



Peek Freans bakery to grow with provincial gov't dough

By **CASSIDY JACOBS**
The Observer

A long-time East York bakery will be expanded and modernized with the help of a \$22.6-million investment from the Ontario government.

The announcement was made last week by Jeff Leal, Minister of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs, at Mondelez's Peek Freans plant on Bermondsey Road. He was accompanied by Arthur Potts, MPP for Beaches-East York.

"The Mondelez-Peek Freans plant in East York has been a significant local employer for nearly 70 years," Potts said on April 16. "Today's massive investment will help Mondelez expand local production, create more jobs and support greater prosperity in our community."

Mondelez produces well-known treats, such as Oreo cookies and Ritz Crackers and is one of Canada's top biscuit companies. The Peek Freans location has supported local wheat farmers and other ingredient suppliers since the 1950s.

Ontario's Jobs and Prosperity Fund has invested in the expansion project and plans to support opportunities in master baking, technician and engineering skills. It will also allow the company to expand the production plant and install two new bakery lines while upgrading existing bakery lines.

In a press release, Steven Del Duca, Minister of Economic Development and Growth, said the investment is part of the government's strategy to attract business investment in order to build "an Ontario where businesses and working can thrive in a changing global economy."

■ See **INVESTMENT**, page 3



Photo courtesy of Natalie von Teichman

My four sons

Andrew von Teichman hugs his sons, (L-R), William, 8; Hudson, 6; and twins Dax and Holden, 4. Bullies became a part of daily life for von Teichman when he was a child himself in Grade 1. Now a wine-maker, he started D'ont Poke the Bear, a wine that donates up to \$1 for each bottle sold to the Friends First Foundation, a group he and his wife Natalie started to fund anti-bullying efforts. To read the full story, turn to page 4.

Leaside's Leaf Shack gathers hockey fans for a good cause



Anjelica Balatbat/The Observer

Leaf signage outside the Radford home invites neighbours to watch the playoff game.

Invited local residents to cheer on the Leafs, raise funds for CAMH

By **ANJELICA BALATBAT**
The Observer

For 15 years, Leasiders have gathered at Doug Radford's Leaf Shack to watch every Toronto Maple Leafs playoff game. Even though dreams of victory were dashed in Wednesday night's game with Boston, fans remain hopeful for next season.

The "shack," a covered area in the backyard of the retired paramedic's Hanna Road home, is publicized by a large sign and Leafs memorabilia on the front lawn. This includes banners, hockey sticks and a jersey that reads, "Watch Leafs playoffs

outside, all welcome."

"More than half the people who come I've never met," Radford said the night of the April 12 playoff game. "There's a lot of people, friends and that, but I try and say hi to everyone, but during intermissions."

The idea was born in 2004. "When the Leafs finally made the playoffs after 10 years, I was quite excited," Radford said. He wanted to watch the game with friends, but his house was too small to host everyone. He decided to take the party outside. He pitched a camping tarp in his backyard and continues to do so today.

"First we put our TV in the front window and had everyone sitting out in the

front lawn," his wife, Elizabeth Radford recalled. "Then we had an old tent trailer and we brought the TV out under the awning and had people sit there. We finally graduated to the backyard and technology has helped out."

For playoff game one against the Boston Bruins, more than 30 people (and their dogs) gathered at the Leaf Shack to watch the projected game on the big screen — a 12x8-foot canvas drop cloth.

The Radfords' daughter Sarah is the official sign-maker and helps her parents prepare for hockey fans who visit the tented shack.

"The structure gets bigger and bigger every year," neighbour Paddy Doherty said.

This year, the Leaf Shack partnered with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and donated the proceeds from each game.



■ **RADFORD**

Safety visits in the works after two fatal fires

Visits will happen in June, with safety workshops at 50 buildings

By TAYLOR BRIDGER
The Observer

The Toronto Community Housing Corporation is planning door-to-door safety visits after the second fatal fire to happen in East York's Greenwood Towers since November.

The second-alarm blaze on the 13th floor of the 14-storey building near the intersection of Danforth and Greenwood avenues happened in the early hours of April 18.

A man in his 70s died in hospital after succumbing to smoke inhalation and severe burns.

In late November, a fire one floor below claimed the life of a man, who was in his 60s.

Daniele Gausin, a spokesperson for TCHC, outlined plans for the visits.

"We are planning door-to-door fire-safety visits by Toronto Fire Services during Fire Safety Awareness Month in June at Greenwood Towers, along with fire-safety workshops led by Toronto Fire Services at 50 of our buildings," she said in an email.

"TCHC provides homes to some of Toronto's most vulnerable residents, and it is crucial that we maintain a strong focus on fire safety and prevention."

Gauvin also talked about '12 Days of Fire Safety', a recent awareness campaign of TCHC, which ran from Dec. 7, 2017 to Jan. 2, 2018.

"It included posters in our buildings, a social-media campaign using Twitter and Facebook, and a dedicated web page," she said.

"We also mailed two sections of building fire-safety plans that apply to tenants to 52,000 households in December 2017.

Annual fire safety unit inspections were also completed in all buildings by the end of December, Gauvin noted.

"All buildings with a fire-alarm system have detailed fire-safety plans in place, and these plans are approved by Toronto Fire Services," she added.



Fleur Boomsma/The Observer

This home at 43 Aldwych Ave. sold for more than the asking price in December.

Homebuyers turning to E.Y.

