



■ EARTH HOUR



Alexa Battler /// The Observer

### A tree grows in East York

Don Valley West MPP and Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne speaks to a crowd at St. Cuthbert's Church on Bayview Avenue in East York, to conclude the church's day-long fair around Earth Hour last Saturday. The event was called Creation Care 2017 and it culminated with the great oak tree at the front of the church being recognized as an Ontario Heritage Tree. It was the first of the 150 trees being honoured by Forests Ontario for Canada's 150th anniversary.

## Nursery school facing closure

By ANISSA CALMA-BROWN  
The Observer

Tomorrow may be make-or-break for a neighbourhood fixture in the southeast corner of East York. That's where Dentonia Park Co-operative Nursery School is, on the lower level of the Faith Presbyterian Community Church at 140 Dawes Rd.

It's been operating for 43 years as a non-profit, play-based school for very young children. It's had official charity status since 1983.

But now the combination of parents and teachers who run it co-operatively say that it's in danger of being shut down because of low enrolment.

So tomorrow, April 1, there will be an open house at the school from 10 a.m. until noon. The hope is that a handful of families will be encouraged to enrol their children in the next couple of weeks to ease the crisis.

The nursery welcomes students between the ages of two and four. It currently has 16 of them. It says it needs a few more to remain viable.

■ See NURSERY, page 4

## Annual East York ceremony honours community leader

Pastor Jim Parker 'humbled' by Agnes Macphail Award for local youth program

By ANNA BOYES  
The Observer

It was standing room only in the council chambers of the East York Civic Centre on March 24 — despite it being a mild Friday night at the end of an unseasonably cold work-week.

East York turned out for the community's highest award for civic activism: the 24th Agnes Macphail Award.

The annual award is given to one East York resident who has made distinguished contribu-

tions toward the community and who lives by the motto attributed to Macphail: "Think globally, act locally."

This year's recipient, Pastor Jim Parker of Bethany Baptist Church on Pape Avenue, won for his work with East York Strategy, a network of church groups working to create good in their community through youth activity programs.

Parker called his win "humbling" and a surprise. The \$3,000 in prize money will go to the East York Strategy.

For event organizer Lorna Krawchuk, the award is also a reminder of the East Yorker who in the early 20th century was a pioneer social reformer and female politician at both the provincial and federal levels.

"It's really important to re-

member someone with the significance of Agnes Macphail," Krawchuk said. "I think if there weren't an award like this and her name didn't come up with it, then people would say 'Who?'"

One of the night's highlights was a keynote address given by another female pioneer, Dr. Vivienne Poy, who has been credited as the first Chinese-Canadian to be appointed to the Senate.

The night's MCs were past award-recipients Lis Lister and her husband Bob Lister. Hosting is a tradition that they have coveted for the past 16 years.

Referring to Macphail, Lis Lister pressed her hand to her heart and said, "She is the epitome of everything that I as a woman aspire to."



Anna Boyes /// The Observer

Macphail Award winner Jim Parker is flanked by East York councillors Janet Davis (left) and Mary Fragedakis.

## POLICE &amp; FIRE

## No suspects in fatal shooting

A 28-year-old man was murdered in East York on March 18. Police have identified the victim as Mohamed Abdulkadir Ali of Toronto. They say they were called to Meighen Avenue in the Victoria Park Avenue-Dawes Road area that Saturday night at about 9 p.m. for reports of gunshots. They found the victim with a bullet wound and other trauma to his body. He died the following day in hospital. Homicide detectives are investigating. Anyone with information is asked to call police at 416-808-7400, or Crime Stoppers anonymously at 416-222-TIPS.

## Bank robbed

A bank branch in the area of Danforth and Woodbine avenues was robbed on March 12 when a man wearing sunglasses handed the teller a note demanding money and threatening the staff. He then fled with some cash. He's described as about 20, 5'8" and 150 pounds. He has short hair and brown skin.

## Man charged

Toronto police executed a search warrant related to a child pornography investigation on March 15 at an address in the Eglinton Avenue-Don Mills Road area. They subsequently charged a 20-year-old man with accessing, possessing and distributing child porn. Emin Omerinovic of Toronto made his first court appearance on March 16.

~Sarah Bhola

## Keep it within the lines

## Urban Gallery plays host to innovative student artwork

By RHIANNE CAMPBELL  
The Observer

There's still time — but only a little — to see the work of some emerging East York artists in what is, for many of them, their first big gallery show.

The students are finishing their first year in the fine arts program at Centennial College's East York campus. And for the third year in a row, Urban Gallery at 400 Queen St. E. is showing their work.

The show opened on March 19. Today, March 31, and tomorrow are its final days. The gallery is open 12-5 p.m.

At the show's opening, students, parents and friends enjoyed food and wine as they took the time to survey the 19 artists' work hanging on the walls.

Each artist was given an eight-inch wooden box as their muse, and based their works on the theme "Fever."

The box could be ripped apart and manipulated as their hearts desired. The art was priced anywhere between \$200 and \$350.

"Buy it now while you can, while it's cheap," said David McClyment. "Because these people will be stars."

McClyment is the college's fine arts program co-ordinator. He said he is not proud of the students; rather he is proud for them. He explained that means the work is the students' alone — and his only job was to "wind them up."

"A big part of our program is making sure everybody understands what's coming their way as soon as they graduate," McClyment said, "in terms of how do you have a show, how do you get a show, how do you put your portfolio together, contracts, insurance, all that stuff."



Rhianne Campbell/// The Observer

**Amanda Francis with her piece "Inversion," part of a gallery show by East York art students that's on until tomorrow, April 1, at the Urban Gallery on Queen Street East.**

For his part, Urban Gallery curator Allen Shugar said, "the mandate of the gallery is really to promote the work of emerging artists or artists that don't already have their foot in the door of the gallery system."

