



## COMMUNITY

# Police add cannabis to RIDE's checklist

By ELLEN SAMEK  
The Observer

East Yorkers can expect to be asked about cannabis as well as alcohol this year when they roll down the window for the Toronto Police's holiday RIDE program.

RIDE (Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere) will run through the holiday season. The purpose of the program is to raise awareness of the dangers and consequences of impaired driving.

Last year in East York, police stopped 14,959 vehicles. Of those stops, 13 drivers received warnings and 12 drivers failed the impairment test.

Police have purchased two Dräger DrugTest 5000s to test drivers' saliva for traces of cannabis, specifically THC, the psychoactive component of the drug. It also tests for traces of cocaine.

Police officers check for impairment by observing the driving and behaviour of the driver. If an officer suspects impairment, then devices such as a breathalyzer or the Dräger can be used.

"Oral fluid devices are good tools for officers to detect the presence of drugs if the officer suspects a driver could be impaired," said Sgt. Brett Moore of Toronto Police traffic services. "It doesn't prove impairment or anything like that, but it gives the officer an indication that there is a drug in that person's system."

One way the Dräger device could be used during the RIDE program is to test commercial

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Louise Allyn Palma/The Observer

## Sharing some pre-holiday cheer

Steve Briggs, band leader and co-musical director of the Riverdale Share Concert, accompanies his wife Kristin Briggs on the guitar, much to the delight of the audience. They were participating in a sing-along at the Second Cup on the Danforth to promote the upcoming holiday concert. Turn to page 8 for the story.

## FAMILY

# Parents, babies celebrate World Preemie Day at local hospital



Nida Zafar/The Observer

Yankey Shrestha and her son Jay tie a ribbon on a cedar tree.

'When you talk about a bun in the oven, it's like taking it out when it's not fully baked,' says one mom

By NIDA ZAFAR  
The Observer

Cries, laughter and gurgles echo throughout a second-floor room at Michael Garron Hospital, all of them coming from healthy, happy babies who were once bound to the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).

These same babies are now celebrating the local hospital's first World Preemie Day, known worldwide as World Prematurity Day,

with their loved ones.

World Preemie Day commemorates the importance of premature births to families, society and health-care resources, said Dr. Celia Atkinson, Interim Chief of Pediatrics at the East York hospital.

It started in Europe in 2008 but didn't spread worldwide until 2011. It is celebrated each year on Nov. 17.

Going through the process of having a premature baby once can leave parents feeling fearful. Joanne Fong and Jonathan Foster went through it twice.

Fong and Foster are parents to two young girls: four-year-old Amarrah and 14-month-corrected Kalea. The term "corrected" is used in reference to Kalea having been born two months premature.

Fong recalled being terrified when it all start-

ed with Amarrah.

"When you talk about a bun in the oven, it's like taking it out when it's not fully baked. It's scary, because a lot of the baby's critical organs are still developing," she said.

When Amarrah was born, she was the size of a small teddy bear. Her father's ring could fit around her arm. "Her arm was literally the size of my pinky," he said.

When Fong was pregnant with Kalea, Fong was strictly monitored but developed pre-eclampsia, an issue characterized by high blood pressure.

She ended up being hospitalized for a month at Sunnybrook Hospital.

During that time, she saw the fear on the faces of the mothers around her. When Amarrah

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## Bradford sees silver lining in council cuts

By JUAN ROMERO-USME  
The Observer

Beaches-East York councillor-elect Brad Bradford is one of many critics of Premier Rob Ford's decision to reduce the number of Toronto city council seats from 45 to 25.

However, the unprecedented move may offer community councils a chance to move into the spotlight, he said.

"This is a natural opportunity for us to explore what is considered to be a local or citywide matter, providing community councils with more autonomy and more authority over local decisions,"



Bradford said. "This would have the added benefit of taking things off the lengthy City Council agendas."

With the reduction of city council seats the new city council will have eight councillors instead of the 12 that were part of the previous decision body. The area the community council covers has also been expanded, leaving more issues under the jurisdiction of a smaller number of councillors.

Brad Bradford says that the Toronto-East York council is aware that it needs to re-structure to meet the demands of the community and also to help councillors adapt to the new setup.

On Dec. 5, city council will consider a report from the city manager and the city clerk, on the impacts of the reduction of the size of council on governance structures and processes.

These include the committee structure, community council boundaries, members appointments and council procedures.

The date for the first Toronto-East York community council meeting since the municipal elections is yet to be announced.

As for now, Brad Bradford is preparing to officially become the Ward 19 councillor next month. He prefers to keep on looking at the positive side of the new shape of the city and the community council, he said.

"I think the whole process could benefit from more citizen engagement, and we should explore opportunities for more citizen involvement in community councils," Bradford said.



Ellen Samek/The Observer

Det. Const. Michael Thompson demonstrates a breathalyzer in the Toronto Police RIDE truck. This year, the police will be asking about cannabis usage as well during their roadside checks.

## RIDE to check for cannabis use

Cont'd. from page 1

truck drivers and young drivers. There is a zero-tolerance cannabis and alcohol policy for those groups.

There are a lot of misconceptions surrounding cannabis, Moore said, and it's important for people who are trying it for the first time to be informed.

"Folks who might not have been users of cannabis in the past but now might want to partake because it's recreationally

legal, they might not know how it affects them," he said.

"What we're asking is, don't consume and drive a motor vehicle."

When it comes to travelling with cannabis in the car, Toronto Police will be looking for clearly marked packages and at the amount.

"You can carry it with you as long as it was legally purchased, it's a single-use amount and it is in a sealed bag," Moore said.

"It needs to be clear what it is and where it came from."

Under no circumstances can the package be opened in the vehicle, similar to the laws surrounding open alcohol.

The point Moore wants to make clear is that while recreational cannabis consumption is now legal, driving while high has always been against the law.

"People should be able to enjoy legal substances as long as they're following the laws and practising safety," he said.