Buyers attracted by 'good vibes and reasonable house prices,' real estate agent says

By FLEUR BOOMSMA
The Observer

The East York community is booming, and so is its housing market.

According to Toronto-based real estate agent Suzanne Lewis, the neighbourhood has developed substantially over the past 10 years. From restaurants to boutiques, this has brought a different vibe to the area, she says.

While people may start out looking for homes in Riverdale or Leslieville, they quickly come to the realization that the lack of inventory and subsequent price

hikes put those homes out of their price range, Lewis points out. That's when clients turn to East York, where they can still get that feeling of community without necessarily paying exorbitant prices.

Leslie Hubel has lived in East York for 12 years. She moved to the community during the lead-up to Halloween and recalls the homes being decorated festively. "A very accepting neighbourhood can always seem daunting at first," she said via Facebook Messenger. "I have come to know many great people here. Many who have lived here for generations, even."

East York is home to a lot of post-war bungalows that people may want to buy and renovate. According to Lewis, they're worth anywhere from \$900,000 to \$1 million. Once renovated, that figure jumps to between \$1.5 million and \$2 million.

"There is the walkability, the Danforth,

and even Pape is changing," Lewis said, noting that some people still prefer living in a detached house to avoid sharing a wall with neighbours. They also like have a parking space and proximity to the subway.

Real estate, says Lewis, is about supply and demand. There is always a demand in the East York neighbourhood, but there aren't many houses on the market that can fulfill that need.

Just last December, a home at 43 Aldwych Avenue sold for \$304,000 over the asking price.

However, some homes may be priced under market value to attract different buyers, Lewis says.

"The first quarter (of the year) is over, and what we saw is that good product goes fast," she noted. "There are still multiple offers."

Potholes proliferating on local streets

Early freeze/thaw cycle has doubled number of potholes repaired this year

By DANIELLE CLARKE and JUSTIN CHAN
The Observer

It may be spring, but Torontonians are still being tormented by winter's potholes.

"I've seen a spike of 50 per cent (more damage on vehicles from potholes) this year in comparison to last year," said Steve Perusits, owner of the Leaside Master Mechanic on Laird Drive, in a recent interview.

"With potholes, it will start to wear out the Teflon. It sounds like your whole front end is starting to fall out of your car, just from the jolt of the actual pothole."

Those repairs can get expensive.

"We had one gentleman come in with a new fairly new BMW and had to replace three rims and two tires because of potholes," Perusits said. "The rims were \$700 apiece."

Drivers are not the only ones affected.



Justin Chan/The Observer

A man rides his bike along a stretch of road littered with potholes.

"A lot of the roads are unsafe for cyclists," said avid cyclist Adam Hotchin.

"Potholes tend to appear on the right-hand side of the road, which means cyclists are forced over to the left side of the lane," he said. "This puts drivers and

cyclists in conflict with the road, and it's dangerous for everybody."

Frequent cold spells and pressure from vehicles add to the predicament.

"We experienced an earlier-than-usual freeze/thaw cycle," explained Cheryl San Juan of the city's engineering and construction services department.

"Potholes are created when water penetrates the top layer of asphalt through cracks in the road," she said.

"After the moisture freezes and expands, sections of the pavement are forced up. The weight of vehicles going over this section of road breaks the pavement and the asphalt is forced out."

From Jan. 1 to April 25, the city fixed 129,794 potholes, San Juan said. That's almost twice as many as last year at this time.

City crews usually take 15 to 20 minutes to repair each pothole, according to the City of Toronto website.

However, cyclist Hotchin feels that some of the smaller potholes that affect bike riders are not fixed quickly enough.

"The city is usually quick to repair potholes that are deep enough to damage cars, but potholes that concern cyclists can be left for weeks or months," he said.

WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

Fling into spring at St. Cuthbert's fair in Leaside

St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church is hosting a spring fair on Saturday, April 28 at 1399 Bayview Ave. Everything from baked foods, quilts, crafts, stamps and toys will be available. There will also be children's activities and a family barbecue. The fair will run from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Craving a little jazz? Come to Northlea United

Juno nominee Heather Bambrick and pianist Rob Lowe and friends will perform at Northlea United Church, 125 Brentcliffe Rd., on Sunday, April 29 from 4:30-5:30 p.m. Refreshments will be served at 4 p.m., and the price of admission is a free will offering. Call 416-425-5252 for information.

Kitchen design at the library

Get some tips on kitchen design from an expert at the S. Walter Stewart Library, 170 Memorial Park Ave., on May 1 from 6:30-8 p.m.

Withrow Park gallery hosts local art in May

The Withrow Park Clubhouse will be transformed into a gallery on May 26 and 27 for a show featuring work by members of Central Connection, a local art group. The clubhouse is located at 725 Logan Ave. and the show will run from 1-6 p.m. May 26 and 1-5 p.m. May 27.

~ Observer staff

Jews faced 'Double Threat' in war: author

Ellin Bessner commemorates Canadian Jewish veterans in book about their contributions

By DOHA HANNO
The Observer

There were 160,000 Jews living in Canada before the war, according to the census. It was a very small population, yet 10,000 went in the army, author Ellin Bessner told an audience at the Todmorden branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.

"Another 6,000 served in the air force, and 500 or so went into the navy," Bessner said in a discussion about her new book *Double Threat* on April 21.

"There were another 2,000 who served who didn't put down — or lied — on their application forms about their religion because they were afraid," she said. "So they said they were Protestant or Presbyterian, or they said nothing."