For Amanda Francis, this is an opportunity to showcase her talent. She designed the promotional poster for the gallery opening, and she is also a featured artist in the show.

Born in Pakistan and raised in Toronto, Francis took the title of the show literally and made a piece that spoke to intense and unusual dreams caused by having a fever.

The inspiration behind her piece was the late renowned artist Joseph Cornell. She decided to create a shadow box that

displayed found objects that resonated with her vision oriented around medicine. The piece features apothecary bottles and a broken ceramic doll's head, among other "creepy and weird" objects.

"I want there to be intrigue," Francis said. "I want there to be acknowledgment of the weirdness and I want them to kind of ask questions about why is this there."

The piece is called "Inversion," because to her, this piece connects to who she is.

"It kind of connects to me being inverted myself," she said. "The opposite, the different, the not-normal. Just like when I think of the word inversion, I think of a spiral looping in my head, and that kind of reminds me of fever dreams."

## Thief's spree damages 30-plus cars

By FATIMA AL-SAYED  
The Observer

East York resident William Robinson said he was baffled on Monday when he found his car window smashed in — and only an inexpensive gift card stolen.

"It cost me \$300... to fix the window, and they took a \$7 Tim Hortons card," said Robinson, 62. "There's stuff they could have taken that would have been an inconvenience."

The Toronto Police Service reported a series of car break-ins on March 27 on Eastdale Avenue near Main Street. Residents at 75 Eastdale Ave. went to their cars that morning only to find their windows smashed and the contents dumped onto the seats of the cars.

According to TPS Const. Victor Kwong, over 30 vehicles were reported damaged with contents stolen.

"I came down here at about 3:30 to go to work and I saw my car," Robinson said, "and (the passenger's window) was smashed, like somebody had taken a hammer to it."

Robinson has lived in the apartment building for three years. He said that he's seen this happen in the garage before and



Fatima Al-Sayed///The Observer

**More than 30 cars were broken into via smashed windows in the garage of 75 Eastdale Ave., in East York's southeast corner.**

has often therefore taken precautions, like removing his car GPS to his apartment.

There were security cameras in the parking lot that may have caught all of the action, but the building manager refused to answer questions about the

break-ins. TPS has gathered the evidence and is still investigating.

Although the damage and thefts made for a bleak morning, residents such as Robinson have now had their windows fixed and have put their cars back on the road.

## WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

## Talk recalls Vimy Ridge

The 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge is on April 9. The costly First World War victory is considered an epic event in Canada's development as an independent global actor. This Monday, April 3, renowned historian Jack Granatstein will be speaking on the subject at the S. Walter Stewart library. His talk is from 7 to 8 p.m. No registration is required and the event is free.

## Easter beagle is on his way

The Todmorden Mills Heritage Site on Pottery Road is hosting Easter egg-painting workshops. Adults and children will learn to create their own personalized egg using a "wax-resist" method. Workshops will be from 1-4 p.m., April 8-9 and April 15. It costs \$12 for adults and \$8 for children. Pre-registration is required; the site's number is 416-396-2819.

## A new use for duct tape

You don't often see a school principal rendered powerless, but that's going to be the case — for charity — at Westwood Middle School at 994 Carlaw Ave. on 'Pink Day,' April 12. The school is raising awareness for diversity and against bullying. So from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., there will be a bake sale, and you can buy some duct-tape to actually help adhere principal Mark Sprack to the gym wall.

~Jordan Clarke

# Local writers share secrets of the trade

East York Writers' Group gathers to discuss craft of writing, provide feedback

By NICOLE REIS  
The Observer

Former York University lecturer and creative writer Lee Parpart, 51, has been writing poetry and prose for most of her adult life. She was the winner of the 2016 Open Book Ontario "What's your story" contest for East York. And now she's joined the East York Writers' Group to share her work and receive feedback from fellow writers.

"This is great barometer for me," she said in an interview. "It's easy to get too close to your own work, so I need this input."

The East York Writers' Group is in its 16th year and gathers once a month at the S. Walter Stewart library branch. At last month's meeting on Feb. 22, seven people came together to share their written pieces.

Paola Ferrante, 34, discovered the East York Writers' Group in the fall and said that one of the first pieces she read for the group has now been accepted for publication in the online literary journal, the Minola Review.

"I'm developing a serious writing practice and it's really about getting feedback and getting to the next step (in writing)," she said.

The writers' group is a membership-free service co-ordinated by Toronto author Sharon Crawford. Crawford is a former freelance journalist and member of the Crime Writers of Canada. She's been published regularly and is working on the third novel in her "Beyond" murder mystery series.

"I had 35 years of journalism experience freelancing for the Toronto Star, CBC, the Globe and Mail and various magazines throughout Toronto," Crawford said.

The group began in 2003 in Crawford's Toronto bungalow. Ten years later, she moved the group to the S. Walter Stewart library on Memorial Park Avenue, near Coxwell and Mortimer — where Crawford works in conjunction with the library as an official program convenor.

Some of her members come from various professional backgrounds. They include teachers, social workers, musicians and film critics.

Crawford said she'd like to see more young people come out, and she encourages creative writers aged 13 and up to attend and read their poetry or fiction.



Nicole Reis // The Observer

Lee Parpart (left) listens as author Sharon Crawford provides feedback to aspiring writers at one of their group's meetings at the S. Walter Stewart library.



Nicole Royle // The Observer

The Royal Canadian Legion on Pape Avenue held a darts tournament in remembrance of Jack Aldred, a prominent branch-member and East Yorker who died in 2015.

