



Observer, Matilda Miranda

TINY DANCER: Shammi Panvin and her six-year-old daughter, Rayna Rakib, take a breather after Rayna performed a Bengali dance for their new year's celebrations. **See story on page 8.**

Silent auction serves E.Y. tennis

By NICK PESCOD

Ontario Tennis Association supporter and local businessman Gus Morhart has donated over 200 pieces of artwork from his personal collection to a silent auction benefitting junior tennis in the province.

The silent auction runs until the end of April at Studio 51 Design Art Gallery, 51 Laird Dr.

Morhart's nephew and founder of Studio 51, Rob Blaskovic, said

his uncle is a longstanding supporter of junior tennis.

"Gus is a very selfless man," he said. "He gives everything he has."

Morhart has been involved with the Ontario Tennis Association for over 30 years and was once a junior tennis developer at Thorncliffe Park.

"There are lots of kids who are really great tennis players," Morhart said. "But they get to a

stage where they can't compete anymore because of financial problems."

He often drives kids to practices and tournaments across the city, province and country.

Canadian professional tennis player Frank Dancevic recalls how tough it was to get around to tournaments and said Morhart's support is huge.

"He tries to help out any way he can," Dancevic said.

Tenants worry about post-fire waivers' intent

By SCOTT REID

Two months after a fire at 80 Cosburn Ave. damaged the apartment building's electrical system and forced about 200 tenants out, several remain homeless.

And there's a debate between some of them and the building managers about whether management is trying to get them to surrender their rights in the wake of the fire by signing waivers.

Janis Miller Dininio, who lived in the building along with her husband, said the waiver that they and others have been presented with does not have their best interests in mind.

"We spoke to a lawyer to get some legal advice," and she said their counsel questioned the waivers' propriety.

"The waivers essentially say that the building management isn't responsible for the fire and forces people who live here to sacrifice their tenant rights."

But Dan Roth, a spokesperson for the building managers, Brown Management Services, argues that the criticism represents a misinterpretation of the waivers. He said they're standard forms and tenant rights are not being violated.

"The tenants are in no way being forced to sign waivers," he said. "The only people that are being asked to sign any paperwork, and it's only a small minority of the tenants, are those who are attempting to get out of their tenant leases."

Roth explained that under their leases, tenants are obligated to give 60 days notice prior to stopping rent payments and leaving. He said that, following the fire, some want to break their leases with shorter notice.

"In this instance, the landlord has agreed to allow tenants who want to break their lease early



Observer, Alexandra Ward

AFTER THE FIRE: Some residents of 80 Cosburn are still homeless.

to do so," Roth said. "In that case, we're asking that tenants sign a release since they are essentially breaking a contract. Otherwise, nobody is under any obligation to do so."

But Dininio said she and her husband had to get their insurance company to go to bat for them with building management just to retrieve their belongings from the apartment. She suggested that other tenants — some of them recent immigrants without renters' insurance — have been led to believe they have to sign waivers merely to get their possessions out.

"From what we've seen, it's mostly people who are new to the country without insurance, who maybe don't have a good understanding of the law, that are signing," she said.

But Roth denied that anyone had been misled.

"It's their property," he said of the tenants and any belongings they still have in their apartments. "They can get in whenever they want."

The Observer reporter working this story was asked to leave 80 Cosburn by building staff, who said only tenants and individuals approved by the building management are permitted access.

Church's centennial year marks progress and change

By ALIMA HOTAKIE

A framed sheet of music with notes created from leaves and maple keys rests against a large, round window inside the Danforth Mennonite Church, at 2174 Danforth Ave. The song *O God, Our Help in Ages Past* symbolically parallels the church's 100-year anniversary.

For Pastor Tim Reimer, trees symbolize longevity and continuation.

"It's a song of how God helped us over 100 years, but the interesting thing is that the song is created with seeds of trees," he said. "You know trees can grow to live another 100 years."

The church has been an integral and active part of the East York community since 1911.

To celebrate its centennial last weekend, the church organized an open house, a singing event and a potluck.

This summer, church members can also take part in activities involving the number 100. Activities include planting 100 trees and cycling 100 kilometers.

In the last 10 decades, the church has seen many changes. Member Bill Bryson has been exploring its history for the past 25 years. He has collected and scanned archival material from Toronto's Mennonite community, as well as the Mennonite College at Waterloo University. One change Bryson observed is the dress code.

"If you wanted to join the

mission (the church), you had to conform to their dress code, which was very conservative," he said. "If they (women) put a coat on and were going downtown, they would have to wear a bonnet over their head."

But he said men had the option of wearing more liberal attire that included no tie and a relaxed or open collar.

Besides the changes in dress, more pertinent evolutions include the changing role of women and the church's ethnic makeup.

"One hundred years ago, the Mennonites would never have had a woman leading a church, but today we don't have a hierarchy," Reimer said.

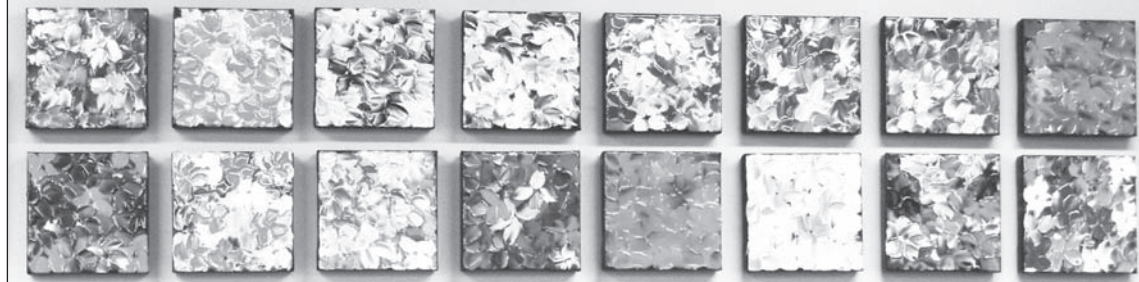
See CENTURY, page 7



Observer, Alima Hotakie

SISTER ACT: Sisters Elizabeth Groh Rudy and Cora Groh proudly hold the farewell gift their father, Harold Groh, received as an early pastor of the Danforth Mennonite Church.

Willis Blair's Garden



Observer, Janet Piercey

HOSPITAL IN BLOOM: The reception room at Toronto East General Hospital now displays a mural dedicated to former East York Mayor Willis Blair.

Hospital mural pays tribute to former East York mayor

By FARHANA UDDIN

Patients and visitors will now have something other than old, dog-eared magazines to look at as they wait in the reception area of Toronto East General Hospital (TEGH).

The TEGH Foundation has dedicated the waiting room to Willis Blair, who served as East York's mayor from 1973 to 1975. The hospital's reception area for the diagnostic imaging unit has placed a mural on the wall as a way of paying tribute to Blair.

James Werry, chairman of the TEGH Foundation, said the board chose to honour Blair for his previous services to the hospital.

"Willis has a 50-year history of working on behalf of Toronto East General," Werry said. "He served for many years on the board of the TEGH Foundation."

Doctors and representatives from the hospital gathered recently for the unveiling of Blair's plaque and mural.

Blair himself made an appearance, and he wasn't the only former East York mayor in attendance. Past mayors Alan Redway and David Johnson also dropped by to show their support.

"Willis put in a tremendous amount of service to this community, which included the hospital and all of the municipality," Johnson said. "He was always a

staunch supporter of the hospital and gave his own financial support."

"He's not a young man anymore," Redway said. "He could get on his feet, but at times he needed help getting around the ceremony. Still, he managed to give a nice speech. His closing comment was, 'I always think about what the hospital needs and I believe we should give what we can give.'"

Over the years, East York has recognized Blair's service in other ways too, such as the naming of the Blair Court Seniors Residence and the naming of Blair Street near O'Connor Drive.

Aldred wins fight for crossover

By BRITNEY BRADY-MAGINLEY

For Jack Aldred, the number 13 came up lucky this April.

On April 13, the city gave its formal go-ahead for the installation of a pedestrian crossover on Mortimer Avenue at Carlaw.

It took Aldred 10 years of lobbying to get the approval. Most recently, he collected more than 200 signatures on a petition that councillor Mary Fragedakis then took to city hall.

The city defines pedestrian crossover as a system of "push-button activated lights suspended over the roadway that flash to indicate to vehicles that a pedestrian is crossing the road." A crossover can include "zebra-striped pavement markings, flashing beacons and signs."