## RATS! Local rodent population on the rise

By BRANDON WONG  
The Observer

Residents and pest-control pros are seeing an increase in rodents, specifically rats, in Toronto, and there's no shortage of blame to go around.

According to The Weather Network, the hot, dry summer is believed to be the cause of the recent infestation. However, Pro Pest Corporation owner Peter Pekelny doesn't think weather was a big factor.

"The rats were quite healthy and vigilant in what they were doing all summer long," he said. "They're resourceful and can't be stopped."

East York has also seen an increase in rat sightings, which has local residents worried.

"This has been the worst year for rats in my neighbourhood," said Louise James, who lives in the O'Connor Drive and Pape Avenue area.

The garden of one of James' neighbours was unkempt and attracted a nest of rats, she said. The situation got so bad that she had to report that person to the city.

"We bought poison for the first time and disposed of several dead rats," she said.

Rudy Boonstra, an ecology professor at the University of Toronto who has studied rodents for more than 40 years, believes that access to a ready food supply during

the summer led to the recent rodent population boom, not the weather.

"I can't believe that temperature or dryness would have any effect on the rates of reproduction or survival," he said, adding the quality of food and access to it for females determines the rate of increase. "If conditions are good, then reproductive biology allows for extremely rapid growth."

Zack Mraovic, who lives near Mortimer and Coxwell avenues, has had rat problems since finding one in his car-engine bay in 2017.

"To this day, I have a pest-control company maintaining a bait station on the property for peace of mind," Mraovic said. "I'm just tired of dealing with it."

Budget Pest Control owner Michael Haralampopoulos believes the "only proper way" to eliminate rats is to use exterminator-grade rodenticide, which is available only with an exterminator licence.

"Once a rodent infestation enters the house, they multiply so quick that catching them rarely works," he said. "There are usually several, if not dozens, present."

Construction, such as the development of the new transit system, is another possible factor in the

recent rodent increase.

"The noise disturbs the nest and forces them to be on the move," Haralampopoulos said. "This happens all across the Greater Toronto Area, and we're becoming more like New York in terms of the rat population."

Rats enter houses by searching for an access point, such as a gap in the wall or a place where warm air is released.

"Once they find that opening, they begin to occupy your space and travel through your pipes, vents, floors and walls," Pro Pest's Pekelny said.

To find the rats, Pekelny surveys the area for any evidence of rat activity, such as bite marks, droppings, tracks and burrows. "This is a method that I like to call CSI: Pest Control," he said.

When the access point is found, Pekelny blocks off all points of entry to force the rodents outside, and feeds them poison.



## WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

Holly Berry Fair a good way to start the season

St. Luke's Anglican Church at 904 Coxwell Ave. will host its Holly Berry Fair from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 24. Crafts, knitted goods, Christmas items and much more will be featured.

Stressed out? Try singing

Bring your kids to the mindfulness sing-alongs at S. Walter Stewart Library, 170 Memorial Park Ave. Learn about mindfulness and hands-on, easy-to-remember techniques to reduce stress. The event will take place on Friday, Nov. 30 from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. Spaces are limited so registration is required.

Alan Redway launches book about East York

Alan Redway, former Member of Parliament and mayor of East York, will be at S. Walter Stewart Library, 170 Memorial Park Ave., on Saturday, Dec. 1. He will be introducing his new book, *East York 1924-1997: Toronto's Garden of Eden*. He will be selling copies and signing books after his presentation. Everyone is welcome to join.

Skating opens at Evergreen

Skating returns to the Evergreen Brick Works, 550 Bayview Ave., on Saturday, Dec. 1 at 10 a.m. Check the facility's website for information about recurring dates.

~ Dena Shah

# New trustee Aarts has big plans for Ward 16

By NIDA ZAFAR  
The Observer

A longtime education activist, who was elected the new Ward 16 trustee on the Toronto District School Board, says she doesn't have an interest in politics or political connections of any sort.

What Michelle Aarts does have, however, are connections that run deep in the Beaches-East York educational community.

Aarts, who was elected Oct. 22 with about 40 per cent of the vote, has been a member of advisory committees and has connections with staff and families who attend schools in the area.

She says she's well known in the education system and wanted to gain more of a say in how it works in the city, which led her to run for election.

"I want a school board that operates better and follows best practices and does a better job at delivering education to the community," she said in an interview.

Her agenda is vast, containing tasks that range from developing a plan to reduce class sizes to creating a welcoming environment for new families.

But one of the biggest problems she wishes to tackle is special education.

Special education refers to school boards allowing students to learn in a manner that's welcoming and inclusive.

Every school board, including the TDSB, has something called the Special Education Plan.



Photo courtesy of Michelle Aarts

**Michelle Aarts is shown on the campaign trail with friends and family. From left are volunteer Michaela Jeffs, Aarts and volunteer Karin Eaton, with Aarts's youngest daughter Athena in front.**

According to their website, the plan is updated every year to make sure any needs that arise are being met.

But Aarts says there's a discrepancy in what the board envisioned and what she's hearing

from the school community.

"The way that special education is supposed to be delivered isn't working. Resources aren't getting to them the (way the) board's designed," she said.

Similar issues can be seen with the budget, according to Aarts.

Money's "not reported in a sensible and transparent manner that the public can look at it in what money's coming and what money's going out."

Savings are reportedly being made by cut-backs, including increasing the sizes of classrooms, Aarts said. "The way that the board reports (the) budget publicly isn't acceptable."

Another issue she wishes to tackle is the imbalance of support between different regions.

The board has a program called Model School for Inner City. According to the TDSB's website, the program focuses on children who live in the inner city and ensures that all students and their families have "access to the same opportunities and support."

But this program is geared towards kids who live in Toronto's poorest neighbourhoods. Children who have a similar socioeconomic background but live in other neighbourhoods don't benefit from the program.

"I'd like to see a more comprehensive model of access that supports all kids regardless of where they live," Aarts said.

She's eager to set up meetings with the new Ward 16 councillor. While it's not mandatory for trustees to have these sorts of meeting, Aarts wants to do so.