## Legion tosses laurels in form of darts

By NICOLE ROYLE  
The Observer

Angie Gualtieri holds a book in her hands: Tales of Todmorden Veterans by Jack Aldred. It's obvious this book means a lot to her.

Gualtieri recalls when the roof at her Royal Canadian Legion Todmorden, Branch 10, needed fixing. The branch, on Pape Avenue near O'Connor Drive, couldn't afford to fix it.

Jack Aldred, a well-loved member of the branch, stepped up. Proceeds from Aldred's book helped raise money for the roof repairs.

"That's who (Jack) was," Gualtieri said. "A great man."

The roof repair story was one of many memories shared at the Todmorden branch during its now-an-

nual "blind dart" tournament, held since Aldred's passing. This year's version was Feb. 25.

Blind darts is a tournament in which players don't know who their partners will be until names are drawn from a hat.

The event helped get everyone engaged, socializing and sharing their memories of Aldred, who died in 2015.

"He was a legendary man," said Gualtieri, who's president of Branch 10. "Everyone loved him."

Aldred spent his life after the war as a post office employee, then retired and served as a crossing guard in East York for 24 years, while remaining an active member of Branch 10.

He successfully campaigned for a controlled crosswalk at Carlaw and

Mortimer and was awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medal, and a Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation, for outstanding community service.

Larry Porter, another member of the Todmorden branch who attended the blind dart tournament, explained that he emigrated from Ireland in 1957 and has lived in East York ever since.

"I never met Aldred personally, but I can't stop hearing about everything he was doing for the community I live in," Porter said. "I love this community and he was a great man for making it better."

The branch raised \$505 from the 25 players at this year's Jack Aldred blind dart tournament. All proceeds will further Aldred's legacy of repairing the Todmorden branch roof.

## Teens apologize for homophobic slurs

By JUAN ROMERO  
The Observer

An East York-area couple have been targeted with homophobic slurs for the second time in two years.

B.J. Barone and Frank Nelson live in the Danforth Avenue area. Just last year, a photo of them holding their newborn son Milo was fodder for Internet trolls and was even used by some politicians in Ireland and Italy to promote anti-gay agendas.

But in the most recent incident, the abuse came right to their doorstep. They described it to an Observer reporter:

A few Fridays ago, a group of five teenagers knocked on the family's door. Nelson opened the door, and the teens inexplicably started complimenting their furniture and singing randomly.

One of the teens then asked Nelson, "What do you think of the LGBT community?" before Nelson closed the door.

Then Barone heard a noise outside, looked to see the teens down the street — and noticed that someone had scrawled "F\*\*k LGBT" in the snow on his car's windshield.

"The fact that they actually came to our door, face-to-face, and then had the nerve to do it is a little frightening," Barone said, "and quite frankly a little scary."

Barone proceeded to call the police, who were able to catch the teenagers. The youths apologized,

and the couple decided not to press charges. Barone and Nelson are both high school teachers and they said they hoped the teens' apprehension by itself would teach them a lesson. Barone said that he and Nelson were not angry at the boys and that he would like to instead have a conversation with them about their actions.

"I would like to speak to them and to their parents," Barone said, "and use this as a teachable moment and reach out to them."

Barone added that he thinks the U.S. presidential election has opened the gates to some people who are racist, misogynistic or homophobic. He said that those people suddenly feel like they have a kind of permission from friends in high places.

Although Canada may be a more socially progressive country than the United States, he said, this trend is slowly infiltrating here as well.

The couple fly a pride flag every summer, and Barone said that may have tipped the teens in their targeting of the couple. But he emphasized that the homophobia they've experienced is not going to change the way the family live their lives.

"The incident did make us feel a little bit less safe," Barone said, "but it is not going to stop us from being who we are, doing what we do every day, or how we live our lives. If anything, it just makes us even more proud."

# Workshop promotes young imaginations

Author hosts event at local library for teenaged writers

By DENA SHAH  
The Observer

Some budding young writers got tips from an accomplished pro at an interactive workshop held at the Pape-Danforth library branch on March 16.

Author Mahak Jain met with a group of teenagers at the branch to show them ways to improve their story and character development.

Jain has written picture books for children, including the popular book “Maya.” She has also published some adult short stories and poetry.

She thinks that children and adults should get in touch with their creative side and that do-

ing workshops like these will help them do just that.

“It is really important for our own sense of wholeness... to be practising creativity,” Jain said.

She added that she worries about young people being too focused on getting good grades rather than cultivating creativity — because society generally tends to reward productivity over everything else.

So her goal at the March 16 workshop was to get the students to focus more on the act of being creative rather than the end product.

During the workshop itself, which had people of all ages in attendance, Jain showed how one could connect animals and drawings in order to create original lively characters.

Jain said later that she was happy with the way the workshop went, and she felt she was able to get the attendees to reach their creative side. That, she added, is essential when writing a book.

“The most important part for me in the workshop is that while they were in the process of the creative work — that is very much what is involved in writing a book — I was able to create an experience to let them access that part of themselves,” Jain said.

The author is currently developing another picture book, an adult novel and a short stories collection.

But she also practises what she preaches: she’s taking her time with these projects and making them as creative as possible, instead of focusing on a timeline.



Dena Shah /// The Observer

Author Mahak Jain hosted a workshop on story and character development at the Pape-Danforth library.

# East York hookah bars still bubbling despite ban



Divya Rajan /// The Observer

The city has banned hookah bars in Toronto, but that hasn’t put them out of business.

By DIVYA RAJAN  
The Observer

It isn’t just cannabis shops that are playing a game of chicken with the law and its enforcement.

Last spring, city council banned hookah bars in Toronto. And last fall, Justice Robert F. Goldstein of the Superior Court of Ontario upheld the ban.

But some bars remain open and customers still come — including in East York.