"I'm proud that I've done something that will benefit other people," said Aldred, who has been the crossing guard at the intersection for 22 years. "When Mary first called me to tell me the news, I was so happy. I had told my kids in the past that I had this petition



JACK ALDRED
Lobbied for crossover

going and I was just hoping it would go through."

Aldred said he's long been concerned about how oblivious drivers are while driving along Mortimer approaching Carlaw, where elementary schoolchildren cross. And when he's off duty, the chil-

dren are on their own.

"A number of mothers had complained to me when their kids were kept after 4 p.m. that they a hard time crossing the street with all the oncoming traffic," Aldred said.

Referring to the college campus at Mortimer and Carlaw, he added, "Not to mention that there are Centennial students crossing this intersection at all hours."

The crossover almost didn't happen, because the city's traffic services division said as recently as February that conditions at the corner didn't meet the prerequisites. Aldred credited Fragedakis with pushing the petition through.

He added that he'll continue in his role at the intersection, even with a pedestrian crossover.

"Some people have the mistaken idea that I won't be here because the crosswalk will be here. I'll be here whether they have the pedestrian sign up or not," he said. "I'm a crossing guard."

Earth Day's a picnic at Brick Works

By NICOLE PULSINELLI

Spring has finally arrived and East Yorkers will be ringing in the new season by celebrating Earth Day.

One such celebration will take place at the Evergreen Brick Works, a restored brick factory located at 550 Bayview Ave.

With its 40 acres of ravines, it is a hub of natural life and art and will play host to various Earth Day events tomorrow, April 23.

Anthony Westenberg, manager and spokesperson for Evergreen Brick Works, believes Torontonians should

practise Earth Day on a daily basis.

"Make every day Earth Day," he said. "Start with turning off the tap while you brush your teeth and hug a tree."

Evergreen has held one Earth Day event already this year. Thursday, in honour of the site's 20-year history as a community centre, it assembled what Westenberg said is the world's longest picnic table at 300 feet in length. Visitors were encouraged to come for a picnic, a concert and to bring their old electronics for recycling.

The centre also gave visitors an opportunity to become more

acquainted with trees on the first day of events. Site steward Stuart MacPherson distributed tree seedlings for donations to the Brick Works. He's also organizing some additional events for Saturday.

"I'm going to be having a public stewardship event. We'll have a lot grassroots stuff," he said. "We're going to be picking up garbage, do readings, getting the site in better shape. We'll also be getting rid of invasive species (of plants)."

He said invasive species, such as phragmites, garlic mustard and dog-strangling vines, are often brought into Canada.

Police briefs

East Yorker badly beaten

Police have identified a suspect in connection with a kidnapping that took place on Feb. 17 in East York.

According to police, six men abducted a man from a building in the Thorncliffe Park Drive area. The man's hands were tied behind his back and he was severely beaten. The suspects took the victim's cell phone and cash and then took him to the Flemington Park area, where he was assaulted further, police said.

The victim managed to escape and was taken to a hospital with serious but non-life-threatening injuries.

Last month, the police charged a man in connection with the incident.

Police are currently searching for a second suspect, Hamsa Ibrahim. He is described as a 26-year-old black male, six feet tall and weighing 170 pounds.

Phone call leads to arrest

Police credit an anonymous caller for assistance in a massive drug bust.

The call initially led police to a parking lot and later to a home in the East York area, where over \$500,000 in cash and drugs were seized.

The caller notified police about "suspicious activity" in a parking lot in the Woodbine Avenue and Hwy. 7 area.

There, police say, they observed a man for several hours while he made transactions with different people. The man was arrested on March 25.

The following day, police raided a home on West Lynn Avenue in the Danforth-Woodbine neighbourhood and seized \$120,000 and drugs such as heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, Oxycontin, marijuana and steroids, with a total street value of over \$310,000.

Fabio Canto, 37, Darren Casimier, 38, and Concettina Canto, 70, of West Lynn Avenue have all been charged.

Missing woman found

Toronto's 53 Division would like to thank the public for helping to locate a missing woman.

The woman was reported missing on April 9 at 11:30 a.m. and was said to have been seen last in the area of Bayview and Moore avenues. Police reported that they were concerned for the woman's safety and requested the public's help.

The woman was found early the following evening.

—Cherrone Thurab

What's On

BI-ANNUAL STREET SALE: The Topham Park Homeowners Association is having its 11th bi-annual street sale in conjunction with the Westview Presbyterian Church Spring Sale on Saturday, April 30, from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. More than 100 homes will take part in the event, selling household appliances, electronics, furniture, clothing, and more. The sale will happen on Westview Boulevard, which is one block east of O'Connor Drive and just north of St. Clair Avenue. A rain date has been set for May 7.

LOTS OF LAUGHS: The East Side Players present Noel Coward's classic comedy, "Present Laughter," at the Papermill Theatre at Todmorden Mills on Pottery Road. The premiere is Thursday, May 26, and then the show runs Wednesdays through Sundays. It closes on Saturday, June 11. Showtime is 8 p.m., except for 2 p.m. Sunday matinees. Tickets are \$20 each and \$15 for students. Purchase them online at www.eastsideplayers.ca or by calling the box office hotline at 416-425-0917.

LOCAL BAND PLAYS: The East York Concert Band will perform its annual spring concert on May 9 at 7:30 p.m. Entitled "Memories of Love," the concert will feature songs from classic TV shows, musicals and contemporary band arrangements. The show will take place at On The Park hotel (formerly Inn on the Park) in the Centennial Ballroom. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for students and admission is free for children under the age of 12. For tickets, call 416-439-3542/416-266-1958 or go to www.eastyorkconcertband.ca.

—Leslie Marciniak



Observer, Nicole Pulsinelli

EARTH DAY PICNIC: Anthony Westenberg of Evergreen Brick Works stands in front of the world's longest picnic table.



Observer, Natasha Jaferi

KEEPING IT LOCAL: Karin Kasabina runs Eight Clothing on Danforth Avenue, one of many local independent stores that supported Local Love Day last Saturday. This first-year initiative aims to bring people back to shopping at local businesses instead of crossing the U.S. border to buy.

Local businesses feel the love on special day

By NATASHA JAFERI

Last Saturday was a day dedicated to local enterprise.

Only in its first year, Local Love Day is a non-profit initiative advocating the growth and promotion of small enterprises, encouraging people to support local independent stores.

Mary Georgio, publisher of EcocentricGuide.ca and founder of Local Love Day, chose April 16 because it reflects Toronto's area code, 416.

"If we can get momentum from this, then we'd like to do it for other local cities like Mississauga in September or Montreal," she said.

"It's only in its first year, but by having consumers purchase at their local business for that one day would have a positive impact on both our local economy, as well as our environment."

Georgio expanded upon the environmental benefits.

"Local shopping means no driving, which is better for our environment," she said. "Also, if things were made or grown locally, (there is) less shipping

and distribution of products, which again means less use of fossil fuels and emissions into the air."

For storeowner Karin Kasabina, it's all about getting people to shop in their local environment to boost the economy for smaller entrepreneurs.

Kasabina has been running Eight Clothing on Danforth Avenue for 10 years. She does everything from customer service to selecting which brands are sold.

"It's been tough. We're in a recession. It's almost a depression, but they're calling it a recession for the past year especially," she said.

"We have to make people shop in Canada. Cross-border shopping is killing us and people don't realize the effects it has on us."

On the bright side, social media played a big role in promoting the event.

"I have 500-plus people on Eight Clothing's Facebook page," Kasabina said. "So I sent an invite to the people and I even asked friends that

have their own businesses to post it on their Facebook page because this event is not just for one person. It's for us little guys."

A challenge for Georgio was measurement.

"We can't measure the amount of people attending the event, but in the future if we can get the city involved, and local BIAs, then we can get a lot of press from that and we could make stickers to put on the front of the store," she said.

"What we did for this year was drive people to the Facebook page and by clicking they are attending, we get a rough number of people supporting the event."

According to a related press release, CIBC reports that Ontario is home to 36 per cent of Canadian small businesses.

"People don't realize the amount of work that goes into owning a business," Kasabina said.

"You work six to seven days a week. We have to really communicate to people that this is what we need."

Founder of youth group decries lack of kids' programs

East York area is particularly 'underserved'

By ALISSA RANDALL

The founder of a children's charity says there aren't enough programs for kids in East York.

Craig Logue, founder of the Broadview Community Youth Group (BCYG), has worked in the non-profit sector for years, doing fundraising and programming in arts and sports.