"I want to set up working relationships that have regular proactive meetings that discuss things like access to resources and share use of facilities and taking school systems into account."

Aarts will be sworn in as trustee on Dec. 3.

## High-dose flu shot in short supply for seniors, experts say

By RASHIDA POWANKUMAR  
The Observer

Seniors in parts of the province are struggling to get the high-dose flu shot because some clinics have run out, says the deputy opposition leader.

"Of the 20 clinics that we called around the province, 12 said that they hadn't been able to obtain any vaccines or they were already out," NDP MPP Sara Singh said as part of a question to Minister of Health and Long-Term Care Christine Elliott during the Nov. 1 session of Parliament.

"A few of them did have vaccines but warned us that they would be running out of that supply very soon."

Elliott acknowledged Singh's concerns but pointed out that the high-dose vaccine is only available at certain types of facilities.

"In terms of the actual high-dose flu vaccine for seniors 65 years and older, it's not for every person, but many seniors should get that one," Elliott said. "It's not available in pharmacies. It's only available at doctors' offices. There may be a little bit of confusion about that."

Grace Kong, a pharmacist at the Shoppers Drug Mart at Pape and Cosburn avenues, reiterated the point.

"Seniors cannot come to the pharmacy (for the high-dose vaccine) because we do not have any supply," she said. "We usually refer them to their doctor's office."

Sandra Dwight, a senior who lives in East York, didn't even know about the special shot.

"I have gotten the (regular) flu shot," she said. "I never knew that there was more than one flu shot. But I heard on the news this year about the high-dose one."

NDP health critic France Gélinas explained why seniors should get the high-dose vaccine.

"It is worth it because so many people die from the flu," she said in an interview. "It also helps what we call herd immunity. When a lot of people have the flu shot, it helps to protect the most vulnerable."

## Minorities also 'helped win the war'

Panel of diverse speakers share their histories at local Remembrance Day event

By VARSHA RAMDIHOL  
The Observer

Remembrance Day reminds us about those who fought for Canada during both world wars, and Danforth Collegiate's assembly on Nov. 8 focused on making sure discriminated-against minorities who served are among those remembered.

"What I'm hearing on this stage is how many groups of incredible people dealt with hatred in this country and yet stood up and fought for it," Joanne Dallaire told the assembly.

Dallaire, a Cree elder and educator for Indigenous concerns at Ryerson University, was among six diverse speakers at the school's Remembrance Day panel discussion.

Speakers from Indigenous, Sikh, Jewish, Black and Asian backgrounds moved the students who showed, by a raise of hands, they learned something new in that auditorium.

"I learned that Canada has buried its deepest, darkest secrets into the corners of history," Grade 10 student Joaquin Kataoka said. "We really need to remember all of the people who helped win the war."

The reasons for fighting in the war for a country that overtly oppressed minority groups didn't always make sense, Toronto historian Arlene Chan said.

But for the men and women of minority backgrounds, a sense of honour and patriotism was felt for serving Canada in both wars, according to the speakers.

"Fight now, vote later," Chan recalled in her storytelling from a Chinese man who



Varsha Ramdihol/ The Observer

**Speakers from Sikh, Black, Jewish, Chinese and Indigenous perspectives participated in Danforth Collegiate's Remembrance Day event.**

fought in the First World War, despite discrimination from Canadians and criticism from his community. The Chinese man was Canadian-born but his right to vote was not honoured until after the Second World War.

"What the Canadian government to this day has never officially recognized are the 17,000 Canadians of Jewish faith who put on a uniform, went to stop Hitler, and rescued survivors of the Holocaust," said Ellin Bessner, a Jewish-Canadian journalism professor and author.

"It was pretty upsetting to hear that people who fought in the war weren't being recognized for being part of something big," said Nusrat Basher, a student in the audience.

The history school curriculum is responsible for including all stories, said Pardeep Nagra, an advocate for Sikh rights.

"It's the job of the teachers to engage

in a more inclusive and accurate curriculum," Nagra said, adding that speakers cannot always be available each year to speak at all Toronto schools. It is the teaching system that has to include more diverse history studies.

Grade 10 history students from Danforth Collegiate, Malvern Junior Public School, Monarch Park Collegiate Institute, Greenwood Secondary School and East York Collegiate Institute attended the discussion.

They also heard from Black speakers Kathleen Grant and Sheila White, who shared North American and West Indian stories of Black men and women who were a part of the wars.

"I want you to remember the importance of fighting small social battles that you're going to face," Dallaire said. "And until we can treat all citizens equally in this country, we haven't won the war of humanity."

# Love art? Go for it, local artist encourages

## Don Valley Art Club member's work on display at show at Papermill Gallery

By JELA TEJADA  
The Observer

Vanaja Cotroneo remembers falling in love with art at a young age, but she did not pursue it until later in life because of her upbringing.

"As a kid, I did paint some, but it wasn't something that was encouraged back home in India," Cotroneo said. "It's an expensive hobby, and my parents couldn't afford it at the time. Academics were also more important to them, so that's the route I took."

Cotroneo has been painting for about 20 years now. Among other art clubs, she's a member of the Don Valley Art Club, which opened its annual fall show on Nov. 14 at Todmorden Mills' Papermill Gallery.

Every year, one of Toronto's oldest art clubs hosts two art shows, one in May and another in November.

This show's theme is, "Does Size Matter? Art in All Sizes." The smallest piece is about 10 by 10 inches and the largest is approximately five feet tall and three feet wide.

"It's a way for people to start collecting art. We're really trying to reach out to young people," said club president Susan Abbott.

"We're constantly promoting and encouraging people to buy real art. Live a real life. Own originals."

The club currently has about 200 members.

Many are retirees who have decided to work on their art full-time.

"Our members come from different walks of life with different experiences, so we're always learning from each other," said Georgia Bowen, chair of the art show committee.

"In this country there's absolutely no reason why art couldn't be encouraged," Cotroneo said. "Go with it. Fly with it. If that's what makes your heart sing, go for it."