Defined narrowly, a hookah bar is where customers share a multi-stemmed waterpipe in which shisha is slowly burning and producing smoke. And shisha, in turn, is a mix of tobacco, molasses, moisturizer and added flavours.

The dangers of smoking tobacco are well-known. But the owners of hookah bars say that the ban ignores the practice’s cultural significance, especially among people from the Middle East.

“Yes, smoking is bad for you. Smoking anything is bad in general: cigarettes, marijuana, anything,” said one area bar-owner who asked not to be identified by name.

“But where I come from, this is all we are allowed to do, and we don’t do it every day. Just like people don’t go to a regular bar every day. Everything can be OK if you don’t overdo it. Why must bar owners be punished for people who came in too often?”

The people who use hookah bars also say that the shisha they’re in-

haling contains less tobacco than a cigarette, making it less dangerous.

Jess Seghal, a hospital nurse working in the GTA, said there is some support for their position.

“Smoking hookah is a lot better than smoking a cigarette,” Seghal said.

“A lot of it is for entertainment, so it contains less tobacco than a cigarette. You cannot get second-hand (smoke) from a hookah, only as much as you inhale. Any effects of smoking a hookah could be caused by smoking anything.”

The defence seems to be that this guilty pleasure is in small doses — and that while smoking carries health effects, the occasional use of a hookah will affect a person less drastically.

# Nursery holding open house in bid to boost its enrolment

Cont’d. from page 1

The school is an affordable option for parents and it uses fundraisers as one way of paying for its operation. The programming includes a large variety of multiple stations that hold puzzles, paint easels, music and crafts.

Clifton Corbin, a parent volunteer at the nursery, said he thinks the school is helpful to its young students in preparing them with the skills needed for kindergarten.

“The nursery teaches kids how to share, line up and use the washrooms alone, and gives them the confidence and independence they need before starting school,” he said.

Corbin said one reason for low enrolment is full-day kindergarten, introduced by the province in 2010. He explained that some fluctuation in enrolment is natural, but since full-day K, the overall trend is downward.

“The school has years where there’s more and less enrolment,” he said, but “when the province went to full-day kindergarten more went to kindergarten than to full-day daycare.”

According to research through the Toronto

District School Board, a fifth of young children who have birthdays late in the year are lacking in some of the emotional and physical maturity they need to fully succeed in senior kindergarten. Late-birthday children are as young as three when they start full-day kindergarten, and some are not fully potty trained or able to communicate as clearly as a 4-5-year-old. TDSB research also suggests that very young children born between October and December are more likely to have lower scores measuring social competence, physical health and emotional skills.

Corbin said his own son, now in full-day kindergarten, thrived while attending his co-op nursery. He said his family and others at the nursery are thankful for the resources provided for the children.

“This school has been a fantastic resource to the public, more of a support system to the parents,” Corbin said.

Parents who miss tomorrow’s open house can still investigate whether the nursery school is a good fit for their family by calling the school at 416-691-1202 or by emailing them at [dentonurseryschool@gmail.com](mailto:dentonurseryschool@gmail.com)



Leonida Sheffield /// The Observer

## Family fun at Todmorden

A few families gathered one weekend last month for a guided tour of the Todmorden Mills Heritage Site off Pottery Road — part of the city’s late winter program of events.



Zia Zarawar // The Observer

The Milk Mart convenience store is a familiar sight to passersby in the area of Pape and Cosburn avenues. But it's also a regular shopping stop for locals — and it's been the Hadad family's livelihood for almost two decades. Now there will be another sign in the window: Under new management.

# Neighbourhood crossroads in transition

Store stalwarts retiring, but experts say another retail pressure is gentrification

By ZIA ZARAWAR, ANDRE SAUNDERS, JUAN ROMERO and YVANO ANTONIO  
The Observer

Every day for the last 19 years, Salim “Sam” Hadad, his daughter Mary and his son-in-law Emel have been up at 7 a.m. to open Milk Mart Convenience at Pape and Cosburn avenues in East York’s Pape Village.

Milk Mart serves hundreds of customers daily, all with different needs and wants. Hadad said they’ve been around so long they’re like family to many East Yorkers. Even when people at the youth shelter up the street stole from his store, Hadad said he offered help.

“I wouldn’t say anything, but I would follow them. I’d say, ‘Look, if you need help come to me. Ask me... I’ll give you free, but don’t take it,’” he said.

For many, the store is an institution in the community, but this April, the family behind it is stepping away, and new owners are taking over. Hadad, now 75, realized it was time to move on after his second heart surgery, and so he decided to sell his business.

“Before (when) I worked 15 hours, I didn’t care, but now if I work for an hour I have to sit,” he said. “This is my life here, but after 75 years, of course, you have to relax.”

Milk Mart’s sale is the latest in a series of changes to the intersection, which has seen a dry cleaner’s close and its building sit idle for over two years, and a clothing store similarly shuttered and empty to this day.

While Hadad’s decision was made mostly for health reasons, experts say that gentrification of neighbourhoods can also play a role in the transition of communities like the one around Pape-Cosburn and elsewhere in East York.

Published reports predict that Toronto’s increasing property taxes will drive the price of a home up by eight per cent in 2017. RE/MAX Realtron Realty forecasts that affordability will decline, as the average price of a single detached home in Toronto will jump to roughly \$783,000 from \$725,857 last year.

Gerald McGiverin serves as manager at a RE/MAX office in East York. He said climbing property taxes can also apply



Yvano Antonio // The Observer

**Sam Hadad, his daughter Mary Hadad and son-in-law Emel Shahin pose inside their Milk Mart convenience store. The Hadad family is retiring from operating the business this April. It’s another passage for a busy East York intersection that’s been in upheaval recently.**

pressure on small businesses, but in the midst of the increases, Milk Mart Convenience managed to survive because of its prime location on Pape Avenue.