"As I was doing research in the community, I realized that the East York area in particular has been really underserved in terms of kids' programs," Logue said.

He added the community's scarce arts-based programming is privately run and very expensive in general.

The BCYG, a registered charity, started in 2007. It provides affordable, accessible and entertaining programs to children aged 4-12, and leadership opportunities for youths 13-17, mostly living in the East York, Riverdale and Leslieville communities.

The charity is located in the Danforth Church at 60 Bowden Ave., but isn't affiliated with the church.

The BCYG began as co-op housing with a program for children and youth living there. Logue said that there wasn't much funding for it.

When he expanded the program, as past-president of the co-op, he noticed kids were flowing in from different areas in Toronto, not just the immediate neighbourhood.

"I started getting registrations from Riverdale, North York and Scarborough," he said. "I started realizing that there are more kids out there than there are programs."

Logue is working on starting a media arts program, consisting of such activities as original video making and photography.

"To have something where we can offer arts programs at a professional level for kids and for youth and make it reasonably affordable, that's definitely unique to the community," he said.

The BCYG consists of three seasonal day camps in the summer, winter and over the March



CRAIG LOGUE
Founder of BCYG

break. Weekend programs are offered as well, such as the glee club and a Saturday Club including an alternating variety of fun activities.

BCYG's programs fall into three categories, allowing for a broad range of activities. The creative program involves theatre, visual and media arts. Health and fitness programs involve sports, games and cooking, and the educational program involves science and personal development.

Logue said most schools today have reduced funding for their extracurricular programs.

"Hopefully, because we're a charity that caters to all these kids, we can give them that experience and then the parents don't have to necessarily raise all that money," he said.

Logue said BCYG is unique because it doesn't cater to specific children and youth, such as underprivileged kids or families with money.

"The idea is to bring them all together under one roof and have them meet and socialize, and to break down the barriers that exist between them," he said. "I believe that all kids are at-risk, regardless of their background."

Logue emphasized the charity's registration fee is cheaper than most places, and it provides subsidies to families who need them.

"If you have a kid who really loves acting or really loves music and their parents can't afford to put them in a program, and their school isn't running that program, then they have no opportunity to do something like that," he said. "Now they have that opportunity."

Campaign encourages East York drivers to buckle up

Police stress importance of using seatbelts

By JANET PIERCEY

It's time to buckle up, or pay the consequences.

East York is participating in a provincial seatbelt campaign to promote safe driving. The Ontario-wide campaign started April 13 and will wrap up tomorrow, April 23.

Sgt. Jack West, from East York's 54 Division, believes drivers should keep their

seatbelts on at all times.

"I hope that there is going to be more public awareness," he said.

The campaign aims to ensure all Ontarians wear their seatbelts and understand the consequences if they don't.

"It's the law that drivers are responsible for ensuring passengers under the age of 16 are secured properly," West said.

The fine for not wearing a seatbelt applies to both the driver and the passenger if found guilty of not properly buckling up.

"They get a \$240 fine and

get two (demerit) points to accompany that," he said. "All passengers 16 years of age and older are responsible for wearing their own seatbelt and they will receive the same \$240 fine and two points."

West said most Ontarians not wearing their seatbelts are adults aged 50 years and older.

"I don't think the offenders realize the consequences of not wearing a seatbelt," he said.

"I think if they came with me to some of these accidents and (saw) the human devastation of not wearing a seatbelt, it would change their mind very quickly." The provincial Ministry

of Transportation and the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) teamed up to promote the campaign.

Silvana Aceto, a spokesperson for CAA, said that nine out of 10 Ontarians wear their seatbelts.

"This is just one campaign and it is really a message that drivers need to be reminded about throughout the year," she said. "This is just one way to help get that message out there."

Another issue the campaign hopes to highlight is the proper use of seatbelts and car seats for children.

Aceto advised drivers to make sure that children's car seats

meet safety standards, and are not worn out or torn in any way, to ensure proper safety.

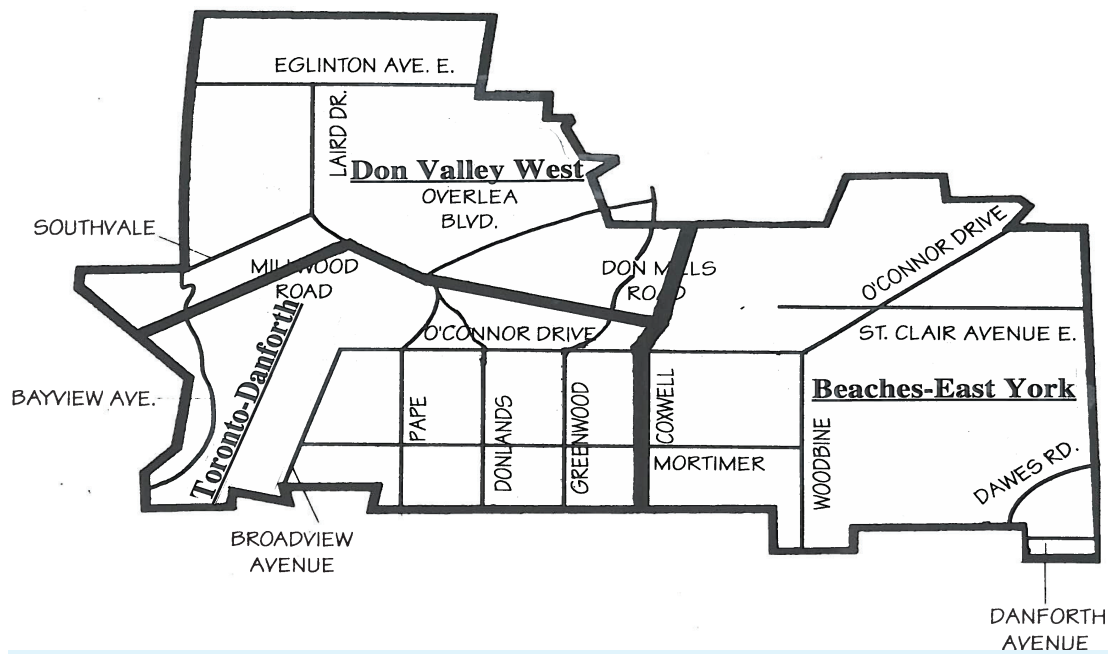
West also said children under 13 are safest in the back seat to prevent harm from airbags.

"If you have a car seat for your child, it's best to put them in the rear and centre," he said. "That will keep the child safe from any possible slide impacts."

Police will be highly visible throughout East York and Toronto to promote the campaign.

"I think everybody that works in the morning deserves to get home safe at night," West said. "So buckle up."

Meet Your Local Candidates



Liberal MP talks international aid

By KRIS ALI-TROTMAN

Rob Oliphant has big plans for immigrants and visible minorities in his riding. He's been canvassing door-to-door almost every day during this campaign, and talking about giving them a better life economically.

Oliphant represents the riding of Don Valley West in the House of Commons. He said he's running for re-election because he loves his job, and the Liberal party is like family to him. Oliphant said he's been a Liberal for 42 years, since he was 12.

The former United Church minister — holding a bachelor's degree from the University of Toronto, a master's from the University of British Columbia and a doctorate from the University of Chicago — is in a rematch with the Conservative candidate he defeated in 2008.

Statistics show that the Don Valley West area is largely made up of immigrants and visible minorities, and Oliphant said that they often complain to him about discrimination.

He said that, as a gay man himself, he has also experienced discrimination firsthand — and he wants to put an end to it.

"I am openly gay, so I know what it feels like to be misunderstood and limited to what people can expect of you," he said. "I'm running again to give immigrants a better life."

So the MP has been going door-to-door and introducing himself with English, Tamil and Islamic greetings.

"I greet them in these ways to let them know I am familiar with their values" he said. "Not just another politician."



Observer, Kris Ali-Trotman

DOOR TO DOOR: Rob Oliphant promotes his campaign door-to-door.

Oliphant said that Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Conservatives are not as inclusive as the Liberals. The Tories want conformity, he said, and that's one reason why some people in his riding don't trust politicians.

"When I knock on people's doors to talk to them, many tell me that politicians are all the same — in a negative way," he said. "If I needed to give one message, it would be that we're not all the same."

Oliphant lists international aid as one of his top priorities. He said that assistance for troubled countries will help restore Canada's tattered international reputation.

"We like going outside of Canada and having people talk with us," Oliphant said. "Africa is in dire need of help and we should be able to give them aid."