Jela Tejada/The Observer

"There's something romantic about streetcars. They've been a part of Toronto for so many years," says Don Valley Art Club member Vanaja Cotroneo.



Tijuana Turner/The Observer

Jaxson Tripodi, 5, strokes his newly adopted cat during the recent PetSmart Adoption Weekend.

## One lucky black cat finds a home

By TIJUANA TURNER  
The Observer

Five cages. All empty but one.

Home to a five-month-old tiny fur ball, Noelle.

Her adoption papers indicate she was an owner surrender. Like her recently adopted counterparts, she has four paws, two eyes and a warm personality.

The only difference? The colour of her fur. She's black.

"Black cats are less likely to be adopted and it's quite unfortunate," Erika Daniels says. "They're overlooked too often."

Daniels volunteers as a screener at Toronto Cat Rescue (TCR), one of the city's largest no-kill, non-profit cat rescue shelters. She interviews prospective adopters to make sure the cats and the adoptive parents are a good fit for each other. She was at the PetSmart adoption weekend event in Leaside on Nov. 10 helping to find homes for various felines.

Daniels isn't imagining that black

cats take longer to adopt than any other breed. According to Peta2.com, black cats are two-thirds less likely to be adopted than their white counterparts.

For centuries, black cats have been associated with witchcraft and Satanism in popular culture. Take Salem in Sabrina the Teenage Witch and the nameless murderous feline in The Black Cat, for example.

Such portrayals have woven themselves into people's perception and are reinforced by myths such as the one that says if a black cat crosses your path, it's an omen for bad luck.

Fortunately for kittens, the innocence of children can do a lot to change the narrative, as was the case with Noelle.

The Tripodi family recently lost their 10-year-old rabbit and were in the market for a new pet. Brothers Jaxson, 5, and Dylan, 16 months, didn't think twice about the colour of Noelle's fur. All they knew is they had come to PetSmart with one intention — to adopt a cat, preferably two.

They were disappointed that most of the cats had already been adopted, until Jaxson laid eyes on Noelle.

"I could pet her all day," he said, stroking her soft fur. "Please, mommy. This one."

Their grandfather, Tom Stein, and their mother, Alyson Tripodi, paid the adoption fee, purchased some cat essentials and they were on their way.

Lead TCR volunteer Todd Burgess says on average they help 2,500 cats find new homes each year. Outside of the adoption events, interested individuals can visit their website to adopt.

"For a lot of people, cats bring them happiness in their home," Burgess said. "A lot of people are better (off) for having cats and we just want to give a loving and deserving cat a great forever."

And Jaxson has promised to do just that.

"I would never get rid of my cat," he said. "She's cute and I'd like her to get used to our house and she's welcome to our family."

## Pet adoption weekend turns into family affair

By VARSHA RAMDIHOL  
The Observer

Looking into the green eyes of a tiny, timid kitten is sometimes all it takes to know this is the pet you want to make family. For Ayra Malik, that was the case.

"I woke up last week and I wanted a kitten," Malik said. "And so I got a kitten."

After being tagged on Facebook in an ad for the Nov. 10 National Adoption Weekend hosted by PetSmart, she anxiously waited for the day to arrive.

The 22-year-old's two brothers each have their own cat but Malik wanted one to call her own.

For people hoping to adopt, the weekend was their chance to add a new family member.

PetSmart hosts four national adoption weekends throughout the year, the most popular two being in the summer,

Jon Sammons said.

As manager of the Leaside PetSmart location at Eglinton Avenue and Laird Drive, Sammons hopes to find these furry friends a "forever home," he said.

"Part of our philosophy is that we want to be the trusted partner for pets and the pets' parents."

Shannon MacDonald, animal care and control officer for Toronto Animal Services, also hopes each animal finds a family.

"The most memorable moment was watching a little dog go home to a new family with three lovely girls," MacDonald said.

While you may be planning your holiday travels, thousands of animals are travelling to find you at any of the 135 locations across Canada, according to PetSmart's press release.

"It's a great feeling finding these pets homes," Sammons said. "This event is always a hit."



Varsha Ramdihol/The Observer

Yousuf Malik holds the kitten he and his two siblings adopted at Leaside's PetSmart National Adoption Weekend.

## COMMUNITY

# Black Labrador helped woman deliver papers

'It was ultimately Luca's route, not mine,' owner says of her rescue dog

By DENA SHAH HOSSEINI  
The Observer

If you live in East York or the Beaches area, Linda Pelley and her dog may have delivered your local newspaper.

For the past nine years, Pelley has used the job as a way to train her black Labrador mix, Luca.

It was her trainer who originally suggested she should teach Luca to follow her lead and walk up the stairs behind her.

"I had so many stairs to walk up and down," she said.

"It worked out really well, and she actually learned how to be a good dog. She's an incredible dog now. She was pretty slow to pick up new rules, let's say. But she picked (this) up so fast, how to walk up and down the stairs behind me."

Pelley adopted Luca from Petfinder, a popular dog-adoption organization based in the United States. Luca was a puppy when she was rescued off the street by volunteers.

Pelley's previous dog had died after being part of her life for 16 and a half years. The loss made Pelley decide to take time off from being a dog owner. That didn't work out.

"Honestly, I lasted two months and I ended up looking again, because I have always had a dog in my life," she said. "I looked on Petfinder and I saw Luca, who at the time was named Angel. I really liked the look of her, adopted her, and decided to change her name."

Luca had just turned one when Pelley began covering her route. She was a "crazy" dog and had lots of energy. The job would wear Luca out and give Pelley a break at night.

"Now, at the age of 10, she's just a fat, lazy Lab," she joked.

After nine and a half years, Pelley is giving up the job because she is moving away from the area.

What she will miss the most is the strong sense of community and talking to the friends she made along the way.

"I would bring my dog with me door-to-door with everybody's papers," she said. "I know everybody and I talk to everybody, so I could typically do it in 10 to 15 minutes, but it normally takes me 30 to 40 minutes, because I love catching up with everybody."

