new exhibit

By JESSICA McDONALD  
The Observer

A six-year-old science enthusiast says the new Ontario Science Centre exhibit is one of the coolest things he’s ever seen.

The Science Centre on Don Mills Road opened the new “Biomechanics: The Machine Inside” exhibit to the public earlier this month.

The exhibit, originally developed by The Field Museum in Chicago, explores animals and plants as machines built for survival. Real specimens, life-like models, video footage and interactive displays all fill the exhibition.

Carter Love, otherwise known as “the Curious Kid Professor,” has been visiting the Science Centre almost his entire life, and he said he’s excited for what the new exhibit has in store.

“I find it really cool,” he said. “I’m most excited for the pushing, pulling and bending parts.”

Love is exactly the kind of centre visitor the exhibit is aimed at, said Prof. Mark Westneat from the University of Chicago, one of the lead scientific content advisors for the exhibit.

“I hope that students, after they leave the exhibit, see biomechanics everywhere,” Westneat said.

“In the exhibit, we were able to get little panels, at about the height of a sixth grader, to read about doing the math. That’s important to us.”

Westneat said that biomechanics is an important way of looking at the world.

“Biomechanics is a blend of math, physics, biology. When you tell people that, they’re like ‘Oh my God, is it really that academic?’” he said.

“Do I really have to do math?” he continued. “Well, you don’t have to do math to appreciate biomechanics... but the math is not complicated. Biomechanics is everywhere.”

The exhibition is completely interactive and is broken down into seven sections with titles that reflect the theme of life as machinery: Staying in One Piece — Structures and Materials; Going with the Flow — Pumps and Pops; Surviving the Elements — Insulations and Ra-

diators; Grabbing a Bite — Jaws and Claws; Crossing the Landscape — Legs and Springs; Launching into the Blue — Wings and Fins; and Gathering Intelligence — Eyes, Ears and Beyond.

Walter Stoddard, acting senior scientist at the Ontario Science Centre, said the facility prides itself on picking the right exhibits to please a wide range of visitors.

“This is a great example of the right choice. It’s open to all ages. Very amazing content. There’s a lot of depth if you want to go in-depth, but there’s also some fun interactives,” Stoddard said.

“It’s a great fit for our space and our target audience, which is everyone. Everyone should find something to enjoy here.”

Stoddard also believes the exhibit is part of a bigger picture and wants guests who come to experience it to see that.

“What I hope is that we will reinforce that understanding that nature is a part of us and we are a part of it... that really, we are a part of a much bigger picture and as we understand and build our understanding of the nature world, we increase our own understanding of ourselves,” he said.

The exhibit, which runs until May 7, is included with general admission.

### ■ BLACK HISTORY MONTH

## Journalist says racism is still a problem in newsrooms

Co-founder of Share Newspaper says prejudice is sometimes blatant, at other times subtle

By JOE FLUTE  
The Observer

A prominent Toronto journalist, originally from Trinidad and Tobago, says that newsroom racism persists in Canada.

Jules Elder, a founding member of the Canadian Association of Black Journalists (CABJ), delivered a guest lecture at Centennial College’s East York campus on Feb. 14, as part of the college’s observance of Black History Month.

Elder is program director of the college’s Internet radio station and a student intern supervisor.

In the mid-1970s, Elder helped launch Share Newspaper, a weekly newspaper serving the black and Caribbean communities in Toronto.

One of his most vivid recollections of racism is from his tenure reporting for Share.

It was 1976 and Elder was attending a news event in Toronto at which a prominent white supremacist was speaking.

“I went to a press conference with Ernst Zündel, and was one of two black people in the room,” Elder said.

“Some reporters asked questions, so I got up to ask a question.”

But Zündel didn’t even respond.

“I’m still waiting for my answer,” Elder remembers saying.

“He just looked at me.”

But being ignored didn’t stop Elder.

“Did I go back and write a story for Share Newspaper? Of course I did,” he remembered. Then he paused and added: “These things happen.”

When asked if black journalists still face racial prejudice in the industry today, Elder answered that they do.

“Sometimes it is blatant, while at other times it could be subtle,” he said.

“I deal with it as I see fit, but always in a responsible manner that places me above the one displaying the racist behaviour.”



■ ELDER

## East York pastor recipient of 2017 Agnes Macphail Award

Cont’d. from page 1

spend time with other kids in the community, he explained. They play ping pong, basketball and a number of other activities.

Approximately 60 young people ranging in age from eight to 14 are involved in the initiative.

All of East York Strategy’s programs and sports are free of

charge, thanks to community sponsors and Parker’s attention to cost-effective activities.

“That’s part of our approach, where it’s the community coming together to help the youth,” he explained.

Parker was nominated for the Agnes Macphail Award by Pauline Adams, one of his East York Strategy team members.

She was involved in the strategy from the initial planning process and has remained a constant contributor.

Parker received a call at the beginning of the month about the award and was overwhelmed by the news.

“Obviously, it’s a very nice honour to receive (this award) and understand that other people have

seen what you’ve been doing,” he said.

While he is delighted to be receiving the award and proud of all of the work everyone has done with East York Strategy, Parker said an honour such as this was never the goal for him.

“It’s one of those things where you don’t do this kind of stuff to get an award,” he said. “If I was

doing it just for the thanks, I would have stopped doing it long ago.”

Parker is hoping that all 60 of the young people involved in the strategy will be able to attend the March 24 ceremony at the civic centre.

He wants them to see the community-building they are taking part in, he said, and hold pride in themselves as well.