And while there have been persistent reports that the Conservatives' national campaign "war-room" has targeted Don Valley West for a concerted effort toward a turnover to Tory blue, Oliphant appears unfazed.

"I haven't found anybody yet who voted for me last time that isn't voting for me this year," he said.

EDITOR'S NOTES: With this instalment, East York's Observer concludes its two-part series profiling the major candidates running locally in the May 2 federal election. In our last edition, we profiled the contenders in Beaches-East York. This time, we offer coverage of the contenders from the Liberal, New Democratic, Conservative and Green parties vying for votes in Toronto-Danforth and Don Valley West.

The most dramatic race in all of East York may well be in Don Valley West — traditionally the most politically conservative of the three ridings, and one that political observers consider a particular Tory target this time.

There, Liberal Rob Oliphant and Conservative John Carmichael are getting ready to square off in a rematch of their rivalry three years ago. In 2008, they battled to the closest call in East York on election night: Oliphant won by fewer than 3,000 votes out of more than 50,000 cast.

The New Democrat in Toronto-Danforth has kept a low profile in the riding during the run-up to May 2. But his circumstances offer some explanation: incumbent MP Jack Layton has been criss-crossing the country in his capacity as NDP

Leader... and almost everyone acknowledges that he's the frontrunner in Toronto-Danforth anyway.

In the election three years ago, he and his staff successfully balanced his cross-Canada tour with a community campaign that ultimately resulted in his leading his nearest rival in Toronto-Danforth by 16 percentage points.

That rival was Andrew Lang, son of Trudeau-era justice minister Otto Lang. He's vigorously reprising his run as Toronto-Danforth's Liberal opposition to Layton.

Meanwhile, the NDP candidate in Don Valley West and the Conservative in Toronto-Danforth have been running campaigns that verge on the invisible; neither have been reachable for interview purposes.

This is the final edition of the Observer for the 2010-2011 school year (the paper is produced by journalism students at Centennial College's East York campus — where the semester concludes on April 29). But on election night, we'll endeavour to offer a roundup of the results in the three ridings that converge in East York — on our companion website: the Toronto Observer, www.torontoobserver.ca

Third time may be a charm for Don Valley West Conservative

By LESLIE MARCINIAK

Three years ago, Conservative candidate John Carmichael came very close to winning a seat as Don Valley West's MP. Liberal Rob Oliphant nabbed the coveted spot by a mere five per cent of the vote.

Now, in 2011, the political rivals are facing off again. And the seat is a particular target of the Conservatives' national campaign strategists.

Carmichael has been the Conservative candidate for Don Valley West since 2006. He has 35 years of business experience, most notably as chairman and CEO of City Buick Pontiac Cadillac GMC Ltd., which has been family-owned and operated for over 55 years.

His strong business resume and ability to keep his own company thriving during the

recession are assets he feels residents of Don Valley West will appreciate as the Conservatives continue tackling economic issues.

"The Conservative government's steady leadership has helped Canada emerge quickly from the global recession," he said. "We injected billions of stimulus dollars into the economy, which has helped us emerge stronger than our G7 partners."

Traffic and transit have also been important issues in Toronto and the GTA in recent years. Carmichael is confident the Conservatives are taking proper steps to make Canada's largest city run smoother.

"Work is underway to provide the Greater Toronto Area with a new light rail line, thanks to \$333 million from the Major



JOHN CARMICHAEL
Background in business

Infrastructure Component of the federal Building Canada Fund," he said.

Carmichael said that this creates jobs, is good for the environment and gives commuters better access to other transit systems in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton areas.

"This major investment demonstrates the government's commitment to improving public transit," he said.

NDP wants a 10-year health accord

By MATILDA MIRANDA

Liberal incumbent Rob Oliphant and Conservative challenger John Carmichael are running one of the most high-profile election races in the entire city. But there's a New Democrat in the background of the rivalry: Nicole Yovanoff.

Yovanoff has been running a very low-key campaign, apparently by design.

She did not attend the March 29 meeting of the riding asso-

ciation that made her the New Democratic candidate in Don Valley West.

The Observer failed to contact her despite several attempts. And a spokesman at NDP headquarters in Ottawa said she is not available to the media.

According to her campaign website, Yovanoff, who studied political science at York University, has lived in Toronto for 16 years. The site describes her as a community activist and

volunteer.

The NDP platform that Yovanoff is running on includes an "affordable plan to get Ottawa working for your family."

One of the main planks is "improving your family's health services."

The party wants to negotiate a new 10-year health accord in 2014 to ensure a continued strong federal contribution to provincial provision of health care.

Encore campaign for local Green candidate

By FARHANA UDDIN

When she's not delivering babies, Dr. Georgina Wilcock is knocking door-to-door across Don Valley West trying to earn people's votes.

Running as the riding's Green Party candidate, Wilcock acknowledges that the riding encompasses a diverse community of people.

"Don Valley West is one of the wealthiest ridings, but it also has a lot of low-income people," Wilcock said. "They deal with serious issues in terms of social welfare."

According to Wilcock, low-income families continuously struggle with heating bills.

"I care for families and poor families have to live with heating day-to-day in a pretty brutal (climate)," she said.

"We shouldn't subsidize heating, but rather have a massive program to retrofit homes so that heating costs are much less."

Moreover, Wilcock's campaign is also geared toward improving immigrants' livelihoods.

No stranger to the Canadian immigrant experience, Wilcock was born in Zambia to British parents, and raised and edu-

cated in Zimbabwe. She immigrated to Canada in 1989.

"I'm a huge advocate of recognition of foreign work qualifications," she said. "I myself am an immigrant who has managed to get my qualifications recognized."

Wilcock hopes to go to Ottawa and talk about issues that concern everyday people.

"Liberals and Conservatives are constantly squabbling rather than talking about important issues," she said. "The leaders' debate failed to mention anything about the state of water, the environment, aboriginal affairs. They spent their time pointing fingers and saying, 'you did this, you did that.'"

Wilcock ran for Don Valley West in 2008 but was defeated by the Liberal party's Rob Oliphant. This year she hopes to see citizens' voting habits change, particularly among youth.

"I want more young people to vote," Wilcock said. "Most young people wouldn't let their grandparents choose who they date, so why are they letting their grandparents choose who governs them?"

Don Valley West and Toronto-Danforth

Greens to focus on economic change

By JILAN NASHER

Toronto-Danforth Green party candidate Adriana Mugnatto-Hamu, 46, has always been interested in human rights.

Although she has never run for office before, she has been actively involved in her community.

She has advocated for greater community involvement in transit planning and put together an energy plan avoiding the need to build another fossil fuel plant at the Portlands power station.

"We did not succeed in the three-year battle against the power plant," she said.

"We used to have an environmental assessment process for all government projects, and one of the worst things about public-private partnerships is that they are a blend of the worst of both worlds."

She added that blending the public and private sectors results in "socializing" the risks, with the government paying the price if things don't work out.

"We talked to the people at

the plant and they said (it) will operate in such a way that it makes profit from the government, which means taxpayers pay for it whether or not any energy is produced at all," she said.

Among other issues, Mugnatto-Hamu stresses her concern over where the economy is headed.

"In my personal position, I've been involved in Post Carbon Toronto, which is looking at oil and energy resources, and talking to various energy and resource experts. I'm very skeptical," she said.

"We see over and over again crises where oil prices start rising and we have problems that are related to food."

Mugnatto-Hamu also spends a lot of time expressing her feelings about conditions that future generations may face.

"We have to develop our economy and health care and our social services," she said.

"We need an economy that builds and protects resources for our children."



Observer, Nicholas Pescod

KNOCK-KNOCK: Ontario Transportation Minister Kathleen Wynne and Liberal candidate for Toronto-Danforth Andrew Lang knock on doors at 1048 Broadview Ave. on Sunday.

Politics a family affair for Grit

By NICHOLAS PESCOD

You might think that Toronto-Danforth Liberal candidate Andrew Lang would feel intimidated running against Jack Layton — the incumbent MP, and federal NDP leader. But Lang, 43, says he's up to the challenge... and Toronto-Danforth is ready for a change.

"I feel great about it," Lang said. "This riding needs change. This country needs change."

Lang said that the cancellation of the Liberals' early childhood strategy was one of the many reasons why he decided to run against Layton.

The Liberals had the strategy ready to come into effect back in 2005, but when Layton decided to no longer support the minority Liberal government of Paul Martin, the strategy was effectively dropped.