During her time delivering papers, Pelley would donate \$50 out of each month's paycheque — in Luca's name — to organizations that helped rescue dogs.

"One of the first times they gave me a bonus, they gave me \$50 as a reward," she said. "I just put it back into dog shelters as a donation. I kept doing this constantly. It was ultimately Luca's paper route, not mine."



Photo courtesy of Janet Kimber

**Linda Pelley with her black Lab mix Luca, who helped her deliver newspapers for over nine years.**



Nida Zafar/The Observer

**Joanne Fong and Jonathan Foster celebrate World Premie Day with their daughters. Fong and Foster initiated the parent support group at Michael Garron Hospital, to support pre-mature babies.**

## First World Premie Day held at E.Y. hospital

One of main concerns is whether babies are reaching milestones

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came to visit, she became an unexpected source of comfort for those moms. "They saw life after prematurity and that it does get better," Fong said. "I saw (that) knowing what to expect really helped them cope better."

The couple turned to supporting new parents when they were transferred to Michael Garron Hospital (MGH) for the second time. They had already been through the process with Amarrah and knew what to expect.

MGH has an Advanced Level 2 NICU, a community special-care nursery. Babies who are born from 30 to 32 weeks are kept here.

"Babies are vented for about five days," interim pediatrics chief Atkinson said. "Longer ventilation will go into Level 3."

Premature babies use ventilators to help them breathe, since their lungs aren't fully developed. The babies in Level 3 are monitored for more serious issues, like jaundice, feeding challenges and breathing. Babies who are born at under 30 weeks also go to Level 3 NICUs, Atkinson said.

Once infants at Level 3 become stable, they are shifted to a Level 2 NICU.

The Level 3 NICUs in Toronto are at Sunnybrook Hospital, Sick Kids and Mount Sinai Hospital.

A Level 1 is known as a healthy birth. Babies are released with their moms within 24 to 48 hours, Atkinson said. A typical pregnancy lasts between 38 and 40 weeks.

Premature babies are affected in both the short and long term. In the short term, the biggest challenge is respiratory, since



Nida Zafar/The Observer

**Jennifer Marchment enjoys the event at Michael Garron Hospital with her daughter, Adaline Marchment.**

preemies are born without fully developed lungs, leading to breathing problems.

In the long term, one of the main concerns is whether these children are reaching milestones, Atkinson said.

With the help of staff and pediatrician Dr. Jelena Popovic, Fong and Foster established the parent support group at MGH for mothers and fathers who are struggling with the process.

Weekly classes focus on helping new parents cope with stress when in the NICU and self-care. It is common for parents to stop caring for themselves in the midst of caring for their children, and it is possible for them to experience PTSD down the road.

The parent social "allows parents that

might be in the same room to talk," Foster said. "Like, hey, this is normal."

The weekly event is put on with the help of the Canadian Premature Babies Foundation's (CPBF) microgrants program.

CPBF also created a welcome book to help new parents navigate their time there. "The foundation's goal is to support families in the NICU and in their journey going home," said executive director Fabiana Bacchini.

That journey can be a long one, but it does pay off, Fong said.

"Being a parent is like starting a marathon, and then the preemie journey is another marathon beforehand with all the tension," she said. "But when you get across that finish line, it's amazing."

## ■ EDITORIAL

## Smaller council, bigger concerns

Premier Doug Ford's move to cut the number of wards in Toronto from 47 to 25 not only took attention away from much bigger problems during the elections, but could make it more difficult for councillors to get things done.

Fewer representatives on city council means fewer ears to respond to residents voicing concerns in the community, both those that have existed for years and others that are just emerging.

After the old Wards 29 and 30 were merged, voters in Toronto-Danforth had to choose between Mary Fragedakis and Paula Fletcher, who ultimately won. Fletcher says she met voters who were upset about having to pick between them. The two incumbent councillors had been allies and worked together for many years.

Some argue that Ford's reduction of council will result in more people paying attention to what's happening in their community. But that means more voices will be raised, and that could result in more complaints when all the voices are not heard and work doesn't get done sooner.

Fletcher says one of her biggest concerns is finding more staff who can handle the tasks being demanded by the community. This is a whole new commitment that takes attention away from the problems.

The relationship between residents and staff would be much better if people felt they were being given priority. That can happen when leaders and staff listen to them and implement solutions much more quickly and efficiently. That appears to be the opposite of the new system.

East York is a great community, but there's always work to be done to make it better for everyone. Road safety and affordable housing are just two of many things on Fletcher's list.

Other things happened this year that still require attention. Take the Danforth shooting in the summer. Locals were injured and businesses were affected.

It's a tragedy that will mark the Danforth's history for a long time. It requires full attention. How can the healing process be expedited by people facing an increased workload?

Councillors will have to adjust to the new system while realizing that this is a critical time for East York to come together to make the healing process work.

~ Trisha Sales

## ■ COLUMNS

## How kindness makes a difference

I spent much of my adolescence as an ignorant and rebellious teenager who resented police officers.

As I grew older, I accepted that they, too, are just people trying to do good and earn a living.

Recently, something happened that deepened my respect for them.

You may be expecting a sweeping tale about how a police officer saved my life, but instead it was something small.

Last month we celebrated my girlfriend's birthday and, as 20-somethings, we decided to go clubbing.

After pooling our money, we rented a limo to get downtown.

The car arrived at 10 p.m. sharp, and 15 of us packed into it, laughing and cheering, music blaring.

At first we were oblivious to the creeping smell. Soon, though, smoke was flooding the limo.

The driver pulled onto the shoulder of the

highway, and we poured out, gasping for air.

Flames and smoke were coming from the engine. People started to freak out. I asked the driver what the protocol was, but all he did was give us our cash back.

"I've got other things to deal with, clearly. Call yourselves Ubers," he said.

I was shocked. Not only did he handle the situation poorly, but he ignored the fact that Uber drivers cannot pick up passengers on the side of a highway; it is not safe for them.