“It’s hard to say whether (forecasts) will affect businesses in East York, but they should be able to adapt,” he said.

McGiverin said East York homes sell for upwards of \$600,000. Most newcomers buy a home and renovate it for equity, which he said could ultimately push property prices higher in a neighbourhood.

“More and more we see older homes (in East York) being bought and torn down,” McGiverin said, and while East York isn’t as redeveloped as downtown, he confirmed that some parts of the neighbourhood are gentrifying.

Craig E. Jones is a PhD candidate in geography at the University of British Columbia. According to Jones, businesses in gentrifying neighbourhoods might not survive rent increases as a result of a property tax hike. That’s why, he said, some might close.

“If you’re getting a more affluent crowd, property owners would push to raise prices,” he said. “I don’t think any business would survive their lease going up... unless there’s insane profits.”

Business can also be pushed out, Jones said, because of a demolition clause on the lease, which could cause displacement if the lot is scheduled for redevelopment.

“People in some neighbourhoods see local

institutions gone because they can’t keep up,” Jones said. “If there is no clause in the lease, (a business) would be in slightly of a more secure position.”

So while he was not referring to the prosperous Milk Mart, Jones said some family businesses can struggle because of gentrification, even as rising property values benefit others — like realtors and developers.

“(Signs of gentrification) lets them know that change is coming and it may not be for them,” Jones said of vulnerable small businesses.

Alan Redway has seen the commercial progress of East York throughout almost his entire life. A former municipal and federal politician, Redway, now 81, has also done extensive volunteer work in the East York community. He has been living in the area since he was four years old.

According to Redway, the commercial development of East York began with small corner stores, usually in the middle of neighborhoods with houses. In the 1950s, the main East York streets began to have stores in small retail strips, like the one Milk Mart is located in.

Redway said he and many East Yorkers are afraid of the current pace of gentrification in his neighbourhood.

“That is taking place holus bolus across East York and many people have concerns about that, as I do too,” he said.

“Back in the day,” people in East York would go to their local store and buy a few

groceries every day. But in recent years, the trend has been buying all of your groceries at once, at regular intervals.

Redway said the lack of on-street parking outside places like Milk Mart prevents people from buying all of their groceries at neighbourhood stores. Instead people would rather bring their car to a shopping plaza and just buy all their groceries without having to walk home with them or ride the subway with multiple bags in their hands.

The fact that some of the new condominiums being built in the East York area are planned with convenience stores right below them gives Redway some hope that local stores can survive, and even find space in the market along with chain supermarkets.

“They want to have some sort of convenience stores on the first floors (of condos),” Redway said. “I am sure they can actually co-exist but it is going to be tough, there is no doubt about it.”

Redway’s main concern when it comes to gentrification is the price of housing. Before gentrification gained strength in East York, the neighbourhoods usually were comprised of modest homes that were affordable to the working class. Now, with new chain stores and condo buildings, the housing prices have dramatically increased.

“My heart aches for the people that in past generations and today will never be able (to afford) to buy a home in East York,” Redway said. “They are saying some people are going as far as Peterborough, and commuting to work to Toronto, to be able to afford a home.”

The effect of gentrification on housing prices can lead to having big houses turned into rooming houses so that many families can live there at a low cost, Redway suggested. Families being forced to share homes with other families because they can’t afford houses due to gentrification can dramatically affect the development of East York.

Back on Pape Avenue, customers have been coming into the Milk Mart all winter, to say their goodbyes before the Hadads leave. It is bittersweet for the family, too.

“We are here more than home.... Even our kids spend most of their time here,” Hadad’s daughter Mary said.

“Every wall has a story,” Mary added. “Some people come in tearing.... We’re like family with everyone, (but) it’s time for Big Sam to rest.”

## ■ EDITORIALS

# Pre-K survival

## Declining enrolment threatens existence of Dentonia Park Co-operative Nursery School

One of East York's strengths is the many modest features that, together, help create the sense of community that we're all so proud of.

But, as Bob Dylan reminds us, the times they are a-changin'. Childcare centres have been struggling recently, since the province introduced full-day kindergarten. At the same time, families still needing pre-K childcare have been struggling just to afford it.

Through these trials and tribulations and more, the Dentonia Park Co-operative Nursery School has been operating for 43 years as a non-profit, play-based school for very young children. It's had official charity status since 1983.

But now this neighbourhood institution at the southeast corner of East York may have to close.

It's struggling with enrolling enough children aged two to four for its half-day program next school year.

About a dozen children are required to be registered to keep the nursery from closing. The parents and teachers who run it say that if they can get that, the school is guaranteed to stay open.

It's not as if they haven't overcome obstacles in the past. The whole co-op model is an obstacle in the sense that parental involvement is a given, and parental involvement can be tough if both parents work full-time.

Clifton Corbin is one of those parent volunteers, and he's taking a lead role when it comes to addressing the recruitment crisis.

"Recruitment has been difficult," he says. "We've really been able to run the school by word-of-mouth. But in the future, we hope to get more engagement by using social media and get involved with the community."

But it would seem that this neighbourhood asset's survival is a two-way street; that the community has to get involved with the nursery school too.

To that end: Tomorrow, April 1, there will be an open house at the school from 10 a.m. until noon. It's located on the lower level of the Faith Presbyterian Community Church at 140 Dawes Rd. Let's hope the turnout of prospective families tomorrow is good.

Or, if you can't make tomorrow, you can still find out about whether the nursery might be a good fit for your family. You can call the school at 416-691-1202 or e-mail them at dentonianurseryschool@gmail.com.

For families in the market, it's certainly worth a look.