Bessner commemorated the veterans by sharing their contributions, their sacrifices, their stories, their deaths — and the dangers they faced of being identified as Jews.

The name of her book, *Double Threat*, came from a letter from Mackenzie King to the Jewish people, which she read aloud:



Doha Hanno/Toronto Observer

Ellin Bessner displays her book *Double Threat* at the Todmorden Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.

"Thank you very much for helping the Allies win the war because, for you, this war was a double threat, not only to freedom and democracy but the annihilation of your people."

King thanked the Canadian Jews for going to the war despite these dangers "and that's why I called my book *Double Threat*," Bess-

ner said.

Bessner also passed around a book titled *Canadian Jews in World War II, Part II: Casualties*.

"The Canadian Jewish community published a book of all the biographies of all the casualties (during the war) and the 200 who were awarded bravery medals," Bessner said.

She shared the stories of Ben Dunkelman, Hymie Steinberg, Monty Hall, Johnny Wayne and Frank Shuster, Arthur Hiller, David Croll, Barney Danson, Rose Goodman and many more Jewish Canadian men and women who enlisted in the war.

"Rose Goodman was from Nova Scotia," Bessner said. "She graduated from Dalhousie University. She played violin. Her father owned the largest Eatons type stores in the Maritimes. They had four daughters, all graduated from university. That didn't happen so often in those days. When women were allowed to enlist in September of 1941, she went down and had an interview in Halifax.

"The very first thing they did — and in the MeToo and TimesUp worlds it's so wrong — they wrote on her identification card 'attractive.' That's completely illegal. They said 'Hebrew.' That's two strikes. Then her age. Then they said 'intelligent.' As a woman, this drives me crazy but that's how it was in those days."

Double Threat explores the untold stories of our country's history, the 17,000 Jewish Canadian men and women who were sent to defeat Hitler and the Axis in WWII.

It's a *New York Times* bestseller and will be made into a documentary using cartoons to help illustrate the war.

For more information about the book and for an event calendar, visit ellinbessner.com/about-the-book.

■ BUSINESS



Photo courtesy of Arthur Potts' staff

(L-R) Peek Freans plant manager Juan Carlos Torres Rodriguez, Minister Jeff Leal and MPP Arthur Potts announce plans to expand the plant with the help of the Ontario government.

Investment will help province's profile: Leal

Cont'd. from page 1

Leal said the investment will help "increase Ontario's profile in the international market."

Alicia Alessio, a mother of two who has lived in the area for seven years, believes this is a smart move.

"If they actually stick to their plan on creating more jobs, then this move could be great for Ontario's economy."

Alexis Papadakis, a resident of the Danforth community for more than a

decade, questions this.

"Will there actually be a change in our employment and economy, though? We usually see a situation like this where they claim that they'll be a change, but the plan ends up failing and we're left with nothing."

The Jobs and Prosperity Fund has committed more than \$830 million to 35 projects leveraging over \$10.9 billion in total investment.

The fund has supposedly created and retained more than 46,000 jobs since 2013.

Local restaurant planning birthday bash fit for a king

Dutch national holiday recognizes birthday of King Willem-Alexander

By FLEUR BOOMSMA
The Observer

Dutch ex-pats will be painting the Danforth orange this weekend in honour of King Willem-Alexander's 51st birthday.

This will be the fifth public recognition of the Dutch king's birthday, which falls on April 27, since his inauguration in 2013. The national holiday is known as King's Day, or "Koningsdag."

The birthdays of Dutch monarchs have been celebrated publicly since the late 1800s. During the national holiday, Dutch citizens wear orange and organize parties and flea markets. In the Netherlands, the big cities such as Amsterdam and Breda host concerts and boat parties on the canals.

This year, Borrel, a Dutch restaurant located at 1333 Danforth Ave. in East York, will offer a place for people wanting to wish the king of the Netherlands a happy birthday.

Owner Justin Go said the bar will be decorated accordingly and DJ Nanna Koekoek will play famous Dutch tunes. As well, drinks and Dutch snacks will be on offer.

"We've actually teamed up with another bar in our neighbourhood (so) that if we are over capacity, they'll be able to take people over there," he said. "Hopefully we 'Dutch up' their bar a tiny bit for the atmosphere. Peo-



Photo courtesy of Justin Go

Party-goers celebrate at a previous King's Day event at Hitch in Toronto.

ple do seem to appreciate it if you put up some orange streamers."

Go and his wife, Alison Broverman, previously hosted King's Day events at The Ossington, Hi-Lo, and Hitch. Those events were a big success, he said, and they're happy to host this year's national holiday at their new permanent location on the Danforth. Events will run from 3-11 p.m. on Friday (April 27) and Saturday (April 28).

One person who will be celebrating King's Day in style is Janny Thomas, who left the Netherlands over 60 years ago to live in Canada. Even so, she's remained true to her Dutch roots. She raises funds every year with the Dutch Bazaar to send about 300 children to summer camp, and celebrates King's Day by attend-

ing a party at the Dutch consulate every year.

Thomas said she loves the Dutch national holiday since it gives her a chance to catch up with people. The tone of the event has changed over the years, though, becoming more casual in response to the younger generation's input.

"When you attended the consulate's party (in former times), you had to dress up," Thomas reminisced. "You would be served Dutch snacks, like blocks of cheese and *bitterballen*. But recently, people show up in jeans and 'oranje' T-shirts."

Bitterballen are deep-fried balls filled with a mixture of beef or veal and different spices, served with traditional Dutch mustard. 'Oranje' is the Dutch word for orange.