Lang ran against — and behind — Layton in the last federal election in 2008. He said he's very familiar with the obstacles facing him as a challenger running against a popular incumbent. But he also said that his interaction with the voters in Toronto-Danforth and his own connections with the commu-

nity are giving him a noticeable boost.

Still, he acknowledged, "it's obviously an uphill battle. He (Layton) has got a national advertising campaign that he gets to rely on."

Politics runs in the family for Lang; both his father, Otto Lang, and his stepfather, Donald McDonald, were Liberal MPs in Pierre Trudeau's cabinet. His aunt, Pana Merchant, was the first female Greek senator in Canada.

Lang's brother Timothy is also involved in politics, having run against Conservative cabinet minister Bev Oda in the 2004 federal election.

Lang can truthfully claim that his first exposure to party politics was at the age of six, when he attended his first Liberal rally. Since then, he's managed the Toronto-Centre constituency office of Bill Graham, and played a key role in drafting green energy legislation.

He's also been involved with East York-related projects, including the East York Community Centre and the Royal Canadian Curling Club.

Lang's policies and platform

are in line with that of the Liberals national platform, with emphasis on childcare spending, senior care and education. The childcare plan includes the creation of childcare spaces and the Liberals are also promising a major infusion of resources into post-secondary education.

"We want to make sure that every high school student who wants to go on to post-secondary education can do it," he said.

But Lang differentiates himself as a candidate with a focus on local issues in Toronto-Danforth. That includes tackling poverty and job creation.

"Stores are closing down on the Danforth, and we need to do something to help small business because they are the generators of jobs," he said. "It's unacceptable that a country like Canada has the rate of poverty that it has."

Lang uses his focus on concerns particular to the riding to contrast himself against Layton — whom, he said, has not been a local presence in this campaign.

"Layton really just takes this riding for granted," Lang said. "I am going to every single door in this riding."

Tory hopeful keeps public profile low

By MIKE BEAUVAIS

Rounding out the campaign in Toronto-Danforth is Conservative candidate Katarina von Koenig.

The Conservatives have found the riding unwelcoming recently. In 2008, they finished fourth, behind the Greens, despite the efforts of a Tory contender who openly campaigned in the community.

Perhaps in part because of that tough going, von Koenig has opted for a very low profile so far in this campaign. The Observer tried repeatedly, but was unable to secure an interview with her.

The party's website says this is von Koenig's first-ever political campaign. It describes her as a graduate of the University of Toronto with an honours BA, and Humber College, in journalism and teach-

ing effectiveness.

It cites von Koenig's experience in an office environment and in customer relations as



VON KOENIG

helping her understand the difficulties facing job-seekers.

Von Koenig has worked in radio, at CHFI and 680News, and at the diversity office at U of T, where she worked as a women's issues liaison.

She has also volunteered for the Red Cross and at U of T's AccessAbility Resource Centre.

A proponent of Stephen Harper's low-tax plan, the website says von Koenig thinks that the Conservative Party is best prepared to ensure further economic recovery and job creation in Canada.

Partisans talk back to debating leaders

By JESSE MIRSKY

In a dark back corner of the Wally Tap and Grill on O'Connor Drive last week, politics was alive and well — briefly replacing the sports that usually dominates the television screens at the pub and restaurant.

The barstool quarterbacking that Tuesday night was around the federal leaders' debate. Voters were talking back to the television — and to each other.

About 50 mostly Liberal East Yorkers gathered to watch the English exchange between Stephen Harper, Michael Ignatieff, Jack Layton and Gilles Dupeppe.

Andrew Lang, the Liberal

MP hopeful in the riding of Toronto-Danforth, sponsored the event.

Lang said grassroots events like the one at the Wally are the most effective weapon he has against his political opponent — who happened to be up there on the TV screen: federal NDP leader and incumbent Toronto-Danforth MP Layton.

Lang said Layton has overstayed his welcome in Toronto-Danforth, having been first elected there in 2004.

"I live in this riding and my opponent does not," he said. "When I'm knocking on doors, Jack's not relevant. It's over. That's what I'm hearing."

Layton team holds the fort

By ALIMA HOTAKIE

Incumbent Toronto-Danforth MP and NDP Leader Jack Layton is probably the most recognizable of any East York politician at any level of government. But he's also one of the hardest to pin down during a federal election campaign, as he travels the country in his capacity as party leader.

After trying repeatedly, the Observer failed to obtain an interview with Layton by phone or other means in time for this pre-election issue. Finally, a reporter was told that the candidate might be available during a stop-over in the riding on Thursday — when the presses roll.

So considering the deadline, Layton's local campaign chair spoke to the Observer instead.

Pointing out that his candidate has served the riding as MP since 2004, Rob Sutherland said, "East York is personally attached to Layton."

Layton's successful local runs in 2004 and 2008 followed a failed attempt in 1997 against East York Liberal MP Dennis Mills. Before and after that campaign, Layton served as a mu-

nicipal councillor for downtown Toronto.

In recent months, Layton has received treatment for prostate cancer and has also had hip surgery. He's noticeably thinner and has been walking with a cane — but he's also campaigned with as much vigour as his rivals on the national scene.

Sutherland said the MP's "health is good" — and even predicted that "he'll be off the cane by the end of the campaign."

Asked to discuss Layton's stand on the issues, Sutherland focused on the NDP's national platform — what the party would do if it becomes the government after May 2.

He explained that Layton wants to make a number of changes as quickly as possible. He's hoping to implement some within the first 100 days of taking office. He wants to hire more nurses and doctors, strengthen the Canada Pension Plan and make post-secondary education more affordable.

Another priority for Layton involves focusing on small businesses.

"We want a two-per-cent tax

cut for small businesses, from 11 per cent to nine per cent," Sutherland said.

Layton would also like to provide businesses with a \$4,000 tax credit for each job created. Unlike large corporations that often outsource their jobs, small businesses keep jobs inside Canada, Sutherland said. So this tax incentive will keep the economy growing and create jobs, he said.

Layton is also determined to set tighter regulations governing credit cards and cell phone contracts. Current high credit card interest rates trap people in debt, Sutherland said.

"We want to cap it to the prime rate of the Bank of Canada plus five per cent," Sutherland said.

Furthermore, Layton would like to scrap locked cell phone contracts. The focus should be on consumers and providing them with greater flexibility, Sutherland said.

Layton is adamant about holding politicians accountable.

"He wants to talk to Canadians about these issues," Sutherland said. "It's all about engaging the public."

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Liberal MP cares

Approaching the entrance to Lawrence Station on the heels of a federal election call is always a treat — and this year isn't any different. The defenders of Don Valley West have risen like bears from their winter slumber to shake paws with their potential voters. None are more well-versed in the art than Liberal MP Rob Oliphant and his team of volunteers who suffer the April cold, wind and rain with grizzly determination.

His stop at this TTC station is one of many he's making across a ward that's a microcosm of Canadian political demography. Oliphant is running for a second term representing a ward that is one of the most diverse in the country.

Don Valley West boasts one of the most affluent, WASP-ish communities in all of Canada. It is also home to a large number of low-income families — including many recent immigrants. And it's all spread across a topography that is equal parts eco-haven and industrial wasteland. Suffice it to say that Oliphant's job involves navigating some socio-economic hills and valleys.

Canada's upper classes rarely have difficulty getting the attention of the political establishment. But with an office located a stone's throw away from Thorncliffe Park — one of the most densely populated and multicultural areas in the city — Oliphant has also made himself accessible to people who are usually disenfranchised.

And as a member of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, Oliphant has his finger on the pulse of this important but often-neglected constituency: new Canadians.

While most of his platform reflects a traditional Liberal agenda (affordable child care, education and health care) it's Oliphant's image and presence in a diverse community that really stands out.

In the riding of Toronto-Danforth, meanwhile, Liberal candidate Andrew Lang has about as much hope of converting the NDP stronghold as an amateur gumshoe does finding the body of Jimmy Hoffa. That being said, what Lang lacks in political celebrity he makes up for in gumption and humility.

As a long-time proponent of green energy initiatives and legislation, it's easy to see why Lang has endeared himself to some in the left-leaning neighbourhood. But it's hard to envision him unseating Jack Layton, an incumbent who's so much better-known and so personally popular.

So the real battle is to the north, in Don Valley West. Oliphant will hopefully emerge victorious on May 2, and will stay true-to-form in his optimism and approach to victory. The promise of progressive change looms quietly on the horizon for Don Valley West and it will be Oliphant who ushers it in with integrity.