~ Marjan Asadullah

# Let's talk hate

## Racism in East York has risen over past year

Toronto Police have stated that the number of hate crimes reported has increased by eight per cent in the last year.

Hate crimes based on religion alone accounted for 46 per cent of the incidents reported. This is the highest rate that the city has recorded in the last 10 years.

The police say that behind religious hate come racial crimes, accounting for 18 per cent of reports.

We've certainly seen our share here in East York. Just this past November, racist posters were put up anonymously in one neighbourhood.

"Hey white person," the posters said. "Join the alt-right movement."

Elsewhere in this very same issue of the Observer is a report of a gay couple in East York who were targeted with homophobic epithets.

And just north of us (and just last week), York University's Glendon Campus at Bayview and Lawrence avenues was the target of anti-Semitic graffiti, including a bomb threat.

Some Torontonians say there has been a particular spike since the U.S. presidential campaign shifted into high gear a year ago — and since a certain Muslim-banning candidate won the White House in November.

"I've seen a lot of racism in the past few months," one law-enforcement officer told the Observer.

But whatever the reasons for it, to his credit, Mayor John Tory has been outspoken on this subject — acknowledging racism in Toronto the Supposedly Good and talking about ways to reduce it. He's even been participating in a series of "community conversations" on the subject, with a planned final town hall this April and an action plan for city council to follow.

"There is a problem," the mayor has said.

Let's support the efforts to confront it.

~ Emily Chavez

## ■ COLUMNS

# A beautiful sadness

I slept in that Saturday morning, even though that meant I would be running late for work.

My girlfriend and I had been out late at a St. Patrick's Day party the night prior.

I sent her a good-morning text, but I was all-too-aware of the backdrop. I knew we were at a crossroads.

We met on Tinder at the tail-end of 2015, and hit it off instantly. A first date turned to a second and a seventh....

When she left Canada to study abroad, we would stay up until ungodly hours to speak to each other. I left North America for the first time and visited her on her reading week.

When she moved back in the summer, our relationship continued to blossom into the best I may ever have.

Forgive me for saying it, but it was a magical

and uncommon love story, arising from the depths of the millennial dating pool.

But I woke that morning after St. Patrick's Day being able to take a longer view of how things were going.

In the last two months, the passion wasn't there.

Things we enjoyed became routine. It became tainted and impure. We were becoming resentful of things that once felt unconditional. We agreed that what needed to be worked on could not be worked on for now.

She came by my apartment the next day and dropped off my things.

Am I OK? Not at all.

I don't know if I ever will be. I feel hollow, as though I am floating through my day. It's as if I

have lost a family member,

a best friend, a companion, all at once.

I am functional, though, because my professional life demands it. So let me explain how I've been coping.

The first thing I did was reach out to my mother. There's no shame in needing a hug from your momma.

I also called my dad. We exchanged sad songs that we both listen to when we are unhappy about our romantic lives.

My parents divorced two summers ago, after 25 years of marriage. They have both developed an understanding of how to deal with love and loss.

I've been going to the gym, forcing as much energy out of myself as possible.

I've been taking pictures of myself and seeing the friends I've drifted from. I'm trying to find a piece of my old self in my current self. And most importantly, I once feasted on a tub of Ben and Jerry's.

Losing a loved one is not a linear experience. I know it's not going to be easy, but nothing in life ever is.



Connor Atkinson

# Defining your 'better'

It was the first semester of my final year of high school. I was sitting in an accounting class, chatting with my friends, when my name was called over the intercom. I walked to the office, laughing off classmates who jokingly wondered what I had done this time. I arrived to the grim expressions of two other close friends of mine, along with the principal, vice-principal and a guidance counsellor.

This is how I found out my best friend had hanged himself the night before.

For the remainder of that year, I drowned my feelings in work, video games and drugs, before finally spiraling into my first major depressive episode — one which would result in a pattern of self-harm and risky behaviour, several hospitalizations, my withdrawal from university and, eventually, two suicide attempts.

I suppose this is the part of my column where I should jump in and talk about how my life is now so much better. Except that's not quite the case. Things are certainly better, but I don't know if I'll

ever really be OK.

I have good days and bad days, but the bad days tend to create a chain reaction. You feel anti-social, so you withdraw. You feel irritated, so you're a bit colder in your interactions. You feel exceedingly lonely, but because of everything else going on in your life, people will naturally assume you don't want to talk (not due to any malicious intent, but as a natural reaction to someone who seems disinterested).

It becomes startlingly easy to just continue to isolate yourself.

What's more, people who have undergone as much treatment for mental health as I have are used to hearing the same things from well-meaning people. "Therapy will make you feel better," they'll say. "Have you tried CBT? How about anti-depressants?"

Or meditation?" they'll ask.

"My friend/uncle/mom/dog tried exercising/talking to their friends/going to a support group and it really raised their mood," they'll offer.

These suggestions work, of course. They can mitigate the overwhelming tide of negative thoughts and feelings. But ultimately, these are just treatments, not a cure.

I'm not trying to say that people in situations like mine should give up hope. It's just that sometimes writers portray mental illness as a problem that can be solved with the right combination of hard work and a happy-go-lucky attitude. That's not always true for everyone. For some people, there isn't a definite "getting better." There are just periods of happiness and periods of sadness. Other people will make it and be OK, happy even.



Michael Chen

# E.Y.'s scrapbook in war and in peace



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. Although both of these images were photographed locally, they're far apart — not just in time, but in context. The one on the left depicts preparations for war; the archivists have identified the figures at the right of the photo as Sir Henry Pellatt and “Colonel Michie” (no first name provided). The setting is Leaside and military manoeuvres in 1914. Thirty-five years, two world wars and one Great Depression later, the photo on the right was taken — on May 13, 1949, to be precise. Unfortunately, that precision does not extend to the content of the photos... beyond a vague reference to a “student panel” at an unnamed East York high school (and that could be anything from a meeting of the student government to some sort of discussion club).