Photo courtesy of Natalie von Teichman

The von Teichman boys — (L-R) Dax, Hudson, William and Holden — learn the importance of preventing bullying every day. Their parents, Natalie and Andrew von Teichman, enrol them in Leaside sports and carpool with families to teach their children kindness and teamwork.

Wine-making family builds buzz about bullies

D'ont Poke the Bear, Friends First Foundation hoping to fund and support anti-bullying initiatives at East York schools

By **BOBBY HRISTOVA**
The Observer

As a child, Andrew von Teichman was bullied for wearing an eye-patch to treat his astigmatism. That experience helped determine how he and his wife, Natalie von Teichman, would later raise their own four sons.

The boys — William, 8, Hudson, 6, and four-year-old twins Dax and Holden — were in fine form during a recent interview at their home just outside of Leaside. The twins bounced across the hardwood floor dueling with lightsabers while Hudson and William snuggled up to their parents on the couch.

“Whenever we have our family dinner, we play a game called Rose, Thorn, Bud,” Natalie said. “Our rose is something good that happened, our thorn is something we didn’t like and our bud is what we learned.”

Hudson made sure to mention he “usually has lots of buds.”

Two bottles of wine, one red and one white, sit on a nearby table. The labels feature a bear with an eye-patch and read “D’Ont Poke the Bear.”

After bonding with business partner Allan Jackson over being bullied as children, Andrew and Jackson, the co-founder of Jack-

son-Triggs winery in Niagara, created the wine. The label and name were born at the dining table.

“We were having dinner and I said, ‘Oh, don’t poke the bear now,’ and our designer had never heard the term before,” Andrew said. “When I explained it to him, he said, ‘There’s our name.’”

The peculiar spelling of ‘don’t’ was an error, but it stuck.

“It was so embarrassing because it was such a clear typo, but then we thought, ‘Wait a minute, our wine is Canadian’ and sent it back,” Andrew said.

D’ont Poke the Bear launched at the LCBO in August 2017 with enough bottles to last until November 2018. However, it sold out in two months.

Natalie and Andrew created the Friends First Foundation at the same time to raise funds for anti-bullying initiatives. Up to \$1 of the proceeds from each bottle of wine, which retails for \$14.95, goes to the foundation. As well, 20 per cent of merchandise sales are donated to it.

“We’ve raised over \$40,000 since we started,” Natalie said. “We’re about empowerment. That’s what Canadians do.”

Keeping their kids in mind, the von Teichmans want to reach out to local city councillors and schools to fund anti-bullying programs.

“It adds a different layer to parenting. Everyone has been affected by bullying and we try to teach our kids to step up,” Andrew said.

The foundation is working with the Canadian Red Cross, Kids Helpline, the University of Toronto and Bystander Revolution and may create an app. They are also a cider this summer.



Photo courtesy of Natalie von Teichman

The von Teichmans donate up to \$1 from the sale of each bottle of D’ont Poke the Bear wine, as well as 20 per cent of proceeds from related merchandise, to the Friends First Foundation, their anti-bullying initiative. They use the money to help local efforts.

Meanwhile, William, the oldest of the four boys, has advice for anyone who sees someone being bullied.

“Put someone in your shoes,” he said.

“You feel what they feel and it hurts. You should try and make them feel better.”



Tiffany Fung/Toronto Observer

Lorraine Johnson, author of **100 Easy-To-Grow Native Plants For Canadian Gardens**, wants more local gardens.

Creating community with native species

Author encourages planting gardens at local institutions

By **TIFFANY FUNG**
The Observer

A good way to start a love affair between the community and native plants is to approach local organizations for permission to garden on their property, says gardening expert Lorraine Johnson.

“Gardening is a partnership with the land, a partnership with other people,” she said. “And gardening is an expression of love to the land.”

The author of *100 Easy-To-Grow Native Plants For Canadian Gardens*, Johnson recently

spoke to other gardening enthusiasts at the S. Walter Stewart Library.

She described native plants as the “ones that evolve thousands of years in the region.” They are plants that originate in a specific area and continue to exist, grow and develop over time.

Native plants come in numerous styles and colours, Johnson said, and many of them grow unique fruits that cannot be purchased from the market. For instance, she mentioned a native plant named pawpaw that produces a “delicious” fruit that looks like mango and tastes like a mixture of banana and pineapple.

As for planting native species at public institutions, Johnson is all for it. She said outdoor gardens have already sprung up at many libraries and noted that other locations, such as Leaside

Memorial Community Gardens, would be a good place to establish blooms. In fact, its sunny location would make it perfect for native favourites such as black-eyed Susan, butterfly weed and Culver’s root, she said.

Johnson recommended choosing hardier plants for public institutions to ensure the plants survive harsh weather and traffic.

“There is no harm in opening up that conversation,” she encouraged anyone wanting to approach an organization about starting a garden. “A lot of places are really interested.”

To make their case, would-be gardeners should assure the institution that they’ll be the ones doing most of the work, Johnson said. “The act of doing gardening together creates a community,” she said.

DOCUMENTARY

Filmmaking family dives into new project

Father-daughter duo working on documentary about female marathon swimmers

By **BOBBY HRISTOVA**
The Observer

Ali Weinstein started swimming at the East York Community Centre before her first birthday. Her father, Larry Weinstein, says while other kids were miserable in the water, she had the widest smile he'd ever seen.

