



■ BREAKING

McArthur faces 7th murder charge

Further victims identified from remains at Leaside property

By **BOBBY HRISTOVA**
The Observer

Police charged alleged serial killer Bruce McArthur with a seventh count of first-degree murder on April 11.

The latest charge relates to the death of 42-year-old Abdulbasir Faizi, who went missing in late 2010.

In a news conference at police headquarters, Det.-Sgt. Hank Idsinga revealed that pathologists identified Faizi, Dean Lisowick, 47, and Selim Essen, 44, in the human remains retrieved from from planters at 53 Mallory Cres.

Previously police had identified three of the seven sets of human remains recovered from the Leaside property where McArthur, a landscaper, stored his supplies. There is still at least one set of remains to be identified.

Until Wednesday, police were eyeing 30 properties potentially linked to the case, but are now using their K-9 unit for up to 75 properties, some of which are public, Idsinga said.

Detectives are also revisiting 15 cold case files between 1975 and 1997 potentially connected to McArthur, though the number of cases may “increase or decrease,” he said.

“We’ve — quite frankly — never seen anything like it,” Idsinga said about the alleged serial killer case. “We really don’t know how deep this will go.”

Forensic units have been searching McArthur’s apartment at 95 Thorncliffe Park Dr., and Idsinga says they may continue to do so for weeks.

■ See **POLICE**, page 3



Bobby Hristova/The Observer

Sticking up for Humboldt

(L-R) Jude Breen, Finlay Clarke and Maddie Jones from Holy Name Catholic School on Carlaw Avenue hold hockey sticks on Jersey Day. The day honours the 16 victims of the Humboldt Broncos bus crash, with one hockey stick for each victim.

Awards pay tribute to special caregivers

VHA Home Healthcare CEO says everyone will either need care or be a caregiver one day

By **CLAIRE FLOODY**
The Observer

Taylor Allen taught her younger brother Alex how to talk, walk and crawl. These are seemingly normal-sounding duties for an older sister, but if your brother has high-functioning autism like Alex, things can sometimes be more complicated.

Although Alex is only three years younger

than Taylor, he has mental and physical challenges that require a lot of extra support and care.

“Alex is 12, going on five,” his mother, Lisa Knechtel, explained with a laugh.

VHA Home Healthcare (VHA), a non-profit charitable organization, selected Taylor as the recipient of the Young Caregiver Award at its 13th annual Heart of Home Care Awards. The new award was created to acknowledge the younger caregivers in the community.

Every year, the Heart of Home Care Awards ceremony is held to honour the outstanding efforts of friends or family members who’ve gone above and beyond to care for a loved one at home. This year’s ceremony took place at The

Forth, an event space located at Pape and Danforth avenues in East York. It was held on April 3, also National Carers Day, a day to acknowledge caregivers across the country.

To start the event, president and CEO of VHA Carol Annett talked about how vital caregivers are to our lives, explaining that every person in the room would either be a caregiver or need a caregiver at some point.

“They take on many roles: nurse, physical therapist, counsellor, chauffeur and advocate for their loved ones—and that is just scratching the surface,” Annett said.

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■ CRIME

Man killed in East York convenience store stabbing



Alex Gouge/The Observer

A tribute was organized at the 7-Eleven in memory of the victim.

30-year-old man charged with murder after death at O’Connor and Donlands

By **JUSTIN CHAN**
and **BREE-ANN GITTENS**
The Observer

A man is dead after a stabbing inside a 7-Eleven in East York early on April 10.

The victim has been identified as 26-year-old Fesal Ahmed Mohammad

Sobir, who was rushed to a trauma centre, but later died from his injuries.

Toronto police received a call about a stabbing in the O’Connor and Donlands Avenue area at 3 a.m.

Ahilan Chandrasekaramoorthy, 30, of Toronto surrendered to the police later the same day and has been charged with first-degree murder.

He was to appear in court at College Park on April 11.

Sobir was reportedly involved in a verbal dispute with Chandrasekaramoorthy inside the convenience store.

The altercation escalated and Sobir was stabbed.

Police have not connected this event to the recent string of stabbings in East York.

Over the past two months, there have been four reported stabbing incidents in the East York area.

This latest stabbing marks the 16th homicide in Toronto this year, according to police.

A tribute, which included flowers and stuffed animals, has been placed outside the 7-Eleven in memory of Sobir.

Local library holds STEM workshops for children

Organizers' hope is to spark 'wonder, creativity, discovery'

By **CASSIDY JACOBS**
The Observer

The thought of our youth becoming our future resource can be pretty worrisome, but Toronto's largest public library doesn't think so.

Toronto Public Library has decided to ignite the minds of our youth while encouraging and guiding them to the right path by holding "Mini Makers," a weekly workshop at S. Walter Stewart Library for youth aged four to eight.

It teaches and encourages topics in regards to the world of science, technology, engineering and math.

The workshop is a compressed version of the annual seminar in Toronto called "Maker Festival," a two-day event that has more than 100 local tech groups and makers showcasing their work while holding hands-on workshops in relation to STEM.

Each week, something new will be taught so the participants can learn a wide variety of STEM-related material without feeling like their Sunday afternoons are being spent in a classroom.

In a description on its web page, Toronto Public Library said it hopes to use the program to, "spark wonder, creativity and discovery."

During a workshop session, Leslie Paige, a mother of two, praised the library for educating children on topics that will be useful in the future.

"When I was in school, what we learned was all in the books," she said.

"Having my kids learn hands-on, I think it's more informative. They're learning topics that will be useful in the future, but they're having fun at the same time."

The wide variety of learning activities include having children use their imaginations to build things with skewers and marshmallows.

"My son loves to build things and he loves space," said Parami Patel, a mother of five.

"This workshop allows him to be hands-on, but it also helps him realize that his passion could possibly become a future career."

The workshop will run every Sunday (except May 20) at 2:30 p.m. from now through June 24.