We were stranded.

Needless to say the birthday girl was not happy, and there was a sense of panic among the group. One of us decided to call 9-1-1.

In under 10 minutes, seven or eight officers from York Regional Police ar-

rived with six squad cars. I was amazed. They packed all of us into their cars and dropped us off at a nearby restaurant.

They even took us inside and made the restaurant set up a large table so we could sit down and figure out the rest of the night.

They joked about joining us but unfortunately couldn't stay.

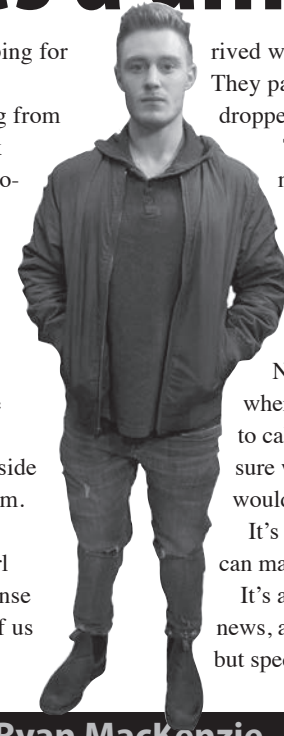
I couldn't thank them enough.

Not only did they take us somewhere safe, they went out of their way to calm everybody down and make sure we knew what our next steps would be.

It's interesting how a small gesture can make such a big difference.

It's also important that we share good news, and these officers were nothing but spectacular.

We ended up at the club an hour later. The night turned out perfectly.



Ryan MacKenzie

## Crazy Rich Asians forgot about me

*Crazy Rich Asians* helped redefine representation in mainstream cinema. A Hollywood film that has an almost entirely Asian cast is unprecedented. Receiving positive reception from Asian audiences about representation was expected. And, of course, all Asians were represented in this film, right?

Wrong.

*Crazy Rich Asians* portrays mainly East Asians. The movie — which gets a second life this month on home video — features a heavily Chinese cast yet has been labelled a victory for the entire Asian community.

As a Filipino-Canadian, I noticed there was no one who represented my ethnicity. That fact alone has deterred me from seeing the movie.

There are Filipino actors, but they don't portray Filipino characters. Nico Santos, a



Louise Allyn Palma

Filipino-American, plays Oliver T'sien, alongside Filipino actress Kris Aquino as the Malay princess, Intan. The film not only lacked a Filipino presence, but also an Indian, Tamil, Thai or Indonesian one — despite being set in Singapore.

What does this mean for Asian actors? Stylecaster.com writer Annie Lim points out the interchangeability of Asian actors.

"Sure, the physical appearance might be similar, and there are times when even Asians aren't sure what ethnicity other Asians are, but nothing else lines up," Lim notes.

What do these physical requirements mean for Southeast Asian actors who cannot fit an "East-Asian" look?

Will we never be properly represented? And if we are, will it be in movies with

little lasting cultural impact, like *Slumdog Millionaire* or *Life of Pi*? Will we ever see these actors taking on a starring role again?

As the Guardian observed, "a key criticism of (*Crazy Rich Asians*) is that it entirely erases the 15 per cent of those in Singapore who are Malay and the 6.6 per cent who are Indian."

Even as a young girl, growing up watching *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*, I would attempt to fit myself into Trini, the yellow ranger; or Disney's *Mulan*, both Chinese. I've always tried to reason that it's fine; as long as they're "Asian."

But I can't completely see myself reflected in them. I am not Chinese. I am not Japanese. I am not Korean. I am Filipino.

By no means am I bashing *Crazy Rich Asians*. It is, after all, a film that has changed the face of representation in Hollywood.

But it is also too much of a burden on this film to represent a victory for *all* Asians.

## Hey, guys: We need inclusive language

You finally arrive and open the door, popcorn in hand. All your friends are lounging throughout the room. What's your opening line: "Greetings, people"? No, I'll bet it's "Hey, guys."

Maybe you've stumbled upon the age-old debate over that phrase. "Hey, guys" itself is widely considered to be gender-neutral. It's casual, it's cozy. "Guys" radiates friendliness, even when the rest of your sentence doesn't — "Keep it down, you guys!" — and gives off a sense of camaraderie. And it's still problematic.

"When our language puts one group over another, society has a problem," says Hugo Vallecilla-Orozco. He's manager of Centennial College's global citizenship, equity and inclusion program.

Terms with an attached maleness tag — think fireman, policeman, salesman — have been more readily perceived as universal than those signifying femaleness. But we've actu-

ally been phasing that out for neutral terms; trading fireman for firefighter, policeman for police officer, salesman for salesperson, and so on.

Perhaps no malicious intent was involved in making the word fireman. Regardless, the fact — that it's a gendered word — is true whether or not we're trying to reinforce damaging stereotypes.

We just need a word that doesn't ascribe to anyone a gender they aren't. A neutral. That's respectable.

"Folks" is my personal favourite," says Vallecilla-Orozco. Other options are "everyone" or "people", or go more informal with something like "peeps." He works with the college, which has a campus in East York, to run workshops about social innovation, positive space, and challenging microaggressions.

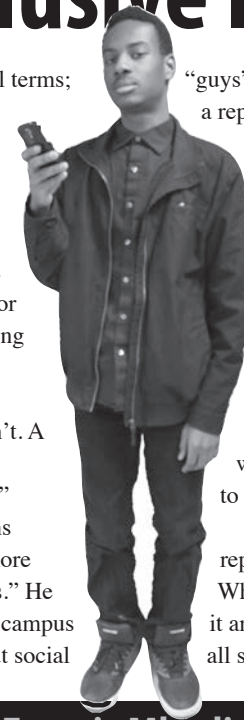
Language reflects reality;

"guys" and associated connotations is just a representation of our social climate.

Words really do help shape our thinking, which can help move along (or hold back) the social changes we'd like to see.