Now 32, Ali grew up watching her father's documentaries in their home near Pape and Danforth. Larry's notable recent works include TSN's *Engraved on a Nation* about the Saskatchewan Roughriders and *Dreaming of a Jewish Christmas*. Most of his documentaries, like Beethoven's Hair, focus on classical music.

After being a competitive synchronized swimmer for five years in high school and a stint in law school, Ali approached her father with an itch to become a filmmaker.

"Having dad as a role model growing up set a high standard for myself in terms of what I wanted to do," Ali said.

For Larry, 61, it was a delightful surprise.

Ali's first documentary feature, *Mermaids*, premiered at Hot Docs last year. When making the film, which examines mermaid mythology and the subculture around it, she asked her father for advice.

Now, the duo is co-directing a documentary that captures both of Ali's passions. Two generations of filmmakers are showcasing three generations of female marathon swimmers in the sequel to TSN's *Engraved on a Nation* series.

"When TSN asked me if I'd make another documentary for them, I knew exactly who I wanted to be my co-director," Larry said. "I always wanted to work with Ali really badly."

The documentary will follow Marilyn Bell, the first person to swim across Lake Ontario in 1954; Vicki Keith Munro, the most successful marathon or open-water swimmer ever; and her apprentice, Maya Farrell, 15, who is hoping to complete a record 88-km swim from Rochester to Toronto.



Bobby Hristova/The Observer

Ali Weinstein and her father, Larry Weinstein, are working on a documentary together for the first time. Airing on TSN in the fall, the film focuses on female marathon swimmers.

Thunderstorms forced a cancellation of Farrell's previous attempt at the swim across Lake Ontario in 2016, where she started from Niagara-on-the-Lake instead of Rochester.

Ali said Farrell would have been the youngest person to complete the swim, but the grueling determination needed to be an open-water swimmer is present regardless of success.

"They can swim for over 36 hours straight and even hallucinate in the water," she said.

Though swimming can be a challenge, capturing the sport poses similar trials. TSN approved the documentary in late March and wants it finished by September, to air later this

fall. The first shoot was April 5.

"It's hard because you don't want to be presumptuous," Larry said about following subjects. "They're in the process of, 'Am I going to have a world record swim?' and you wonder if you being there will be a distraction."

Even with the potential for problems, the Weinsteins stayed afloat.

"It was this beautiful choreography," Larry said about their first shoot. "We gravitated between subjects."

But with Larry working on another project about the history of propaganda, Ali will be left to direct many scenes solo.

"I'm sure it'll be totally fine and an opportunity for me to step up, but it does make me sad. It would be nice to have all the shoots with us together," she said. "Having dad as a role model growing up set a high standard for myself in terms of what I wanted to do."

The directing duo hopes to make the most of their first film together — and it may not be their last.

"It's great. I don't know how common it is for a family to work like this in film," Larry said. "I never knew I could support her the way she could support me. It would be fun to form a company with her."

Toronto Furries hockey player shares her coming-out story

Jessica Platt becomes the first openly transgender woman in Canadian women's hockey

By **TIANNA HENRY**
The Observer

Jessica Platt of the Toronto Furries says she never wanted to be anything other than ordinary. Coming out to her friends, family and fans was a difficult process for the 28-year-old hockey player, as transgender was never a label she went by.

"I just saw myself as a woman," says Platt, who spoke to students at Centennial College's East York campus earlier this week about her journey. "But with the happiness and confidence I found in my life, it was OK to use the label transgender to help others like me."

With the support of her family and Canadian Women's Hockey League team members, Platt became the first openly transgender woman in Canadian hockey after an Instagram post on Jan. 10.

"Hockey was the place where I could escape

and focus on one thing — it was off the ice that was the difficult part for me," Platt says. "People are terrible on the internet."

While she is personally secure with her trans identity, coming out brought on public scrutiny. To keep her sanity, Platt routinely avoids comments on articles and Twitter.

"However, I don't regret it at all," she says. "Before I came out there was always a voice in the back of my mind saying, 'What if someone found out?' When I came out I felt more free."

Since becoming openly transgender in January, Platt has been able to play hockey and follow her dreams, while staying true to herself, she says.

She recognizes the lack of representation with transgender athletes and women playing professional sports. As one of the first to come out in the league, she uses her platform to give advice to those who are afraid or hesitant to be themselves — and proud.

"There's no rush to come out, but make sure you're in a safe place and do it when you're ready. If you have a good support system, everything will be OK," Platt says.

"Ignore the haters. People are going to say terrible things no matter what."



Tianna Henry/The Observer

Toronto Furries player Jessica Platt brings her trusty hockey stick everywhere she goes — including to Centennial College's East York campus.

EDITORIALS

Pot shop paranoia

A pot shop opening half a kilometre from a school has created an irrational amount of fear in parents and a platform for Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne to get more votes.

As the federal government readies to legalize cannabis, the locations of Ontario's first four provincially run cannabis stores have been announced.

Toronto's first Ontario Cannabis Store (run by a subsidiary of the LCBO) is expected to open in the Gerrard Street East and Victoria Park Avenue area in a strip mall with a student tutoring service, a kid's martial-arts centre, and a McDonald's. The mall is a popular hangout for children and high schoolers in the area.

The store has garnered a heap of unwarranted attention for being 450 metres from an elementary school. The other three locations will open in Guelph, Kingston and Thunder Bay, where schools are up to a kilometre or three away.

Now, Wynne is ordering that school boards be given a say in where marijuana stores will be located. She says the boards are likely to know where their kids go at lunchtime and where they go after school.