Rushanthi Kesunathan/The Observer

The East York Hockey Association's peewee division, Team Chicago, celebrates an overtime win against Team Boston for the Little Stanley Cup. The event was held April 7 at East York Memorial Arena.

Cup decided in overtime thriller

Little Stanley Cup goes to Team Chicago in nail-biting game at East York arena

By **RUSHANTHI KESUNATHAN**
The Observer

As one hockey league begins the long journey to the Stanley Cup, another has already handed one out.

The East York Hockey Association (EYHA) closed its hockey season with the Little Stanley Cup game on April 7 at East York Memorial Arena.

The Peewee final between Chicago and Boston was a two-game affair. After each team had won one game, the outcome had to be decided by a sudden-death overtime, with Chicago scoring the decisive goal.

Team Chicago celebrated by skating a few laps around the rink, the Little Stanley Cup in hand. The EYHA has played for the cup since the 1954-1955 season. Peewee

division games are played by 11 to 12 year olds.

"From the start, we've stressed with these guys to play as a team, through adversity and to our fullest abilities," said Chicago head coach Shane Wilson. "Our opponent was incredibly tough; we didn't take it for granted that we were going to win."

When asked how he planned to celebrate, he said the team will just have fun together — possibly with a game of road hockey, he added, laughing.

For 12-year-old Emile Fontaine, this was his second win. He has been playing hockey for four years and said the win feels "great." His father, Chris Fontaine, is Team Chicago's assistant coach.

The game drew a large crowd of parents, fans and politicians.

"It's exciting for the parents, kids and observers," said Councillor Janet Davis, who has been attending the games for 15 years. "It's a lot of fun and a testament to

the volunteers who give so much to this club, one of the most successful in the city."

The association gives hundreds of young people an opportunity to learn the skills and have a competitive experience, she added.

EYHA is a volunteer-based organization. It has more than 800 registered players and 200 volunteers, according to the association's president, Connie Mitchell.

Former Toronto Maple Leafs player Lou Franceschetti was also present, signing autographs and answering questions.

The Little Stanley Cup is a replica of the NHL trophy. Standing at three feet tall, it is known to be the only authorized replica to date.

The East York Hockey Association was allowed the honour of creating the replica in 1954 by Clarence Campbell, who was then president of the NHL.

The EYHA will be celebrating its 75th anniversary next season.

Arson suspected in East York garage fire

By **SERGIO ARANGIO**
The Observer

Roslyn Stephenson was asleep in the early hours of April 6 when she heard a knock at her door. As she went to check who it was, she looked out her window and noticed her backyard was engulfed in flames.

Stephenson, 71, immediately called the fire department, while neighbours came to make sure that she got to safety. In her 10 years living on Coleridge Avenue, near Woodbine and Lumsden avenues, nothing like this has happened before, she said.

"We have a tight community here," Stephenson said. "It doesn't make sense."

The fire department arrived shortly after 1:30 a.m.

No major valuables, other than gardening tools, were damaged in the fire, Stephenson said.

Neighbours told the *East York Observer* they'd heard



Sergio Arangio/The Observer

A detached garage on Coleridge Avenue caught fire on April 6. Residents suspect it was arson.

footsteps close to Stephenson's home in the night and they suspected arson.

Toronto police have yet to confirm arson was involved.

What's shocking, Stephenson said, is that it was garbage day that morning, with some residents taking out their garbage early to avoid doing it, come sunrise. It surprised her that the presence of neighbours outside didn't

deter suspicious behaviour in the area.

That's how Mark Dowling, 57, who lives across the street from Stephenson, was one of the first to notice the blaze.

He recalled seeing flames and hearing crackling in the direction of Stephenson's house, thinking it was coming from a building farther away. Once he realized where the fire was, he knocked

on Stephenson's door and her next-door neighbours' to make sure they got to safety, he said.

"I was just concerned about [Stephenson's] safety," he said. "She's a senior and she has tenants, so I was more concerned about her."

Dowling said he tried to get to Stephenson's car parked by the garage, but the flames were too strong.

In the nights since, Stephenson said she has been nervous about the supposed arsonist returning. She said she once woke up at night thinking someone was lurking outside.

Stephenson is now dealing with insurance to cover the damage caused and plans to get a better security light for her driveway. She said she had motion sensors outside on the night of the incident, but they were tampered with.

Police have canvassed the neighbourhood for surveillance footage.

WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

Double Threat author speaks at local legion

Best-selling author Ellin Bessner will be the guest speaker at a lunch and learn event at Todmorden Branch 10 of the Royal Canadian Legion on Saturday, April 21. She'll be talking about her new book, *Double Threat: Canadian Jews, the Military, and World War II*. The legion is located at 1083 Pape Ave. and the cost of the event, which includes a presentation, lunch and meet and greet with the author, is \$15. Tickets are available at the door.

Learn all about how to grow native plants

Lorraine Johnson, author of *100 Easy-to-Grow Native Plants for Canadian Gardens*, will speak about how gardening can bring positive changes to the world. The talk will be held on April 19 at 170 Memorial Park Ave. from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Admission is free.

East York chain of office exhibit to be unveiled

The former borough of East York Mayor's Chain of Office Exhibit will be unveiled by the East York Foundation on Friday, April 27. Former East York mayors Michael Prue, Dave Johnson and Alan Redway have been invited, as have past East York councillors and staff. The unveiling will be held in the lobby of the East York Civic Centre, 850 Coxwell Ave. The event starts at 7 p.m. All East Yorkers are welcome to attend.

~ Observer staff



Danielle Clarke/The Observer

Above left: Tait Gamble, 17, of East York is a volunteer and a co-ordinator for The Period Purse. Above right: A stylish period purse, filled with pads, tampons and chocolates for homeless and marginalized women.

Teen starts initiative for 'menstrual equity'

East York student behind drive to collect hygiene supplies for homeless, impoverished women

By DANIELLE CLARKE
The Observer

A children's store is probably not the first place you'd associate with menstrual products.