Language reflects who we are. We can see the world in black and white, or we can open our eyes to everything in between. Are we inclusive if it's not even as deep as "Hey, guys," when the only thing we have to sacrifice is a little effort to kick the habit?

We can all make the effort to replace "guys" from our vocabulary. Whichever alternative you prefer, use it around friends, and online. Just like all slang, the best options will catch on and become everyday usage among an increasing number of people.



Francis Mbadiwe

# 'Fernwood' prevails despite changes



Toronto Public Library



Brandon Wong/The Observer

Sixty-four years ago (above left) the In Grafton Gage Home for the Aged stood majestically at the top of Broadview Avenue, where the road curves east into O'Connor Drive. The home was built in 1885 as a residence for John F. Taylor, a member of one of East York's founding families, and dubbed "Fernwood." Becoming a nursing home in 1930, it made a picturesque winter scene for famed Toronto photographer James Victor Salmon in 1954. Today (above right), the structure, converted into a residence for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, still dominates the scene. Much of its facade remains intact, although renovations and additions have modified the building and its setting. The modern additions are mainly to the left of the original wing shown in the photo and run along a side street called Fernwood Gardens.

## Fans of Marvel legend Stan Lee share memories

By KASY PERTAB  
The Observer

The passing of Stan Lee has broken the hearts of Marvel fans everywhere. While the superhero genius made a big impact through films, a local comic-book store is sharing the mark he left in print.

John Farrar has worked at Treehouse Collectibles for more than three years. The store, located at the corner of Donlands and Sammon Aves., sells toys, action figures, records and, of course, comic books.

Since Lee's passing "customers come in saying, 'Hey man, have you heard?' and then we just start talking comics and it ends up being, 'What was your first Stan Lee moment?'" Farrar said. "So the nostalgia has really kicked up in a lot of people, and they start going back to their first experience with him."

Although it's a sad time, Farrar added, prices of Lee's work will go up as a result because sellers will try to capitalize on his death.

He hopes, however, that prices for in-store comics won't change.

Farrar has been a comic-book fan since he was 8. Lee's death brought back the memory of buying his first Thor comic book.

"When I found out he passed on, I immediately thought about the first comic I ever bought with my own money as a child," he said. "Even though it wasn't written by Stan Lee, it was a Thor comic, and he created it."

Max Lemay, who also works at the store, had the chance to meet Lee two years ago at a Fan Expo convention.

"When you meet him, it's infectious. It's like meeting a little kid," Lemay said.

"It's strange to say that about someone his age, but he really had that joyful spirit about him. It was just so nice being in his presence and hearing about all his experiences."

Of the people he has spoken to, he added, not one had a negative experience when meeting Lee.

Although fans are mourning in their own ways, Lemay understands why comic-book stores are a place where they can go to relate to Lee's work.

"People come in and you don't have a personal connection to him, but at the same time you do," Lemay said. "A comic-book store is kind of like that place where you come and commiserate with other people that understand."



Osobe Waberi/The Observer

Gene Lee is the owner of Atomic Age Comics in East York. He opened his store after he noticed his father being drawn to the Danforth area, where Lee's sister lives.

## Comic-book store has story of its own

Life-changing move for Atomic Comics owner was inspired by his late father

By OSOBE WABERI  
The Observer

People say the best stories aren't found in fictional books or comics, but in real-life moments. And like any good story, Gene Lee's began with a turn of events.

For the 49-year-old owner of Atomic Age Comics, it started over a decade ago when he noticed his father being drawn to the Danforth area, where he would regularly visit his daughter (Lee's sister) and her family.

Lee then decided to move to the Danforth area with his father and open a comic-book store a block from his sister's

house. Lee's dad, who has since died, would visit his grandkids almost every day and spend time at the store chatting with the customers.

Things haven't always been easy. According to Lee, many store owners in the area are worried about the changing market and the cost of renting.

"People can't stay in business, especially the small stores that are family-owned," Lee said.

With regulars and out-of-towners stopping by, he is confident his store will continue. When the time comes, he said, he'll either pass down his store to his children or sell it.

But for now, he has no plans to retire and wants to keep running it as long as he can.

One thing is for certain: There is a high demand for books and comics today.

"People still want physical copies," Lee said. "They are realizing that it's not as relaxing when using e-books or Kindles."

The main demographic of Atomic Age's customers ranges from late 20s to 40s, but kids are also common in the store. Atomic Age encourages young girls to get into comic-book reading. Lee takes suggestions from parents and kids on what kind of comics they want to read and places orders with distributors.

Twice a year, Atomic Age gives comics away for free to children: the first Saturday of May and again on Halloween. They also donate the remaining comic books to a children's clinic close by on the Danforth.

Lee doesn't have a lot of free time to read books or comics when running the store. Then again, what's a good story without some good, old-fashioned irony?



Louise Allyn Palma/The Observer

Janna Eed, 6 (right), and her younger brother Dan Eed, 3, cannot contain their excitement while showing Santa Claus the drawing they made him at Riverdale Share's Second Cup sing-along.

## Riverdale Share singers serenade Santa, friends

Sing-along at Second Cup offers a taste of upcoming Danforth concert

By LOUISE ALLYN PALMA  
The Observer

The Christmas spirit spilled out onto Danforth Avenue from the Second Cup café last Saturday, thanks to the Riverdale Community Association. Children lined up to catch a glimpse of a special guest, Santa Claus, and join a sing-along of classic Christmas carols as a preview of the group's big concert two weeks later.

"We love it. We come every year," said Summer Altamimi, who attended with her children Janna, 6, and Dan Eed, 3. They could not wait to speak to Santa Claus.

The event was a thank you to donors and to Second Cup, as well as a sneak preview for the Riverdale Share Concert, now in its 26th year, on Dec. 2.

The concert was conceived out of founders Bill Usher and Maggie Caledine's dream to put out a community show, according to the show's executive director Susan Baker.

Baker attended the first concert in 1991. She reminisced about how exciting the concert was at its debut, with an audience of only 30 people and tickets costing \$3. She went with her family and her nine-year-old while pregnant.