How is this even an issue, especially if protocols are already in place to prevent underage users from making a purchase?

East York Collegiate Institute is only 300 metres from an LCBO, and just across the street from said LCBO is a bar.

Both of these places, under the law, cannot serve to kids under 19.

Breaking the silence over a potential weed-shop location next to a school and not having done so for a number of LCBOs and beer stores is a form of hypocrisy. Or is it an absurdity? Oh, wait, it's a political forum for those seeking votes.

Data compiled in the Toronto Star shows that more than half the city is within 450 metres of a school.

If cannabis stores are going to be anywhere, they might as well be in open areas. School-age children are already well aware of its existence.

Don't fret over government-operated pot shops. For concerned parents, there's only one rational response: continue to educate your children to be safe and responsible.

~ Rushanthi Kesunathan

Digital footprints

Facebook. Everyone knows what it is. Most people have an account. Most of those people have the app on their phone. In our digital culture, social media has become the glue that connects people.

By using social media, you are divulging information about yourself. Each decision you make leaves a digital footprint of your personal information. Each like and share is a record of information about you as a consumer.

A consumer, not an individual. To the companies with access to your digital footprint, you are not the neighbour down the street who walks his dog every other day. You are a consumer ready to be marketed to with targeted advertisements.

Information sells. Perhaps you've been watching a lot of travel videos and travel content on social media, so a targeted advertisement for cheap plane tickets may seem very tempting.

Even with a very basic Facebook profile, you are willingly divulging information about yourself: your occupation, your age, your interests.

The internet is a free service. We pay for its services with the data we create, and it is our digital presence that's the most valuable to companies looking to profit off the data you provide.

Companies pay for access to this data in hopes of getting a return on it. After all, your online shopping history is a good indicator of what products and services you may seek again.

So, are we living in a society that deems you less valuable than the data you provide?

Deleting social media from our lives would seem to be the logical option to keep our information from prying eyes. This is much harder than it sounds.

Keeping up with friends and family would be much more difficult without social media. A social gathering might be organized and spread through the use of a social-media platform, and it is designed to be most convenient.

The multitude of third-party apps and services that are connected to your social media also means that, without an account, you lose access to certain parts of the internet and its services — which is, again, at its core, inconvenient.

Convenience is a large part of why Facebook is such a big part of our social lives today. A 2015 study by Pew Research Center showed that 28 per cent of U.S. adults used social media to connect with friends and family, with up to 97 per cent using their phones as a way of communication.

Cutting out social media from your life may also mean cutting off access to friends and family. Is that an acceptable consequence of keeping your data safe? That's up to you to decide.

~ Justin Chan

COLUMNS

Learning code best way to build digital literacy

To communicate with other people, we use language. Having the ability to communicate with a computer, that's coding.

Through step-by-step instructions using text, we can tell a digital device what functions we want it to perform.

This allows people to search, create, and evaluate information on a computer system.

Also, it provides the autonomy to build websites, software, and media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram.

Many of us use these systems but lack an understanding of how to take control of the technology.

Why does this matter? Well, technology is everywhere you look.

Whether it's interacting with friends and family through social media or reading about the latest news online, much of what we do in our personal and professional lives is

digital. Recently, a Facebook scandal broke in which millions of users' data were obtained by a political analytics firm known as Cambridge Analytica.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg was placed under scrutiny as people began to question what it means to share their information online and, when they do, where it goes.

Learning how to code builds digital literacy and assists in making informative choices while using technology.

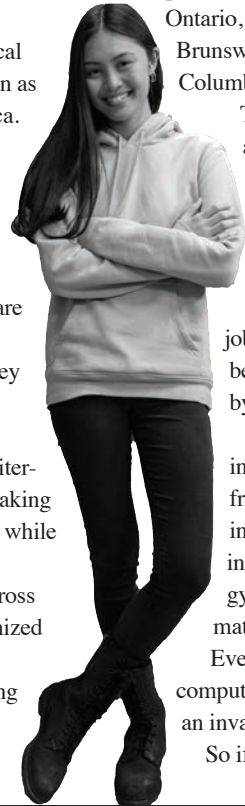
School boards across Canada have recognized this, and that youth today will be entering a job market that demands a greater understanding of telecommunication

systems. Coding has already been implemented into curricula in Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and British Columbia.

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Council released a study saying "over 84,000 new ICT jobs are expected to be created in Canada by 2019."

Many of the openings that will benefit from a knowledge in coding are careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Even at the basic level, computer programming is an invaluable skill.

So if you're looking to learn a language, learn to code.



Anjelica Balatbat

Time to invest in local hospitals to solve crisis

Can the next Premier of Ontario fix the province's hospital crisis?

Ontario's health care, especially when it comes to hospitals, has always been a huge problem.

Data collated by the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions found there are too few medical staff and hospital beds in Ontario.

Because of this, the waiting lists for treatment are getting longer and longer. Ontario's per-capita public funding of hospitals is also the lowest in the country.

Ontario needs to invest more money in hospitals so more medical professionals can be hired and more beds can be made available.

Could the 2018 Ontario general election in June solve this?

Doug Ford, the

leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, says Ontario needs to get rid of "hallway health care" — patients being treated in the hallway because there aren't enough beds.

Ford adds he will shorten the wait times for treatment by finding "resources."

The leader of the New Democratic Party, Andrea Horwath, says she will fund hospitals to handle population growth.

Horwath recognizes the needs of human resources, too. She says medical staffs are working very hard because there aren't enough of them to meet the needs of citizens.