But that's where you'll find a drop-off point for donations to The Period Purse, a grassroots organization dedicated to delivering menstrual products and toiletries in fashionable purses to menstruators across Canada.

The store, Silly Goose Kids, is located at 2054 Danforth Ave. One of its employees, East Yorker Tait Gamble, 17, is behind the drive for donations.

Gamble, who is in Grade 12, became interested in menstrual equity when researching how to advocate for pads and tampons in the wash-room at her all-girls high school, St.

Clement's School. She was scrolling through her Facebook newsfeed when she discovered an initiative called The Period Purse. After reading a CBC article about it, she decided to get involved by starting a drive at her school.

"We set up bins in the foyer and did school announcements to get the word out," she said.

Gamble is now a volunteer and co-ordinator for The Period Purse. She has set up three drives for the initiative since its launch in February 2017.

"It was an issue that the students hadn't considered before, not having tampons and pads when you need them, so it was a good time to check our privilege," she said.

The reaction from the students and administration has been enthusiastic and consistent. Gamble's school has

collected an impressive 6,000 tampons and just under 6,000 pads in just over a year.

"If you say you need product, most people will bring it. People just need the opportunity to give," she said.

The motive behind Gamble's passion is relatable for many.

"I menstruate. If I didn't have access to these products, I know how uncomfortable I would feel," she said.

According to a Chatelaine study, a Canadian woman spends an average of \$65.82 per year on menstrual products. For those who are homeless or impoverished, the cost of pads and tampons can be further marginalizing.

Jana Girdauskas, founder and director of The Period Purse, got the idea for the organization while driving around Toronto for work. She would regularly see homeless women on the street and wanted to get involved.

"I was thinking of something tangible in my car that I could give. I thought about a care package that I

could put into a purse," Girdauskas said.

She asked her friends on Facebook if they could donate any of their purses and got a great response.

Each Period Purse includes two to three months' worth of menstrual supplies, a toothbrush, deodorant, lotion, other toiletries, chocolate and an inspirational card.

"In the winter time, people donate warm stuff, like hats or mittens. Underwear is always a great thing to put in there," Girdauskas said.

Period Purse, which has collected over 25,000 menstrual products in Ontario since its launch, works with 12 shelters to ensure that residents get a menstrual pack every month.

Girdauskas is devoted to reaching as many marginalized people as she can.

"We're at 530 people every month in the city that we serve, including the LGBTQ community," she said.

The Period Purse holds a blitz in the spring and fall, collecting items at designated drop-off locations. The

spring blitz has just wrapped up, but those wanting to get involved outside of the stockpiling period are encouraged to do so within their communities.

"People can do mini-drives throughout the year. They can collect menstrual products, toiletries, other items with their friends, colleagues, book clubs, women's groups, and donate that way," said Girdauskas, who is planning to educate the population she serves on the more cost-efficient menstrual cups.

Meanwhile, Silly Goose Kids has seen a great response from the East York community.

"The store has customers that see they are collecting items and will bring in what they have," said Girdauskas, who is also focusing on getting period purses to Indigenous communities in Northern Ontario.

"Many teenage girls do not attend school on their period, because it's very expensive and it's not accessible," she said. "It's \$40 to \$60, compared to our \$20."

Police release enhanced photo of deceased man



Bobby Hristova/Toronto Observer

Det.-Sgt. Hank Idsinga addressing media questions beside an image and sketch of the unidentified man.

Cont'd. from page 1

"It's easily set the record for a forensic examination of an apartment. They are literally going through that apartment inch by inch," he said. "We have quite a few exhibits out of that apartment."

But that isn't the only thing on law enforcement's radar.

Investigators are also still trying to identify a man who may be linked to the case. At the press conference they released an enhanced version of the previously released photo and a composite sketch. They are combing through 22 potential identities after police received more than 500 tips.

Idsinga says 20 people are dedicated to the investigation.

Though many things in the case have developed, the target in the series of killings remains the same: gay men and men who frequented the gay village.

Idsinga says police believe Faizi knew McArthur before his death.

Faizi disappeared in the Church and Wellesley area and police recovered his car at Moore Avenue, north of the gay village.

Police believe Faizi died on or close to Dec. 29, 2010. He lived in Brampton with his wife, two daughters and his dog.

Faizi and two others were the focus of Project Houston, a police task force created in 2012 to investigate the missing men.

McArthur is scheduled to appear in court next on April 25.

Home care awards a way of saying thanks

Cont'd. from page 1

"Many caregivers do this in the shadows with very little support. The Heart of Home Care Awards are VHA's way of saying, 'We see you and we appreciate you.'"

She said when the event first started in 2005, nobody was listening. Caregivers were rarely recognized for the crucial role they play in society. But as she addressed the full room almost 20 years later, she said, "I am more than happy to say that has drastically changed."

Taylor, originally from Welland, Ont., Madolina Sasa from Scarborough and Zulfikar Alladina from Toronto were all chosen as exceptional caregivers out of the 24 deserving nominees.

In addition to Taylor's award, Sasa won the Caregiver to a Child Award for her support of her daughter Joy and Alladina won the Caregiver to an Adult Award for his support of his father Sultan.

Taylor was nominated for the award by her mother, Lisa Knechtel, who says her son Alex wouldn't be the same if it wasn't for Taylor.

During the ceremony, a video of each award-winner's story played for the audience. The videos were made in collaboration with VHA and video agency Big Red Oak.

In Taylor's video, a teary-eyed Knechtel explains the impact of Taylor's constant help and support on their lives, especially after Knechtel was diagnosed with fibromyalgia.

"Sometimes she knows just by looking at me. And she'll say, 'Mom you look tired. Go lay down; I've got him,'" Knechtel said in the video.

Like the other award-winners, Taylor is much more than just a caregiver for her brother. She is also an 'A' student, an artist, a competitive bowler and a normal teenager, something she likes to point out.