## Plans for Celestica land discussed at public forum

Meeting held to inform surrounding residents about ‘Wynford Green’ proposal

By LINDSAY PINTER  
The Observer

The saga of the Celestica land at the corner of Eglinton Avenue and Don Mills Road at the northern tip of East York continued with a public meeting on Feb. 21 at the Japanese Cultural Centre on Garamond Court.

Celestica is an electronics manufacturer spun off from IBM in 1994. It wants to redevelop its headquarters at 844 Don Mills Rd. and the adjacent land. It filed its first application three years ago, and the plan has been in flux since.

The latest incarnation is called “Wynford Green,” and involves turning the 60-acre site into a new Celestica building — along with a full-blown neighbourhood of business buildings, residential towers, townhouses, parkland — and an Ontario Science Centre stop on the Eglinton LRT line that’s now under construction.

“It will encompass office space and recreational space, so many members of the community can take advantage of it,” said Toronto city planner John Andreevski, who is based at the North York Civic Centre.

The city is in the final stages of the approval process for the plans, and so the



File photo

**Councillor Jon Burnside was among those in attendance.**

purpose of last month’s open house was to inform residents of the surrounding area about them and canvass their feedback.

Among those in attendance was Ward 26/Don Valley West councillor Jon Burnside.

“People seem to embrace the multi-faceted plans for construction,” Andreevski said. “Overall, there is a positive review coming from the community.”

The plan’s specifics include the construction of two public parks, one being 5.58 acres at the north end of the site, and another taking up 1.46 acres at the southwest corner of the site.

The discussion focused on those features and linkages like the planned pedestrian and bike paths.

## Michael Garron Hospital unveils high-end heart lab

By ZIA ZARAWAR  
The Observer

East York’s Michael Garron hospital has become one of the few hospitals in Ontario with an ultra-modern cardiac catheterization laboratory.

Among the 270 health care institutions in Ontario, there are only 19 catheter labs in the province. The hospital began cardiac catheterizations 15 years ago, when it was known as Toronto East General.

Dr. Mohammad Zia, head of the division of cardiology at the hospital, said that puts MGH in an elite class at the top of the province’s cardiac care facilities. But on top of that, the hospital has just advanced its capacity by renovating its facilities around a newly acquired GE Medical Systems “Innova 2000” — considered one of the best cardiovascular X-ray imagers in the world.

“The new machine is able to provide high-quality images of the heart, which leads to more accurate diagnosis,” Zia said.

He said the new state-of-the-art machine takes high-quality images by using a fraction of the radiation that earlier-generation machines use. It also has features like “express swing,” which means the camera rotates to capture a

comprehensive view of the heart’s arteries in just a single imaging session.

“This allows for the 3D images of the artery to be constructed with just one injection, as opposed to multiple static views,” Zia said.

During catheterization, a thin tube called a catheter is inserted in an artery or vein in the groin, neck or arm. It is then threaded through the blood vessels that lead into the heart. This procedure is used to diagnose and treat cardiovascular problems.

MGH has one of the lowest complication rates for post-procedure and one of the highest survival rates after heart attack, Zia said. An average of 2,000 cardiac tests are done every year at MGH, totalling more than 30,000 tests since the lab opened in 2001.

“A truly remarkable achievement,” Zia observed.

Michael Garron’s cardiac tests were shifted to Sunnybrook Hospital for three months while the MGH catheter lab was undergoing its renovations. Irene Andress, the director of medicine and nursing at MGH, said the teams at both hospitals were very supportive of each other and worked elbow-to-elbow during the renovation.

“The multiple teams came together in both organizations to ensure the success of this project (catheter lab),” she said.



# CBC host says 'everybody has a story'

By **TINA ADAMOPOULOS**  
The Observer



Tina Adamopoulos /// The Observer

**Anna Maria Tremonti, host of CBC's *The Current*, speaks to journalism students at Centennial College's East York campus.**

Acclaimed journalist Anna Maria Tremonti says the most rewarding part of her job comes from the simple act of listening to people.

The award-winning journalist and host of CBC's *The Current* spoke to journalism students at Centennial College's Story Arts Centre on Carlaw Avenue last week about her career, which has included everything from field reporting to sitting behind a microphone in a studio. She also shared some of the secrets to a good interview.

"I learn from people every day. It's being able to be curious," Tremonti said. "The question is merely the thing that gets the expansive answer."

As foreign correspondent for *The National* for nine years, Tremonti's career took her to Berlin, London and Jerusalem, where she was stationed for three of those years. After leaving Jerusalem for Washington, she said finding unique stories at a time when the Monica Lewinsky scandal ruled the news cycle came from the art of listening.

"When you meet people and start to talk to them about what they've gone through, who they've lost, what they've done — I realized that you don't know who you are walking by," she said.

During her time in the Middle East, Tremonti covered the First Intifada, three suicide bombings of Hamas, and Afghani-

stan. But the most rewarding lesson of her profession came from exploring the sensibility of people's lives.

"Everybody has a story and people come from different places emotionally, not just geographically. I think we all have it in us to be empathetic," Tremonti said.

"That's why listening is so important, because people really do give you clues. You're there to find out what they think and how they feel and what makes them angry and what makes them scared."

Tremonti describes the grey area as asking the challenging questions — the ones that, along with the facts, get to the core of the issue. From that area comes both understanding and the difficulty of finding the answers and holding authority to account.

Henry Kissinger, former national security advisor to former presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, once ended an interview prematurely after Tremonti asked if he thought he could be tried for a war crime.