Premier of Ontario and leader of

the Liberal Party, Kathleen Wynne, acknowledges the overcrowding problem and says she will invest in hospitals. But it seems she is focusing more on children's mental health and home care instead.

And here comes the problem.

Back in 2014, Wynne promised she would improve Ontario's health care. However, in the past four years, there haven't been any noticeable changes in hospitals.

The medical industry is still understaffed.

The waiting lists are still long.

Hospitals are still relying on "hallway care."

The average annual budget growth rate for health care in general has been the lowest in years.

It is good that Ontario's hospitals are getting more attention. What we can hope is that the next premier can fulfill his or her promise: to invest more in hospitals.



Tiffany Fung

Views from the Danforth: Then and now



William James/City of Toronto Archives



Taylor Bridger/The Observer

Have you ever had to wear rubber boots while crossing Danforth Avenue? Not likely, but that was the case more than 100 years ago, as seen in the photo on the left from 1910. It looks east on Danforth Avenue near Broadview Avenue before the viaduct over the Don Valley was built. As you can see in the photo on the right, present-day Danforth Avenue is a lot more developed with shops and bars lining the street.

Police identify eighth alleged victim of McArthur

Another first-degree murder charge laid after remains found in East York planters identified

By **SERGIO ARANGIO**
The Observer

Toronto police charged alleged serial killer Bruce McArthur with an eighth count of first-degree murder on April 16. McArthur appeared in court via video link.

At a press conference, Det. Sgt. Hank Idsinga revealed the identity of the alleged victim as Kirushna Kumar Kanagaratnam.

Idsinga said he was killed sometime between Sept. 3 and Dec. 14 of 2015, when he was 37 years old, but was never reported missing to police.

Kanagaratnam, who lived in Scarborough,

came to Canada from Sri Lanka in 2010 and had multiple relatives in the GTA, according to police. An international government agency helped identify the victim, Idsinga said, but he would not explain more.

He did say that his team is attempting to communicate with family in Sri Lanka through a Tamil-speaking officer to get more information.

“While we are saddened, we are also tremendously proud and relieved to have been able to bring closure to the friends and family of Mr. Kanagaratnam and the seven other victims.”

McArthur, 66, is also charged in the deaths of Andrew Kinsman, 49; Selim Esen, 44; Soroush Mahmudi, 50; Majeed Kayhan, 59; Dean Lisowick, 47; Skandaraj Navaratnam, 40 and Abdulbasir Faizi, 42.

This now makes Kanagaratnam the seventh victim to be identified among the bodily re-

mains found in planters at Mallory Crescent, near Bayview and Moore avenues in East York. Kayhan is the only unidentified victim.

Unlike the other victims, Idsinga said, Kanagaratnam does not appear to have any connections with Toronto’s Gay Village.

“He doesn’t quite fit the profile that we’ve seen before,” Idsinga said.

The investigation into McArthur and his landscaping business spans at least 70 properties where police believe the landscaper was contracted.

Idsinga said police have some idea of how McArthur supposedly killed his victims, but he is still looking into each case on an individual basis.

McArthur remains in custody at the Toronto South Detention Centre in Etobicoke.

McArthur awaits trial after his case was put over until May 23.



Toronto Police Services

■ **KANAGARATNAM**



Rashida Powankumar/The Observer

A clean sweep

Ted Stuebing, a reporter with The South Bayview Bull Dog, was ready to do some spring sweeping at a recent community clean-up event at Bayview Avenue and Millwood Road.

We’re the centre of the universe

Astrophysicist offers some illumination into the city’s starry history at East York library

By **MICHAEL GEZAHEGN**
The Observer

Like the universe itself, Toronto’s astronomical heritage is expanding.

Stargazing enthusiasts from all over the GTA attended an April 18 lecture by astrophysicist Dr. John Percy at S. Walter Stewart Public Library on how Toronto became a “centre of the universe” for astral research and development.

They heard about the city’s history with astronomy, dating back to the 1840s. That included Canadians such as Sir Sandford Fleming, who pioneered global standard time, to Helen Sawyer, who encouraged women

to pursue science in the 20th century and popularized astronomy. The event displayed the impact of both Canada’s and Toronto’s relatively unknown astronomy community on the world.

One of the evening’s key themes was diversity. Percy said that when people tend to think of astronomers, they think of “the grey, white male looking into the sky.”

As Toronto grows and becomes more diverse, its astronomical heritage has moved in parallel, said Percy, who’s “very happy that astronomy is accessible to everybody.”

Major astronomical events such as the recent eclipse of the super moon have increased public interest, he said.

That eclipse, which was partially visible in Toronto, brought out thousands of spectators to places such as Varsity Stadium and the Ontario Science Centre.

For newer astronomy enthusiasts,

it may be awhile before they can witness another event like the eclipse. At a planning meeting for future outreach programs for astronomical communities in the city, “virtually nothing (came) up until 2024, when there will be a total eclipse of the sun visible in Niagara Falls and almost total in Toronto,” Percy said.

Of course, the lack of major events shouldn’t stop you.

Percy has two suggestions for budding stargazers.

First, to get a good view of the stars in the night sky, look for a “place with large, flat ground, like a soccer field” and “minimal light pollution.”

Second, “If you want to observe things in the sky in the city, let your eyes acclimatize to the dark for 10 to 15 minutes, because their sensitivity improves noticeably if you give them that length of time. Then you’ll see some familiar constellations.”