"I don't feel that I do anything out of the ordinary," Taylor said in an email. "I help my mom and help her with Alex, which at times can be difficult. Each day I learn new ways to help him get through his day."

But to her mother, Taylor's help is invaluable.

"She needs to realize that what she's doing is special," Knechtel said in the video. "She cares more about others than she does about herself. She's a remarkable kid."

Zul Alladina

Zulfikar Alladina, known to most as Zul, was selected as 2018's Caregiver to an Adult award winner and his story is no less inspiring. Alladina first started caring for his father Sultan in



Submitted by Lusine Stepanian, VHA

Taylor Allen receives the Young Caregiver Award from Don Hardy at the 2018 VHA Heart of Home Care Awards on April 3.

his mid-20s after his father lost both of his legs to diabetes.

Alladina's unwavering support of his father brought many audience members to tears, but for him it wasn't a burden. It was a duty to someone he deeply loved and a reflection of the profound connection and relationship they shared.

"I can call him my father, I can call him my mother, I can call him my brother, I can call him my best friend," Alladina said in the video. "We were all of those put together."

Even after Alladina suffered severe injuries from a car crash in 2010, injuries he is still recovering from today, he continued to care for his father.

"The joy I received from making sure that my father was all taken care of and comfortable was extremely important to me," Alladina said. "Incomparable to anything else."

Madolina Sasa

The final award-winner was Madolina Sasa,

extraordinary care of Joy, but also for her determined attitude at work. Sasa works for the Extreme Clean program, a cleaning service that helps people who are facing eviction due to uncleanliness or sanitary issues.

Sasa's supervisor witnesses the long hours Sasa devotes to the job, sometimes in tough situations dealing with clients suffering from mental health issues, and then always going home to take care of Joy afterwards with a smile on her face.

However, when asked about Joy, Sasa doesn't talk about how long her days are or how exhausted she is. Instead, she discusses what Joy has taught her.

"Taking care of Joy helps me be better with other people. It gives me patience and the more time I spend with Joy, the more I open up," Sasa said. "She is so special."

All three award-winners had strong personal messages to share with other caregivers.

From Taylor:

"You are not alone. There are many caregivers out there in the same situation. Just remember that your hard work and dedication is appreciated more than you realize. You help keep your family whole."

From Zul:

"If you are blessed with the opportunity to serve anyone (whether it be a loved one or not), do the deed with genuine love and compassion. To help someone in need is a true blessing and should be handled with utmost importance. Do not expect anything in return. Believe me, the joy you bring to that individual who needs it is a blessing from God."

From Madolina:

"My philosophy is that if you have a child with a disability, you don't need to panic. You don't need to worry, you don't need to stress or depress yourself. Even though they don't talk, you have to listen."

They all thanked VHA for their awards and for the continuous support VHA has provided for families in Ontario over the past 93 years.

Other highlights of the event were keynote speaker Manjusha Pawagi, author of *Love and Laughter in the Time of Chemotherapy*, and a special musical performance by Ania Soul.



Screenshot from VHA and Big Red Oak video
Alex Allen and his sister Taylor Allen at Jeff's Bowl-O-Rama in Welland, Ont.

who took home the Caregiver for a Child Award, acknowledging her ongoing support of her daughter Joy who lives with a disability. She deserved to win best-dressed too, joked Stacey Ryan, selection committee chair, as she presented the award. Sasa wore a gold-sequined evening gown accompanied by her husband in a matching suit with gold-sequined lapels.

Sasa was nominated by her employer for her

Centennial College grad helped breathe life into The Shape of Water



Brandon Wong/The Observer

Nikita Lebedev works as a creature/character artist at the award-winning visual effects company, Mr. X Inc.

By **BRANDON WONG**
The Observer

At the age of five, Nikita Lebedev was always drawing and designing creatures.

Not much has changed. He now works as a creature and character artist at the visual-effects company Mr. X Inc., which has been featured in productions from *The Strain* and *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter* to this year's Best Picture winner, *The Shape of Water*.

"I'm mostly bringing the creatures and characters to life by adding a certain level of detail to them," said Lebedev, a graduate of the Digital Animation program at Centennial College's East York campus. "Most of the time I'm given rough sketches and have to create sculptures that are anatomically correct."

Working on *The Shape of Water* for seven to eight months, he was responsible for creating the creature's facial expressions and movement that helped bring the sense of realism to Guillermo del Toro's film. Using 3-D scans of the actor, Doug Jones, in costume as reference, Lebedev created a digital replica of the creature and sculpted the

details to make it as believable as possible.

"Everything had to be perfect," Lebedev said. "Del Toro has ridiculous eyes and picked out the costume's minor details that still needed to be worked on."

Anatomy is an important factor that Lebedev felt should be fully understood before getting started in the industry because, in terms of creature designs, it's the first time anyone is seeing it. By adding familiar details, the audience is able to believe that the creature would exist in real life.

"My knowledge of anatomy was a key component when creating the creature's facial expressions," Lebedev said. "It helped bring a more realistic performance in the film."

Throughout his creative process, Lebedev gets inspiration from video games, movies, TV shows and nature.

"I recently went to Brazil and there were so many animals, birds, insects and plants that can just spark an idea," he said. "My brain starts to process the images to mix and match those things together and create a 'hell version' of them."

Video games such as *Dark Souls*, *Silent Hill*, *Resident Evil* and *The Evil Within* are some of

Lebedev's favourite because of their amazing design work.

Books are also something he finds beneficial to his sculpting.

"When reading, I picture it like a movie in your head, since there are no pictures to refer to," Lebedev said.

Growing up, he was particularly fond of the *Resident Evil* games and was able to work on the latest film, but *The Shape of Water* is his favourite project because people were able to see more of his work due to the multiple close-ups of the creature's face.

"It was great to see my work on screen and know that I contributed to this film," he said.

Lebedev is also a part-time professor for the Digital Animation program at Centennial's East York campus. He worked as a tutor during his time as a student until transitioning to teaching.