—Ross Johnston

Challenger's time

All of the federal candidates in Beaches-East York seem committed to the riding and anxious for it to move ahead. What separates them, though, are clear differences on how to do it.

Aaron Cameron, the Green Party candidate, has devoted his academic career to political science and economics, while taking action to help raise awareness about our environmental issues. He strongly supports environmentally friendly ways of travel and will provide tax exemptions for people who travel 'greener.' Cameron wants to rule with a green fist.

The incumbent Liberal, Maria Minna, hopes to fight for improved environmental legislation and enforcement. She's already known for advocating on behalf of children, women, and minorities and she hopes that record and her platform will mean a return to the seat she's held since 1993.

NDP candidate Matthew Kellway is also passionate about addressing environmental issues. He wants to focus on the urban issues at hand and relate them to environmental concerns. His campaign also focuses on improving immigrant services as well as adding affordable housing strategies.

Bill Burrows, running for the Conservative Party, hopes his community-based promises will connect with local voters. Besides wanting lower taxes, Burrows wants to focus on seniors and the arts.

But while it's clear that these candidates all want the best for Beaches-East York, the one who seems most attuned to the riding's current needs and aspirations is Matthew Kellway.

Kellway represents a fresh approach to a riding that has changed markedly during Minna's almost 18 years in office. And it's interesting to note that he enjoys the endorsements of not only Michael Prue — the New Democrat MPP — but also the area's successful city councillor, Janet Davis. Prue and Davis understand what voters in Beaches-East York will hopefully reflect when they mark their ballots on May 2: that Matthew Kellway's passion for the community and his strong interest in environmental protection make him the best choice for MP.

—Janet Piercey

Toronto commuters not getting world-class rides

I'm sure you've heard your share of TTC-bashing stories. Some are warranted and some aren't. So this won't be another rant about sleeping fare collectors or texting drivers.

This is about my fairly extensive travels outside of Canada and the exposure that it's given me to subway systems that are ahead of the curve. And way ahead of the TTC.

When I visited Copenhagen and Nuremberg last summer, I practically gasped with incredulity at those cities' automatic subways. As I watched the driverless train approach the station, my jaw fell open. It was like being in a science fiction movie.

But my European cousin was surprised at my disbelief.

He assumed that North American cities would have the latest and greatest of transportation technologies. I had to explain to him that not only do Torontonians travel on manually operated subway trains, Canada's largest city has only three subway lines — and is still pondering on whether or not to add more.

Now imagine if you could avoid the underground all together — not by opting for the car, but for the ferry.

Alima
Hotakie



Imagine if it were possible to take a ferry from downtown Toronto to either Scarborough or Etobicoke.

It would be like Hamburg, where you can ride the ferry with your subway ticket to the city's east and west ends. And compared to Europe, our fares seem, well, unfair.

In Germany, for example, most subway systems charge a person according to distance travelled, so you don't pay a fat flat rate like here; you pay per kilometre.

Average-length trips are generally cheaper than the \$3 shelled out per ride here.

Then there's their monthly passes, which come with special features. On weekends, for example, one other person can ride with you for free.

We also compare unfavourably when it comes to the extensiveness of our subway system. Compare our

three-line underground to that of London, Berlin, Tokyo or Seoul, where the subways are like spider webs.

Tokyo has around 14 subway lines and Seoul has about 11.

So far more neighbourhoods in those cities are serviced and despite the complexities, commutes are shorter and easier.

My admiration doesn't end there.

Aside from superior cleanliness, there are many other small details that make riding the subway abroad more worthwhile and convenient than a ride in T.O.

In Tokyo, electronic displays inside the trains indicate your exact location.

In both Tokyo and Seoul, electronic screens and announcements not only tell you the name of the next stop, but what side of the train to exit on.

And then there's this: at each important transfer point, they play classical music.

And this: in winter, the seats in many of Seoul's trains are heated. (Imagine stepping onto a subway car on a frigid winter day and taking a warm seat.)

Sounds like a Better Way, doesn't it?

A Rolling Rim gathers few wins for joe junkie

"Réessayez S.V.P."

It may be one of the most toxic phrases to Canadians today. My French is rusty at best, but between the months of March and May those words have repeatedly stricken me with momentary grief. I only need to see that l'accent aigu to know Tim Hortons has upset my plans of winning a free coffee (or, if I may be greedy, that vehicle I don't know how to drive) in the Roll Up the Rim to Win contest.

Going to Tim Hortons has become so much a part of Canadian identity that it could be considered an almost patriotic act to purchase your morning cup of bew there and snub Starbucks. Aside from the fact that their coffee tastes like mud, what has Starbucks done for me lately anyway? I can't proudly parade my cup from there, and my chances of rolling up their rims and winning are non-existent.

Over at Tim's, meanwhile, the odds of winning are one in six, according to the Tim Hortons

Nicole
Pulsinelli



website. Tell that to the guy who's won four out of 38 coffees in the past month. That guy represents the majority of us who just want a free... anything. We just want the rush of holding a winning cup, of being a winner.

Most of us hardcore Roll Up the Rimmers know about the deal Country Style is offering. They ask you to bring in your losing Tim Hortons cup in exchange for a cup of their own coffee. Fantastic, right? Well, not really.

Somewhere along the line, rolling up the rim has become less about getting a free coffee and more about the winning. Tim Hortons has found a way to turn even the most holier-than-thou types into committed gamblers.

("I only want a medium coffee, but I bet most of the prizes are in the extra large sizes...")

Even I have begun wondering why I've only won three times so far this year.

I've started to think that most of the winning cups are put in the first few batches to go out to stores — with the idea being that everyone should experience some beginner's luck. Then, as soon as you think you must be one lucky duck, they pull the carpet out from under you.

Well-played, Tim.

Or maybe the odds really are one in six. Perhaps the population and I are overwhelming the system. Or maybe, just maybe, that guy drinking the unwanted extra large coffee and I are just unlucky. Either way, I'll happily and addictively continue going to Tim Hortons.

I'll do it, not to spite Tim's competitors, or to feel more Canadian. I'll do it in hope that one day the word "gagnez" also makes it into my limited French vernacular.

Like the song says...

...See you in September. This is the final edition of East York's Observer for the 2010-2011 school year. The Observer is produced by the journalism students of Centennial College at the college's campus located at 951 Carlaw Ave. (Please address correspondence to The Observer, rm. 149, East York campus, Centennial College, P.O. Box 631, Station A, Scarborough, ON M1K 5E9. Until our newsroom closes for the summer sometime in the next few days, you can also telephone us at 416-289-5107 and fax us at 416-289-5111. And you can e-mail us c/o scogan@centennialcollege.ca. Opinions in the Observer do not necessarily reflect the views of the college.) We'll reopen the newsroom in mid-September, and resume publication around the end of that month. But considering the federal election next week, we'll still endeavour to cover election night results (including the three ridings that converge in East York) on our companion website: www.torontoobserver.ca

Greek soccer fans celebrate game together

By ROSS JOHNSTON

April 17 was an emotional day for some soccer supporters in East York. The final game of the Greek Super League season came and went and was celebrated in style by those in attendance at the Panathinaikos Supporters' Club, located at 983 Pape Ave.

In a tightly cramped room, almost 100 green-clad supporters chanted in unison and urged their team on. Nicolas Kertes, 25, was shaking with anticipation as his team was down 1-0 to underdogs Olympiakos Velos at halftime.

"I'm nervous, but I think we can turn things around," Kertes said. "We're sitting comfortable in second place, which means we're guaranteed a qualifying spot in the Champions League next year."

A spot in Europe's most elite competition has always been the goal for Panathinaikos, or as they're known to a dedicated following, *Oi Prasinoi* (The Greens).

Over the past few years, the club has splashed around money to buy marquee players from across the globe in hopes of bringing the Champions League trophy to Athens.