And, Percy said, “I urge you to keep looking up.”

'Nooks' celebrates spring with pop-ups

Business accelerator launches small artisan retailers at three locations on Danforth Avenue

By LOUISE ALLYN PALMA
The Observer

In this digital age, local artisan craft business owners can still get their niche businesses started the old-fashioned way: by actually meeting their potential buyers face to face. And it's thanks to the Nooks.

Colleen Imrie, owner and founder of "business accelerator" the Nooks, opened the first Nooks store, Design Nook, two years ago. There are now three locations along the Danforth, each with a specific aesthetic to cater to small businesses in a particular way.

On Saturday, April 14, Imrie hosted the Nooks' "Spring into Fashion Pop Up" event in the third Nook space, called Studio by The Nooks.

The event gave business owners the chance to meet and interact with consumers and create an in-person connection with them. The event let them explain who they are and what their brand is, and tell the story behind their products.

"There's a voice to all the products in our store," Imrie said. "And there's a reason why, you know, that necklace with a pin-up girl is there. It's more than it's trending or it's cool or beautiful. You know the maker's right there, so you're able to talk to her and really learn why that is that. And then you actually fall in love more with that than the physical piece. And that's the beauty of handmade."

This is what Imrie envisioned for the Nooks and what business owners such as Christyne Gauthier and Rebecca Greenstein, of Spiro Spero Designs, are thankful for.

They create whimsical and fun jewellery that pays homage to their love of vintage images. They have created charms with classic pin-up models — a statement piece fashioned from Lucite.

"We like things that are different and a little crazy and offbeat, and that's hard to find," Gauthier said. "So, we made something we wanted to wear ourselves, essentially."

Added Greenstein, "We couldn't believe, when we would wear it around, people would go, 'Wait a minute. I really like what you're doing,' and we found our cult, our niche market."

The Nooks hosts many events, including the nookFEST, which showcases handmade crafts and small businesses alongside entertainment, live music and food. This is where Gauthier first learned about the Nooks.

Greenstein appreciates how the Nooks provides the opportunity for "grassroots local mar-



Louise Allyn Palma/The Observer

Spiro Spero Designs co-owners Rebecca Greenstein (right) and Christyne Gauthier were excited to tell the story of their whimsical pin-up-model charms at the Spring Fashion Pop Up event at The Nooks.

kets and [to] look the customer in the eye" to sell their product.

In the internet age, it's not often that business owners get the chance to do that for potential buyers, Greenstein said.

One of the locations in The Nooks General Store has a specific area "in the back of that space [that] is open for the public to hang out, meet with a client, read a book, do a craft circle."

The first store that opened, called the Design-Nook, "has 91 artists in that location, and everyone there gets their own nook so they can really brand themselves, essentially in like a micro-store front," Imrie said.

As an entrepreneur and artist herself, Imrie wanted to create a space to support artisan

business owners, and give them an opportunity to grow and create relationships with potential clients.

"I've always been cheering for the underdog," Imrie said. "I was really involved in my early younger days and into my early twenties with volunteering and giving my time, giving people ideas."

Imrie's supportive personality is a defining point in The Nooks' brand, something that resonates with Greenstein.

"They seem to have a very personal interest in having you succeed," she said. "There's a very personal touch to it. They don't just help you with the marketing. They just seem very personally supportive, and you can see with the vendors

and the community, it's very important."

Sameera Hemmat is the co-owner of Jammy & Co, a resort wear and pyjama line based in Vancouver. She recently brought the brand to Toronto.

The Nooks has allowed her to feel welcome in the community, understand the Toronto market better, and advertise her business.

"It all comes down to basically empowering and supporting each other because we're all local entrepreneurs," Hemmat said. "Like I don't have a brick-and-mortar store, [but] The Nooks gives me that platform for people to actually touch and feel the product."

The Nooks will hold its next event, Momma's Market, at 1912 Danforth Ave., May 5.



Tiffany Fung/The Observer

Terri Favro's new book, *Generation Robot: A Century of Science Fiction, Fact, and Speculation*, was inspired by her father.

Father sparked interest in robots

Author's electrician dad built robots in basement and backyard in 1960s

By TIFFANY FUNG
The Observer

Robots have been a part of Terri Favro's life since she was a child.

Favro, author of *Generation Robot: A Century of Science Fiction, Fact, and Speculation*, recently visited the S. Walter Stewart Library in East York to talk about her fascination with technology. It started, she said, with her father, an electrician at an auto parts factory in St. Catharines.

In the late 1960s, a robot was in-

troduced at his workplace and Favro's father was given the responsibility of handling it.

He fell in love with the idea of robots, and started building robots in his home's backyard and basement.

"I wanted to write about that experience about growing up with this man who was so fixated on robots," Favro said.

She wrote a short essay, but then realized there was a bigger perspective and her father's experience was just the starting point for her book-writing career.

Favro, who describes herself as a "digital immigrant," said she enjoys writing about robots.

"The word immigrant means we are newcomers to technolo-

gies, struggling to adapt to the alien world," she explained.

In the 1980s, Favro became a copywriter for IBM during the time when personal computers were first introduced. While working there, she witnessed the disruption caused by the start of desktop computing and desktop publishing.

Comparing the 1980s to now, Favro said she sees "a real parallel in what is happening right now." She describes humans as the legs and arms of robots because humans are so dependent on technology now.

About her decision to write about robots, Favro said, "I wanted to skip forward in time speculatively to see how we would live with robots in the near future."