"I enjoy sharing my knowledge with others and I'm planning on making some tutorials in the future as well," he said.

"The most rewarding part of teaching is seeing the students' artistic growth and improvement in their work."

DANCE AND FITNESS



Bobby Hristova/The Observer

Above left, in the last five minutes of the full-body hula hoop workout, all ages class, students get to 'free-for-all' and try whatever technique they want. Above right, Amy MacCutchan teaches club member Caroline Vanderghem a new technique.

East York club is healthy and hooping

Hula hoops help HooperSonic dance and fitness club keep local participants in good shape

By **BOBBY HRISTOVA**
The Observer

After visiting her granddaughter Yumi in Egypt three years ago, Martine Star knew she had to become a hooper.

"My granddaughter wanted to teach me but, I couldn't do it," Star said. "I promised I would teach myself without telling her."

When Star returned, Yumi wasn't the only one surprised.

"I brought hula hoops back to Egypt and everyone started hooping."

Star is just one of the East Yorkers who swings her hips and grooves along the studio floors of HooperSonic.

Amy MacCutchan, owner and operator, started the hula-hooping dance and fitness club after "walking into" the idea at Withrow Park.

"A friend of mine was in the park and she was carrying a hula hoop. She told me she was going to a class and I said, 'that sounds dumb,'" MacCutchan says.

"I always thought it was so hard, but when I got there I had the right teacher who gave me the right hoop and I was hooked."

Seven years ago, when she started, MacCutchan was admittedly "uncoordinated and

dizzy."

Four years later, she was leading her own group and HooperSonic was born.

On March 25, the club celebrated its third anniversary with hoopla.

Marilyn Scott, an East York resident who has been hooping for eight years, says she feels "higher than a kite" when she leaves the club.

"Friends are surprised when they hear I'm a hooper," she said. "It makes you think about when you were younger."

They also incorporate dance moves and cardio exercise into routines.

MacCutchan says hula hoops seen in stores are kid-sized and much harder to use. Hoopers use giant, adult-sized hoops and flex their core to swing the ring.

One student, Amanda Stephens, highlights the key difference.

"It's about learning how to hoop versus trying to keep it up," she said.

Though most of MacCutchan's classes focus on experienced students, she also hosts a six-week beginner series for newer students like Caroline Vanderghem, who has been a member for a few months.

"Everyone helps everyone," Vanderghem said. "When you're here you forget everything else."

HooperSonic is held at the Redwood Theatre near the corner of Gerrard Street East and Greenwood Avenue and at St. David's Anglican Church on Donlands Avenue.

In the summer, the club aims to host their hooping in the Beaches Area once a week.

Women's fight night squares off against Parkinson's

Boxing program helps people through drills

By **ALEX GOUDGE**
The Observer

An all-female amateur boxing event served as an introduction to the world of boxing while raising money to fight Parkinson's disease.

The first White Collar Women's Boxing event, held March 29 at the Hungarian Canadian Cultural Centre near O'Connor Drive and Bermondsey Road, hosted six fights featuring amateur women boxers.

The evening raised money for Rock Steady Boxing at Undisputed, a non-contact-boxing program that specializes in helping people with Parkinson's through movement-based boxing drills.

Organized by Lita Mae Button, head coach at Rock Steady

at Undisputed boxing club, the event included a black-tie dinner. Fights were held throughout the evening.

The event served as an introduction to the world of live boxing for audiences and fighters alike.

Haley Brooks is one of the fighters who stepped into the ring for the first time. She brought her mouthpiece and 19 guests to watch her fight, about half of whom had never watched a live boxing match.

"They all loved it," Brooks said in a phone interview after the event. "They got the dinner, too, with it, and it was a great night."

The women trained for 12 weeks prior to the event, doing conditioning exercises and sparring drills.

The women Button trains have different reasons for boxing.

"Some are doing it for fundraising and others want to go further with what they're do-



Alex Goudge/The Observer

Saukyn Luque (in red) and Chaya Stebben punch it out at the inaugural White Collar Women's Boxing event, on March 29 at the Hungarian Canadian Cultural Centre.

ing," she said.

While organizing the event, Button wanted people who had never seen a boxing match to leave the event wanting more.

She also feels that women in

the sport often take a backseat and wanted to highlight the skill set of those participating.

The fundraiser also shone a light on the work done by the Rock Steady gym. Button and

Rock Steady member Wayne Hornsby ran through some drills to show the audience what Rock Steady is all about.

The event left attendees, fighters and organizers feeling

proud, and all for a good cause, too.

"Lita really empowered many of us to succeed and feel empowered as women boxers," Brooks said.

EDITORIALS

So close, yet so far

Women's empowerment is a double-edged sword. As a society, we encourage women to go to university, get a degree, get a masters, be a corporate powerhouse. At the same time, we tell them to get married and have a family if that's what they want. But the moment a woman chooses motherhood as well as a career, we make her life exceedingly difficult.

Premier Kathleen Wynne recently announced that the Liberals' proposed budget would fund preschool for children from 2 1/2 years old until they start kindergarten at age 4. This election promise, if it comes to fruition, would take the weight off many shoulders feeling the burden of having children in the 21st century.

With more and more women choosing education and a full-time career, universal childcare is a necessity. There is simply no other way to fully empower women and achieve equality.

In Canada, maternity leave benefits are pretty good. Parents can get up to 61 weeks of paid leave — meaning a woman would be getting a fraction of her salary while she's at home. After those 61 weeks, or 14 months, everything is up in the air for a working mom.

Experts know that the first five years of life are the most important from a developmental standpoint. It's crucial for children to be cared for properly.

Child-care costs in Ontario are the highest in the country, and waiting lists for reputable, licensed care are miles long. In 2012, the average monthly cost for full-time daycare for an infant in Ontario was \$1,152. That's about the cost of a two-bedroom rental downtown or a mortgage payment in the suburbs.

Now imagine if a woman wanted to have more than one child, or even several.