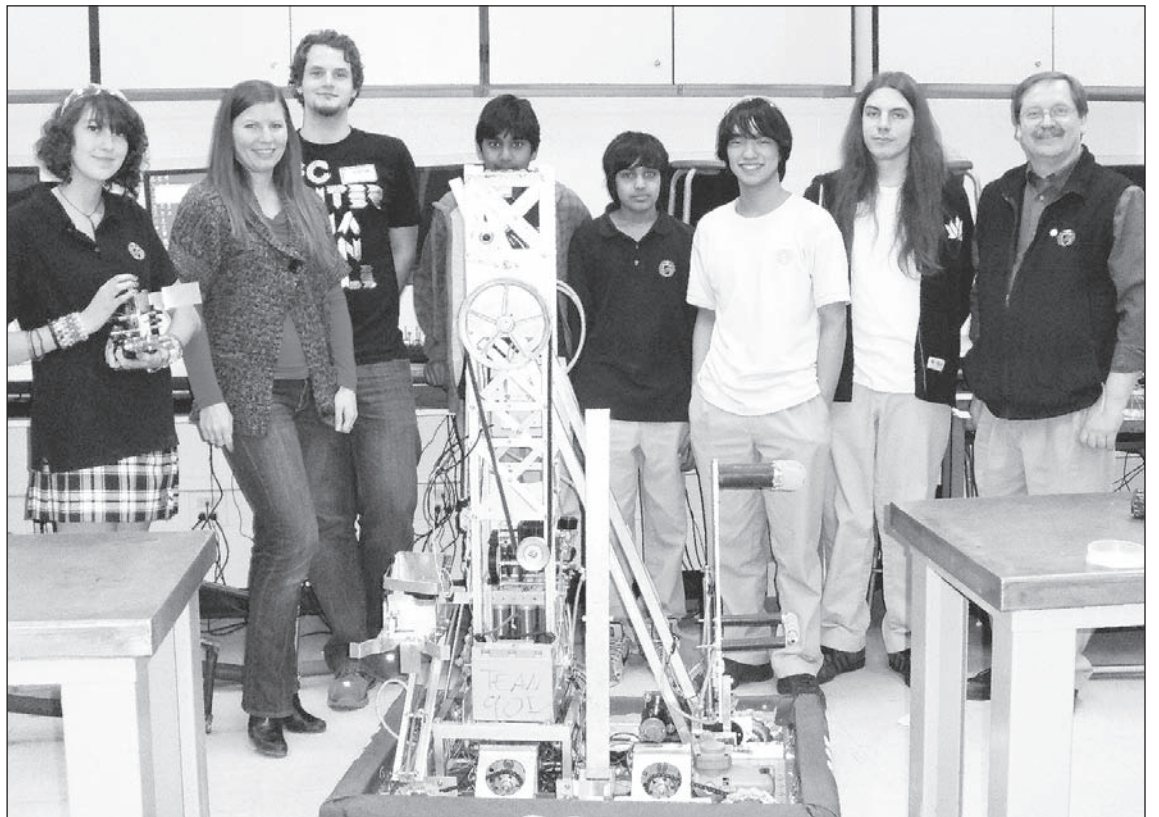
Long-time supporter Constantine Ninis, 68, revels in the kinship shared between Panathinaikos supporters, especially in Toronto.

"It's lovely to have a place like this to come and cheer them on," he said. "I feel like I'm back in Greece. This is a very special place and I love it."

In the end, the club suffered a shocking 3-2 loss at the hands of Olympiakos in a match that had its fair share of drama. Panathinaikos defenders Cedric Kante and Jean-Alain Boumsong were both shown red cards for clumsy challenges, while French international Djibril Cisse pulled the team level with a solo effort at the 66-minute mark. Olympiakos forward Juan Eduardo put his team ahead with the winning goal in the 85th minute. It was his second of the evening.

The local Panathinaikos Supporters' Club will continue to operate during the off season, but will ramp up again when league play resumes in August, something Kertes can't wait for.

"The summer seems too long," he said. "I know that's strange to say, but ask anybody here and they'll say the same thing. We love this team."



Observer, Michelle Grace

TIME TO BUILD: Members of the East York Collegiate robotics team pose with their robot, Long Tall Sally. From left are Natalie Schaefer, Christina Kemp, Philip Perivolaris, Joel Moses, Kokul Subendran, Benjamin Chu, Shawn Zivontsis and Chris Pervolaris.

Robotics team standing 'tall' after making it to semi-finals

By MICHELLE GRACE

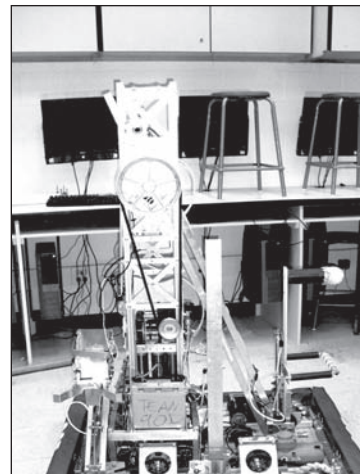
Members of the East York Collegiate Institute robotics team, along with their robot Long Tall Sally, took part in the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Greater Toronto East Regional in Mississauga earlier this month and made it to the semi-finals.

Students in Grades 9 through 12 made up the team of eight members who dedicated almost two months to creating and bringing Long Tall Sally to life.

Chris Perivolaris is the teacher advisor for the cybernetics team. He has been teaching at East York Collegiate for six years, and says being part of a team dynamic and in robotics can be beneficial in many ways.

"Robotics is an engagement strategy for kids to learn and they are learning by doing, which is the best form of learning. It lets them experience math and science concepts live and in colour, so they can see the direct result of the ideas they have created and learnt in school," he said.

The premise of the competition was based around a game where the robot had to hang



LONG TALL SALLY
Took two months to create

pieces on a high structure. The idea of the game was organized and released to the team in January. The team then had six weeks to build the robot.

"I'm very proud of the students," Perivolaris said. "We had one of the smallest teams in the regional, we got completed on the robot and it was considered the best student built robot," he said.

Grade 12 student Shawn Zivontsis put in a lot of time and energy to make Long Tall Sally the best it could be.

"The thing about robotics is that it (comprises) every single field," he said. "It has mechanical design manufacturing, computer programming, and if you're interested in anything related to do with technology or even business management, I think robotics has something for you in it."

The team did its best, but in the end Governor Simcoe Secondary School in St. Catharines took home the championship.

"It felt very nice to make it to the semi-finals. I had a feeling we would do it," Zivontsis said. "This is one of the best, if not the best, robot we have produced. The team that eliminated us from St. Catharines is one of the world's best teams, so that says a lot as well."

Perivolaris and his gang are determined to win next year's competition. It will be held in St. Louis, Missouri.

"This whole competition shows that East York can pull together a team and do well," he said.

"This was our best achievement ever, and hopefully next year we will be able to take it onto the championship."

A century later, church's core beliefs unchanged

Cont'd. from page 1

Indeed, the church has spawned a Chinese and Spanish church and may soon include an Ethiopian chapter.

Another progressive change involves the church's interfaith initiative.

"There's a group of Mennonites who are very deliberately working on interfaith conversation that is mainly between Muslims, Christians and Jews, but will also include Hindus," Reimer said.

"We want to understand one another and we also want to understand how we ourselves are distinct and how we make a distinct contribution."



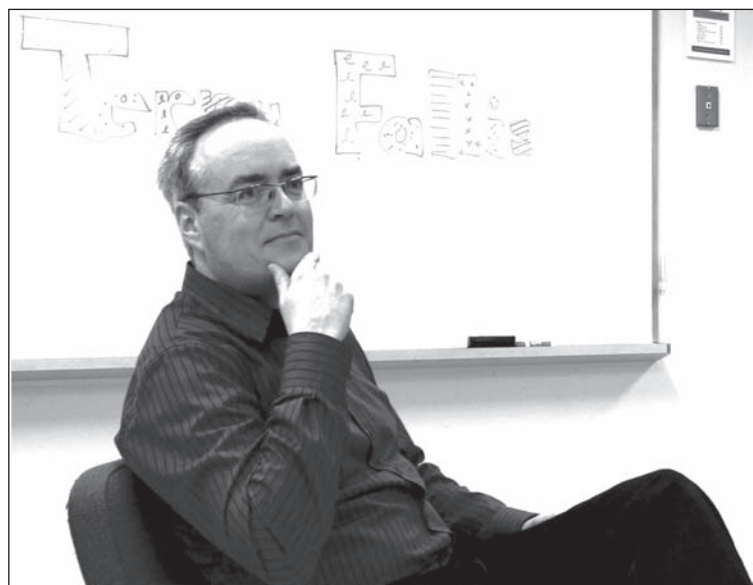
LONG AGO: The church as it was in 1911.

Despite the changes, there's also continuity.

Part of that continuity is the Mennonite tradition of, and core belief in, pacifism, volunteerism and social activism.

"Economic justice and international peace and well-being, those are the things we continue to work at," Reimer said.