"It was such a magical show," Baker said. "We were all huddled together. At that time the (Danforth) Music Hall was in pretty bad shape. Pieces of the ceiling were falling, and it had been really neglected. But everyone was singing; there was a sing-along and it really kicked off the season. It really put us in the holiday mood."

She decided then she would volunteer the following year.

### From elf to ticket seller

Others have grown up with the concert. Baker's daughter began as an elf for the concert and now handles ticket sales. Baker said her granddaughter will likely be an elf next year.

Charities that have received money from the event have flourished alongside the concert's success. Sponsorship money goes to the production costs of the concert, while the money raised from ticket sales all goes to charities.

"Last year, we gave away around \$50,000 to recipients," Baker said.

The Blake Boulton Youth Outreach Service has been involved with Riverdale Share for more than 20 years. It was founded in 1989 by Rod Cohen to help people who

are at risk and vulnerable through counselling, treatment, life skills training and community outreach.

Cohen began a relationship with Riverdale Share when he distributed 1,000 appeal letters throughout the neighbourhood for his organization and received only two responses — one from a woman who wanted to donate, the other from the Riverdale Share's co-founder, Bill Usher.

"The mandate of Riverdale Share is to give these funds to support grassroots community organizations, so my organization is the perfect fit for what Riverdale Share does," Cohen says.

Now he takes the time to volunteer as an assistant manager with the stage crew for Riverdale Share.

### Bringing people together

Cohen spoke about the importance of Riverdale Share's role in the community. "It brings people together to build the community in a positive, healthy way.... Every year 1,000 people come and enjoy and experience the show, and they get to in some way appreciate how a handful of people all come together to raise between \$30,000 and \$50,000 to give away to charities like mine that really need the money."

The organization is led by volunteers, who run the entire production. Local performers and musicians donate their time.

Blair Packham has performed a few times for the concert. He sang, "Happy Xmas, War is Over" by John Lennon, as the final song for his first performance at the event four years ago.

Susan Baker had called him to fill in for a performer who had to drop out of the concert last minute and he was thrilled to be part of the community event as a musician and a local resident.

"As regular performers, your income can be limited and it can be hard to make a monetary contribution to something," Packham said. "Yet, you want to feel like you're doing something positive and this is an opportunity to do that. And to give back in a way that helps raise actual money, for actual people. And you really feel like you're affecting people's lives in a positive way."

Baker still remembers the first time she sat in on the concert, unfamiliar with the community as a relatively new resident to the neighbourhood.

On the day of the concert, "I really felt a sense of my community sitting there that day," she said. "And I feel it today; it's exactly the same. On the day of the show, this is what it's all about. Neighbours helping neighbours, people coming together, everybody doing their part. If you're there, you're playing a part because you bought a ticket, and that ticket goes to help your neighbours."

## SPORTS

# Local family creates a 'racquet' at Leaside Hall of Fame event

By TIJUANA TURNER  
The Observer

Matt Sayliss was a man of his word and when he set his sights on something, he followed through.

His family lived in a house right across the street from a field of grass and Sayliss saw potential in it.

He gathered three of his neighbours, bought a tennis net, some limestone and marked the layout for two tennis courts. That was the seed that grew into what is now the Leaside Tennis Club.

Since then, the club has expanded and adopted the motto 'Learn, Play, Compete, Socialize,' which pays homage to the vision Sayliss had.

"Matt would not give up," said Kathleen Mackenzie, chair of the Leaside Sports Hall of Fame. "The very first court, he managed to persuade them (the city) to let him put down markings on a pile of dirt. That's how they started."

And though his contributions to the community were profound, his induction into the Leaside Sports Hall of Fame came almost five years after the committee was formed in 2014. His daughter, Pat Cole, says it was a struggle to get their bid accepted but it was a win for her family and one she was "over the moon with."

"The first time it didn't get accepted, I wasn't going to pursue it in honour of my father," Cole said, speaking at the 2018 Leaside Sports Hall of Fame Induction ceremony on Nov. 16. "It was like I could hear him say 'Patsy, don't do it.'"

But Cole says despite the fact that her dad wouldn't have wanted to put her through the hassle, his granddaughter, Elizabeth Cole, was adamant that they continue to submit their bid.

Sayliss died in 1952 at the age of 41, when Pat was only 18 and 10 years before Elizabeth was born. Despite never having met her grandfather, Elizabeth felt he was a building block for the Leaside community. She sought the help of former mayor of East York and former federal cabinet minister Alan Redway.

Redway not only wrote a letter sup-

porting their bid, but he also helped them present Sayliss' legacy in a way that was appropriate and pleasing to the selection committee. Elizabeth says he was "instrumental to overcoming an insurmountable hurdle." She also says the recognition was not just for her grandfather but for her mother as well.

"Make no mistake, the volunteer hours that my mother has put into this community, in terms of her church, local politics and contributions to Sunnybrook Hospital as a volunteer, has also built on his legacy," Elizabeth said. "She has no idea how much she outweighs the star that she represented tonight."

Over 30 relatives came out to show their support, travelling from as far as Quebec. Not one of them met Sayliss, but all of them recognized how important the ceremony was to their family.

## OTHER 2018 INDUCTEES

■ **MIKE McEWEN:** Former NHL hockey player and three-time Stanley Cup winner

■ **JAN CARWARDINE:** National Level Curler and member of the Leaside Curling Club

■ **THE LANCERETTES AND BLAZERETTES 1974:** Later became the Toronto Leaside Girls' Hockey Association

■ **THE MERAKI SYNCHRO TEAM:** 2018 National Intermediate Synchro Champions

■ **GEORGE TURRELL:** The first recipient of the George Turrell Commitment Award



Tijuana Turner/The Observer

Pat Cole (right), daughter of Matt Sayliss, stands with Sayliss' great-great-grandsons Joey (left) and Jonny Parum after receiving the award in his honour. Sayliss was a founder of the Leaside Tennis Club.