Quebec has had a subsidized daycare system for a while, but France is where it's at when it comes to childcare. The country has a three-element system:

- There are daycare centres run by municipalities and overseen by the government. Children as young as three months can be cared for, and people pay an hourly rate based on their salaries. These daycare centres are tightly regulated and staff must meet the government's strict employment standards.

- The national government gives tax breaks to families that choose to hire nannies. These nannies must be licensed by the government and meet all the necessary qualifications.

- Universal preschool is also available for children three to six years old. From a Canadian standpoint, it's like mixing preschool and kindergarten into one place.

These options give women in France more flexibility and choice when it comes to balancing a career and being a mom. Women in Ontario don't have the same options, especially low-income women who would benefit from universal childcare the most.

The reality is that we as a society are lying to the next generation of women in Ontario who dream of both career and motherhood. The exorbitant cost of childcare for women with young children is the cold, hard evidence.

It's time for Ontario to live up to its rhetoric of feminism and equality.

~ Ellen Samek

Mind the children

A local school introduced a new initiative in February to educate parents and caregivers on healthy strategies for responding to challenging emotions in children.

Roden Public School/Equinox Holistic Alternative School, located south of the Danforth, hosted a much-needed workshop on mental wellness with guest speaker Christie Hoyos of the SickKids Centre for Community Mental Health.

According to the Mental Health Foundation, mental health problems affect about one in 10 children and young people. These include depression, anxiety and conduct disorder, and are often a direct response to what is going on in their lives. Overlooking mental health issues in children has been linked to horrific events, including mass shootings, crime and alarming suicide rates.

From an early age, children are exposed to situations such as bullying and parental neglect. About 70 per cent of adults who experience a mental health problem have not had appropriate interventions during their childhood. Without proper care, these children may grow into adults who are emotionally stunted and ill-equipped to handle difficult situations.

Oftentimes, the same adults who are mentally ill disregard the same issues in their children. This creates a cycle. If parents and caregivers mend the cycle of emotional neglect from a young age, they can help prevent mental health problems in all people.

Many mass school shootings that have taken place in North America have been committed by people aged 20 and under. For example, Dylan Klebold, 17, and Eric Harris, 18, students at Columbine High School in Colorado, killed 13 people in 1999 before committing suicide. The Columbine shooting was, at the time, the worst high school shooting in U.S. history and sparked a national debate on gun control, school safety and mental health. Yet, we are still seeing the same situations happening today, almost 20 years later.

The all-too-familiar narrative goes like this: a crime is committed and the perpetrator is labeled a lone wolf with extensive mental health issues (almost always due to the way he or she was treated growing up). The sooner we start providing children with mental health support, as this local high school did, the more success we will have at preventing mental health-related crimes and suicides by young people.

~ Tianna Henry

COLUMNS

Club's come a long way

On Tuesday, Toronto FC travelled to Mexico City to face off against Club América in the Estadio Azteca, with a 3-1 lead from the first leg. Toronto FC clinched a crucial 1-1 draw to advance into the finals of the CONCACAF with a 4-2 aggregate win.

Past one Mexican giant, and into another: The Reds are set to face C.D. Guadalajara (Chivas) next week at BMO field. This will be the first time Toronto has made it to the CONCACAF finals, coming off the back of their first domestic treble in 2017.

With Toronto FC easing through the CONCACAF Champions League, it's easy to forget how far the club and MLS competition has come in recent years.

Former Italy Coach Antonio Conte attracted much criticism in 2016 when he snubbed Toronto FC and MLS star Sebastian Giovinco for the 2016 Italian

Euro squad, citing the quality (or lack thereof) of the MLS as the main reason for the omission.

That sentiment was shared by his successor, Giampiero Ventura, who noted that the MLS "is a league that does not count for much."

The label of "retirement league" has been associated with the MLS since its creation, with the likes of David Beckham and Steven Gerrard arriving past their peaks to the developing U.S. soccer scene.

Both Toronto FC and the MLS have come a long way. The league has become much more competitive, capable of attracting young players from abroad, with many making breakthroughs with their respective national

teams.

As for the quality of the MLS inhibiting players' chances of being picked for their national team, TSN soccer analyst Terry Dunfield said, "I believe it's much less of an issue in recent years."

In the most recent transfer window, Toronto FC has brought in 24-year-old Ager Aketxe from Athletic Bilbao, a promising young player in the prime of his career moving from one of Spain's more competitive clubs.

With Jonathan Osorio's goal against Club América Tuesday night, he has been the club's most consistent player at the CONCACAF, scoring a goal in each round of the Champions League.

His teammate Tosaint Ricketts is the joint fourth-top scorer for the Canadian Men's national soccer team, with 16 goals for his country as of 2018.

This Toronto FC is not the same one that set the record for most consecutive losses back in 2012.

As the Reds host Chivas next week for the first leg of the CONCACAF final, they are certainly not a team to be underestimated.



Justin Chan

Put police back in Pride

Will the real Pride Toronto please stand up?

Toronto Police and Pride Toronto have had a complicated relationship since 2016. That's when Black Lives Matter activists halted the parade for about 30 minutes, calling out Pride's "anti-blackness" while demanding police not participate in future parades.

Pride is about being inclusive, accepting, and building community. To exclude one group goes against everything it stands for.

On April 2, in a Facebook post, Pride Toronto and several other LGBTQ organizations co-signed a letter asking Toronto Police Chief Mark Saunders to end all efforts at rejoining the parade this year.

Pride officials said talks between both groups were going well until alleged serial killer Bruce McArthur's arrest on Jan. 18 and the investigation into the missing and murdered gay men in the Church-Wellesley area (known as the Gay Village).

Last year for the first time, Toronto police and their floats

were not part of the parade. Uniformed police will again not be a part of it when the 38th annual Pride Parade takes place on June 25.

The letter contends that the police investigation into the deaths was handled poorly. Even after many LGBTQ groups told police they suspected a serial killer was targeting gay men in the village, their concerns were "dismissed" by police, according to the letter.