Canada Reads winner defies self-publishing stigma



Observer, Alexandra Ward

By ALEXANDRA WARD

For nine months, Terry Fallis spent every weekend in front of his laptop. The result of his dedication was his first novel, *The Best Laid Plans*. The book is a satire about Canadian politics.

The Best Laid Plans went on to claim the 2008 Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour and in February was named the winner of CBC's Canada Reads 2011 competition.

Fallis visited Centennial College's East York campus on April 4 to talk about *The Best Laid Plans*, follow-up novel *The High Road* and politics in Canada.

Speaking to a class of journalism students, the author described some of the challenges he faced as a first-time author.

"I didn't know whether I could write a novel; I'd never written

one before," he said. "I didn't know how to write one and when I finished it, I didn't know whether I'd written one or not. Did the story hang together? Did the characters work? Was it funny? I didn't know."

After finishing the manuscript, Fallis spent an entire year looking for an agent or publisher.

He never received even an acknowledgement or a rejection letter.

At the end of that year, he decided to self-publish his novel.

"I was too naïve at the time; I didn't know that there was this huge stigma around self-publishing," he said, noting that most writers consider this to be "the kiss of death." He, however, went ahead with the plan, podcasting the novel in its entirety.

Contrary to being the kiss of death, self-publishing his novel, with the help of social media, helped Fallis reach his audience.

He received emails from readers living as far away as Australia and China.

Fallis is a self-proclaimed authority on Canadian politics. Born and raised in a staunchly Conservative household, he eventually discovered his liberal values.

"I crossed the family floor," he said.

Despite his recent triumphs, Fallis remains modest about his literary accomplishments, attributing his success to an efficient writing process and a love of the English language.

He is currently working on his third novel, in which he will be exploring realms other than Canadian politics.

POLITICS MADE FUNNY: Terry Fallis, author of *The Best Laid Plans* and *The High Road*, visited Centennial College's East York campus to talk about life as a writer.



Observer, Matilda Miranda

WAVING THE FLAG: Nargis Khan, wearing a traditional Bengali sari, shows off her Canadian flag. Her mother, Naziat Karim, wants her daughter to embrace both cultures.

Bengali new year has Canadian flare

By **MATILDA MIRANDA**

Rain and howling winds didn't stop hundreds of adults and children from pouring into the celebration. Wearing bright, colourful clothing, they sang traditional songs to welcome in the year 1418.

Harmony Hall Centre for Seniors held its fourth annual Bengali new year celebration at the Crescent Town Club last Saturday.

Apart from singing and dancing, festivities also included a children's fashion show and a fair where people could buy traditional clothing, food, books and jewelry.

The Bengali new year, called Poyela Boishakh, started in the Mongol era to coincide the harvest with tax season.

Nazly Sultana, Bengali program co-ordinator at Harmony Hall, said the event embodies a sense of belonging and allows others a glimpse into Bengali culture.

"We celebrate irrespective of religion and regional boundaries. You can see lots of people from other countries here because they love to see what we are doing," Sultana said.

"Our agency is only for seniors, but we think we have some kind of responsibility toward the

community as a whole."

Many Bengali parents said that because their children came here at a young age or were born here, it's harder for the second generation to connect with their roots. Shammi Panvin, whose six-year-old daughter Rayna Rakib performed at the celebrations, said everyone should try to pass on their traditions to their children.

"It's very important to teach our kids about our background, our own language and our culture," she said.

"Because of this, I chose (Bengali) dance for my daughter. She loves to dance and this way she can learn something different."

Families immigrating to Canada not only bring their children, but often their parents as well.

"It's quite unbelievable to see what they've accomplished. They're happier, they're learning a lot and they learn about what's important in Canada," Lieberman said.

"To have services for them like this is really critical for their self-esteem. It makes sure that they don't get depressed and that they stay independent in the community."

One man's garbage is a raccoon's gourmet meal

By **MICHELLE GRACE**

It's the time of year when you find holes in the garbage bags, rustling in the trees and scratching at the back door. Those beady little eyes peering out from behind the dumpsters belong to none other than raccoons.

Susan Fleming, Canadian filmmaker and animal behaviour expert, was at Centennial College's East York campus recently to speak to students about her latest documentary, *Raccoon Nation*. The documentary follows a family of raccoons to see how they have adapted to urban life. After all, Toronto has now claimed the title of "Raccoon Capital."

"My biggest joy is when people say, 'Gosh I didn't know that' when they stop for a second and just consider the animals that live among us," Fleming said.

"I really don't think we give these animals enough respect. Whether it be a beetle or whale,

there is so much we need to learn. If people can just change their perspective a little bit and give them some insight into the animal, or at least make them consider these animals, then I feel like I have done my job."

Joe Bruno has been working in the animal control business for five years now and says raccoons are more active than ever this month.

"At this time of the year, we are extremely busy, especially in April and May and if there is a full moon there seems to be quite a lot more activity," Bruno said.

"People need to understand that what they do around their home (contributes to) the problem. You need to keep your area clean and uncluttered as possible. You don't want to give the raccoons a portal where they can get up onto the roofs or in the shed," he said.

So how do we find the balance between learning how to live

with these creatures and maintain our sanity — and not finding garbage all over the front lawn?

"A lot of people have said to me, 'I have never thought of raccoons as anything but vermin, but now I look at them a different way,'" Fleming said.

"It's all about education. The more we learn, the more we know about these creatures and the better we can co-habitate with them."

With all the green space in Toronto and East York especially, Bruno wants to make homeowners aware of how they can ensure these little critters keep their distance.

"There are a couple of reasons why raccoons are more prominent here. Toronto is very green and people feed these animals as well, and of course they will take advantage of this," he said. "Anywhere where there is more food and garbage bins, raccoons will be there."



Aneta Tasheva does her part to clean up the environment by participating in the citywide "20-Minute Toronto Makeover" on April 15 at Carlaw and Mortimer Avenues.

Observer, Farhana Uddin

Cancer society seeking donations

By **JILAN NASHER**

April is a month when the weather gets warmer, flowers start to bloom... and people fight back against cancer.

Volunteers have been fanning out across East York this month, knocking on doors and asking for contributions to the Canadian Cancer Society. Others have been selling daffodils to raise money for cancer cures.

"There are a number of activities that take place throughout the month in support of our mission, which is to eradicate cancer and to support those who

have cancer, through our services," said Melanie Haydon, the Daffodil Month representative at the Canadian Cancer Society.

Haydon said there are other ways East Yorkers can show their support for the cause.

"During daffodil days and throughout the month of April, we have the sale and the launch of our new daffodil pins," she said. "The daffodil pin is to be worn by Torontonians and Canadians for that matter, to show their solidarity and their support of those in their lives who are cancer survivors."

"They're worn by people who want to honour and support, as well as remember, the people in their lives who have battled cancer."

Pins are available from volunteers selling them in public places, but also from some retail stores. Sales are donation-based, so pay what you can. Those stores can be located on the website www.fightback.ca.

"April is also our residential canvas campaign, so we'll have thousands of volunteers who will be knocking on their neighbours' doors," Haydon said.

Board head targets 'alarming' dropout rates



DR. CHRIS SPENCE
Targeting dropout rate

By **BRAYDON KEDDIE**

The director of education for the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) says the benefits of Africentric schools outweigh the negatives.

Speaking to journalism students at Centennial College's East York campus on April 11, Dr. Chris Spence discussed his advocacy for creating an Africentric program for students at Toronto public schools. After analyzing the collected data, Spence said statistics show that despite their efforts, many black students continue to under-

achieve in standard curriculum schools.

"You have to sort of circle back to what problem we're trying to solve here," Spence said. "What we're trying to solve is that we have a 40-per-cent dropout rate of black students. Those numbers are very alarming and in spite of our best efforts to ensure every kid gets what they need at their local school, we have not had success doing that."

Spence put forward the idea of Oakwood Collegiate hosting an Africentric high school alongside its standard curriculum. That

idea was controversial with some parents, who said it would segregate their children. One Africentric elementary school has already operated in Toronto for the past year and so far has generated positive results.

"We started with an elementary Africentric school and we've had a fair bit of success with that," he said. "We have a waiting list for those who want to get into that school. It's only been one year, but in that short time it's certainly shown to be making a difference. Now the community's asked us to extend that

and to make a pathway for those students to go to."

If an Africentric high school is created, Spence said the TDSB would set up a different curriculum.

The lesson plans would have a stronger focus on African heritage that, according to Spence, is important but not touched upon enough.

"The Africentric curriculum would have more to do with African heritage and the role they (students) play in creating the world we live in right now," he said.