She felt she had to ask the question.

"With accountability, you will often ask questions that are offensive or that they deem offensive," Tremonti explained in an interview after her talk.

"But if a person is in a position of decision-making power, they should expect tough questions."

What we need, Tremonti said, is balance. "It's about fairness and balance. People talk about objectivity, but I think people can also recognize their own biases and try

to be balanced."

Speaking to the issues of gender and racial equality, Tremonti addressed the systemic barriers of the male-dominated, largely Anglo-Saxon newsroom. For the first 10 months of her career, her name was 'Terri' Tremonti, her full name being "too Italian for Pictou County, Nova Scotia."

"I was told that if I hadn't worked out, they wouldn't have hired another woman," she said.

Times have changed since then, Tremonti noted. However, "we can argue it takes too long to change. We can argue it needs to change more."

She believes women in journalism still encounter hurdles.

"I think there is still sexual harassment. I think that the idea that we can't hire a woman is gone," she said. "I used to say if you are a woman in journalism and you haven't experienced sexual harassment, you're either lucky or lying. It's now we need to make sure that we have women and diversity of who we are hiring."

Tremonti assured students that despite the current uncertainty about the future of their chosen profession, "there will always be a need for journalism." She said they have an opportunity to create a new business model that will take reporting beyond the traditional approach.

"There's always going to be a need for accountability and for telling stories," she said. "For curiosity and for holding people to account."

## Documentary touches on experiences of refugees

By **ZAID NOORSUMAR**  
The Observer

Tasneem Fared, clad in a white bridal dress, tells the story of a horrific night in Syria in the documentary *The Bride's Side*. That night, she recalled, she danced away, using music to drown out the sound of exploding bombs, occasionally taking off an earplug to check whether her home had been shelled.

The tales of other people in the film are similarly chilling. Abdallah Sallam talks of the horrors of losing his friends in a shipwreck as he attempted to escape Syria, before eventually continuing his journey alongside a heap of dead bodies after being saved by a Maltese warship.

*The Bride's Side* features an Italian filmmaker and a Palestinian poet assembling a fake wedding party, with the purpose of smuggling five Palestinians and Syrians from Italy to Sweden — a country more sympathetic to refugee applicants.

The idea is that the 'bride' — Fared, dressed in wedding attire — and her entourage would be deemed too innocuous to be stopped at border checkpoints.

Politica Cinema Danforth screened the documentary on March 10 at Eastminster United Church on Danforth Avenue in front of an audience of more than 100 people. The Danforth

chapter is an NDP-run affiliate of the Montreal-based umbrella organization that aims to inspire social change through political video content.

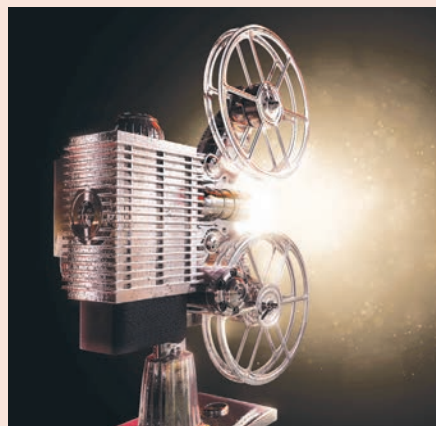
In the film, refugees recount gut-wrenching tales as they make a potentially treacherous journey through Europe, but remain hopeful as they look towards the largesse of Sweden. The group even lets loose at a Marseille bar, head-banging to the Arabic raps of 12-year-old refugee Manar, who lets out a furious volley of rhythmic angst.

Asma Atique, 26, who attended the Danforth screening, said the movie puts a face and narrative to the Syrian crisis, as opposed to reports of large numbers of dead and unrelatable people in refugee camps.

"It's like when you see pictures of starving children from Africa. It affects you, of course, but it's so far away from the possibilities of where you can end up that you kind of just lump it in like the 'oh my God, there are horrible things happening in the world' corner of your mind," Atique said.

"And you feel helpless and you can't do anything about it. But this is a little different representation of how people are experiencing the war."

According to one of the panelists at the event, Malaz Sebai, the humanitarian crisis in Syria and Iraq has worsened while the public's



File photo by Fotolia

attention has drifted away.

Sebai is a board member of Lifeline Syria, a non-profit organization aiding private citizens to help resettle refugees in the GTA.

"The problem's not going away and it's the largest crisis since the Second World War. Unfortunately, right now, the doors are kind of shut for people like us, who want to help," he said.

Sebai was referring to the Canadian government recently limiting citizens from privately sponsoring refugees, as it faces an abundance of people eager to do so. He said more than 45,000 refugees from across the world are currently waiting for their applications to be processed by the Canadian government.

Canadians should demand action from their elected representatives, he added.

"Go talk to your MP. It's that easy," he said. "It's something Canadians don't do enough of. These are the people in Ottawa who represent us and who carry out our will. I'd encourage you to reach out to them and ask them, 'What are you doing to stop this? What are we doing to bring more people here? What are we doing to support people who are already here?'"

While there are many Canadians willing to help and bear the costs of sponsoring refugees, a newly released Immigration Department survey shows that 30 per cent of Canadians think the federal government is accepting too many refugees.

Are Canadians taking inspiration from the politics south of the border where the Trump administration has issued a moratorium on accepting Syrian refugees?

David Langille, head of the outreach community of NDP's Toronto-Danforth Riding Association, which organizes the film screenings, has faith in Canadians.

"We have been welcoming of refugees — that's part of who we are. We are a nation that's more progressive than the United States, more tolerant, more understanding," he said. "Maybe it's because we are smaller — we're not an imperial power. We realize the importance of social solidarity and looking after people."



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## NEIGHBOURLY NEWS

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