If you're blaming BLM for initiating this exclusion from the pa-

rade, well, you'd be right. BLM started it, but it is not one of the co-signers of this year's request to exclude uniformed police from participating in the parade.

One Muslim terrorist should not stereotype all Muslims as terrorists, and one black shooter does not represent the black community.

It's unfair to blame an entire police force for the actions of a few. Yes, they are imperfect. Police services are meant to protect the public and when they fail, we feel cheated, threatened and maybe worse. But excluding police from the Pride Parade is a form of bigotry and provides a reason not to go.



Rushanthi Kesanathan

Landmark hospital has grown over 90 years



City of Toronto Archives



Taylor Bridger/The Observer

Michael Garron Hospital has had a somewhat modest expansion in the 90 years since the above left photo was taken. The hospital, formerly known as Toronto East General until its name change in 2015, has provided emergency health services to the East York area for nearly a century. In 2018, the distinctive chimney stack and the overall profile of the building are still present, while additional expansion wings have been added.

PROVINCIAL ELECTION

Hospital care a flashpoint in Beaches-East York

By TAYLOR BRIDGER and SHAYELLE SMITH
The Observer

Beaches-East York has been represented by Liberal party MPP Arthur Potts since 2014. Two women are hoping to cut his career at Queen's Park to four years with the provincial election in June.

At least one of the challengers is making an issue of problems at Michael Garron Hospital — the same hospital that Potts has helped support with



The Green Party's Debra Scott, left, is one challenger to Liberal MPP Arthur Potts in Beaches-East York.

major funding.

Debra Scott is running for the second time for the Green

Party in the riding. She has been an environmental activist for the past 10 years. Her campaign claims she has a strong commitment to research and development on sustainable innovation. She has the Science, Research and Innovation portfolio in the Green Party shadow cabinet.

"Under-staffing of the Michael Garron Hospital is not a new issue," she says. "The contracting issue has been a situation that has been ongoing for sometime. Putting the idea of

preventative care into a society that is aging is the most effective way of eventually solving the under-staffing of hospitals. Instead of full-time people, we have contracted many positions, which means people are constantly being trained."

The Green Party aims to invest in front-line services, so that we can have more home care, Scott says. "Diverting people away from critical care units like hospitals will ultimately help the under-staffing in hospitals."

Progressive Conservative candidate Sarah Mallo did not respond to a request for comments. Her promotional literature shows her together with new PC leader Doug Ford.

Potts bills himself as a privileged member of Premier Kathleen Wynne's team. His tipping legislation recently came into effect, protecting the incomes of Ontario servers and food service staff.

He also helped facilitate a \$50-million donation to Toronto East General Hospital, now

named for the donors' late son, Michael Garron.

"Over the last four years as your representative at Queen's Park, I have been a proud champion for East York and have worked with our community to get results that will benefit people here," he says.

"Together we secured \$411 million in funding for the redevelopment of Michael Garron Hospital, a true East York landmark and I look forward to continuing our work to build a stronger community."

First-time candidates challenge Tabuns in Toronto-Danforth

By TAYLOR BRIDGER and SHAYELLE SMITH
The Observer

A pair of newcomers to provincial politics are gearing up to challenge Toronto-Danforth MPP Peter Tabuns, who has held office for nine years.

Two women of very different backgrounds and political affiliations are prepping campaigns that plan to beat the thrice-elected incumbent in the June election: Li Koo of the Liberal Party and Patricia Kalligosfyris of the Progressive Conservative Party.

PC candidate Kalligosfyris is a neophyte in Ontario politics and neither challenger has ever been a candidate herself.

Kalligosfyris identifies herself as somebody

who, "like so many residents of Toronto Danforth, embodies the value and character traits that Ontario's foundations were built on."

She's a second-generation Greek-Canadian who says she was raised with the principles of inclusivity, hard work and determination.

As a high school teacher, she promotes a fun and challenging curriculum while pushing students to their potential, according to her campaign literature. "Education is of the utmost importance and her campaign wants to bring positive change to Ontario Education."

Liberal candidate Koo is no stranger to politics, having advised various Liberal political efforts in her recent past.

"I am an educator, a community leader and a successful entrepreneur with experience from

the non-profit, government, corporate and culture sectors," she says. "I am passionate about improving education and helping seniors live with dignity and fulfilment. I've advocated for increased access to justice for vulnerable and newcomer communities as a senior adviser at the Government of Ontario and a director at Legal Aid Ontario."

NDP incumbent Tabuns bills himself as a "candidate that sees in East York a unique set of challenges." He advocates putting provincial money back into the TTC, as well as addressing the lack of affordable childcare, which is causing huge problems for families, and fixing soaring rents.

In 2017, Tabuns proposed a rent control bill that would provide rent-hike protections.

"This will be a tough election," Tabuns pre-



PC candidate Patricia Kalligosfyris, left, and Liberal hopeful Li Koo, centre, are running against NDP incumbent Peter Tabuns in Toronto-Danforth.

dicts. "People see Ontario going back and forth between Liberal and Conservative governments, bad or worse, when there is a chance to break out of that and elect an NDP government that will focus on people's needs."

PC candidate faces 'good campaigner' Wynne in Don Valley West

By TAYLOR BRIDGER and SHAYELLE SMITH
The Observer

Progressive Conservative candidate Jon Kieran knows he has an uphill battle trying to defeat Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne in her own riding of Don Valley West.

"We all know that Kathleen Wynne is a good campaigner and will use her influence to try and win the riding," he says.

"We do not take anything for granted. My plan is to be the hardest-working campaign in Ontario. I will listen and will keep my promise to be a real voice for Don Valley West."

Wynne touts her government as a "force for good," viewing it as something to be invested in, while Kieran cites the public anger associated with Wynne's government.

"I've received a consistent message across the Don Valley

West: constituents want a government that actually listens," Kieran says. "When consultation on important matters like a child's education is promised, voters expect that promise to be kept. People are angry at government waste, they are fed up with the scandals, massive hikes in hydro rates, hallway healthcare and soaring deficits."

Wynne has been Don Valley West's MPP since winning the



PC candidate Jon Kieran is challenging Premier Kathleen Wynne in her own riding.

seat in 2003. She grew up in Richmond Hill and has lived

with her partner, Jane, in North Toronto for more than 25 years.

"I am running again to be your MPP and Premier because I know we can continue to build a fairer, better Ontario where we invest in seniors' care, child care and health care," she says.

She calls the election a classic battle between liberal and conservative values. "When voters cast their ballots this spring, they will choose between Conservatives who want

to slash spending just when families need it the most and our Ontario Liberal team that sees government as a force for good and knows that now is the time to invest in care."

She cites her initiatives to raise minimum wage to \$15 an hour, offer free tuition for 225,000 students, provide free prescription medication for children and youth under 25 and establish 100,000 new, affordable childcare spaces.

Robotic team puts medal to the metal

Local high school students explain the nuts and bolts of competing with robots

By **SERGIO ARANGIO**
The Observer

The East York Collegiate Institute “Cyberonauts” walked into Ryerson University’s Mattamy Athletic Centre ready to throw their robot, Phoenix, into battle.

They pitted her against the robots of 36 robotics teams across Ontario in the year’s opening FIRST Robotics competition.

With six weeks to design, build and program her, the six-student team finally got to show off their aluminum friend’s skills on March 16.

“We’re pretty confident in our robot’s abilities,” Grade 12 student Aliyyah Jackhan said.

This year’s competition tasked the Cyberonauts with playing a game involving a seesaw. Teams have to weigh down one side with blocks for a longer time than their opponents. The East York team didn’t make the finals, but they went home with the Quality Award for their robot’s design and build.

Phoenix is currently competing in the provincial championship at the Hershey Centre in Mississauga. The winner will move on to the world championship in Detroit.

It’s Jackhan’s first year on the robotics team. She worked with two computer science mentors from the University of Toronto to program Phoenix. Jackhan said she was initially skeptical about joining.

“I’m the only girl on the team,” she said. “I have to spend all this time outside of class with all these boys and it kind of scared me.”

Jackhan wants to be a computer engineer. What swayed her towards joining the team was the advantage it will give her going into university.

“Because of this (experience), I am kind of like the ‘super coder,’” Jackhan said. “I was able to do and learn a lot more than I would’ve



Courtesy of East York Cybernetics

The East York Collegiate Institute robotics team walked away from FIRST Robotics competition at Ryerson University with the Quality Award for their robot Phoenix.

in just a regular class.”

FIRST began in 1992 to celebrate engineers and scientists. The organization has programs for students from kindergarten to high school. Younger tech whizzes have the LEGO League, which has them solve real-world issues like recycling and building robots out of LEGO pieces to compete with other teams.

An important thing about the robotics team, Jackhan said, is that it helped her think about how to make her mark in the typically male-dominated field of engineering.

“It’s taught me how to deal with people who may put you down because you’re a girl or because you may not know as much at the time,” she said. “It’s definitely given me a thicker skin.”

Chris Perivolaris has run East York Colle-

giate’s robotics team for nine years. He loves the hands-on aspect of the robotics program, he said.

“It’s about the process,” Perivolaris said. “About learning what to do when confronted with a problem.”

The moment they finally got Phoenix working was the moment everyone’s faces lit up, Perivolaris said. They took her to Crescent School, near the Bridle Path, to finish building her and test her out. Students walking by admired the robot as it zoomed around the school’s practice space.

It’s moments like this that inspire Perivolaris to keep the program going.

“It’s been a fabulous experience for these kids. That’s why I continue to do it,” he said. “I feel like I’m building Canada when I help these

kids.

The Cyberonauts are a small team, however. They had to work extra hard to make a robot that could compete with the larger teams of up to 80 students.

They had to be efficient with their materials too, Perivolaris said, since they’re not as well funded as other teams. They even have to scrap old robots for parts.

“There are technical and manufacturing (businesses) that could help,” he said. “It just means organizing and knocking on doors. I just don’t have the energy as one teacher to do that.”

For Jackhan, she hopes future generations take advantage of the program, especially for the strong bonds that form. “At the end of it, your team is like your family,” she said.

COMMUNITY ART

Wondering who’s behind that colourful mural?



Doha Hanno/The Observer

Yannick Torres Ariel Bihan poses in front of his murals on the side of LucSculpture, an art school and studio in East York.

It’s Yannick Torres Ariel Bihan, who tries to incorporate bits of his life into each painting

By **DOHA HANNO**
The Observer

East York is dotted with mysterious artistic murals. We see them almost every day on our way to work or school. But have you ever wondered: Who paints them?

Yannick Torres Ariel Bihan is responsible for several murals around Toronto, including one on the side of his dad’s East York art studio LucSculpture at Greenwood and Danforth avenues.

A 31-year-old painter who was born in the projects of France, Bihan has spent years honing his style.

“I used to try to paint realism, but now I just paint what I see in my head,” he said.

Bihan’s form of expressionism

isn’t random. He tries to incorporate bits of his life into his paintings.

“I painted my dad in the mural and my little sister and some other people that are close to me,” he said. “I like to paint people I love because (the painting) stays there for a long time.”

Bihan is a sculptor, tattoo artist, still life-painter and more.

His girlfriend, Laura Adams, is also a sculptor, and together they make much of their living through their art.

“I like doing art and murals because I don’t have to follow many rules,” Bihan said.

“When I do tattoos, it’s always about what the customer wants, so sometimes it’s nice to paint whatever I feel like painting without anyone telling me what to do.”

He would paint more murals if more locations were available.

“I wish there were more spots for me to do paintings,” he said. “But the government says it’s illegal to graffiti in some places, so you have to be careful and get a permit.”