



Dennis Wu // Observer

### Finishing touches

Construction workers reinforce the edge of the hill beside Pottery Road — one of the last steps in construction before the East York artery is reopened for traffic this coming Wednesday, Nov. 30. The road closed in May for reconstruction and was originally scheduled to reopen on Sept. 6, but instability was discovered in the hillside.

## Second Leaside ice rink delayed

By ALISSA RANDALL  
The Observer

Residents anticipating the construction of a new rink at Leaside Gardens will have to wait a while longer.

Construction of the first new city ice arena in 35 years was supposed to be underway already, but tenders received this fall to build the second rink at Leaside Memorial Community Gardens on Millwood Road have exceeded the \$9.5-million target, delaying the project.

Last week, a new funding plan was proposed at a meeting of stakeholders and city officials to keep the project moving forward.

Paul Mercer, chair of the Leaside Arena Expansion Committee, said construction bids submitted were higher than anticipated, by almost \$2.5 million. The city's original loan for the project was \$7 million.

The fall bids will soon expire, but even with retendering, it's agreed that significantly more money is needed.

Mercer said the city and province, through Infrastructure Ontario, are boosting contributions to the project. The amount of money Infrastructure Ontario will provide and other details of the revised funding model will be worked out soon, Mercer said, subject to approval by city council in January.

Mercer emphasized that it remains important for the community to meet its original \$2.5-million fundraising goal.

There's fewer than two months left for that, and the holidays and post-Christmas bills can make things difficult for fundraisers. But there's only about \$200,000 to go, according to Mercer.

"Although fundraising efforts will continue after Jan. 15, it's critical that we reach our original \$2.5 million target by that date in order to get city council approval and get a shovel in the ground as soon as possible," he said.

Mercer said the project has received donations from companies and individuals, including money raised from the Paul Henderson Jersey Tour, totaling about \$2.3 million.



● For more on this story, see [torontoobserver.ca](http://torontoobserver.ca)

# Proposal splits trustees

### Board approves opening of 2nd Africentric school

By KRISTIN ANNABLE  
The Observer

East York's public school trustees are divided on the notion of another Africentric school for Toronto.

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) hosted a packed house on Nov. 16 as board members debated the issue of opening a second Africentric school.

Present at the meeting were East York trustees Gerri Gershon (Don Valley West) and Sheila

Cary-Meagher (Beaches-East York). Cathy Dandy (Toronto-Danforth) participated via speakerphone.

The meeting was standing-room-only for the many residents anticipating the board's decision. Applause thundered when trustees spoke supportively of the school, while boos and negative comments were directed at any trustee opposed.

Gershon was one of the trustees speaking in opposition.

"I think there are many ways we can address kids that are having problems in schools. I have no problem separating them into classes," she said. "I can't support a school where kids are



■ Cathy Dandy

separated from each other."

Despite opposition from Gershon and other trustees, the motion to open an Africentric high school was approved, 14-6, prompting the crowded viewing gallery to erupt in celebration.

Cary-Meagher stated at

the meeting that she supports Africentric schools, but wants to see better integration of curriculums created at these schools with schools across Toronto.

"I think it important that we use the experience gathered from these schools to change the Eurocentric system used, then infuse it with the Africentric system," she said.

In September 2009, the TDSB opened its first Africentric elementary school at Sheppard Public School in North York. It is open to students of all races and teaches kindergarten to Grade 5. The new high school is projected to open in the fall of 2012 or 2013, at a site to be determined.

When it was Dandy's turn

to speak, she stressed the importance of building relationships between students and teachers.

"There is no evidence a modified curriculum would improve outcomes for students. But there is incredible evidence that a capacity for teachers to teach to their interests and strengths has value," she said. "We shouldn't isolate by race or gender if we were doing our job properly."

Gershon said she feels the alternative to the school is focusing more on why these students are not achieving:

"We have to somehow hook these kids and create a desire in them to see value in continuing and focusing on the school work."

## Meeting upstaged by pamphlet

By KRISTIN ANNABLE  
The Observer

Tension over Muslim prayer times at Valley Park Middle School surfaced again this week with an anonymous pamphlet circulated in advance of a

meeting organized by the school board trustee.

Gerri Gershon, the Toronto District School Board trustee for Ward 13/Don Valley West, had issued invitations for a Monday night meeting at the school, but the meeting

was overshadowed by the pamphlet, entitled "Segregation in Public Schools."

The pamphlet referred negatively to the way that males and females are separated during Muslim prayers.

The majority of students

at the school, on Overlea Boulevard, are Muslim. About 300 Muslim students used to leave the school and attend prayer sessions at a nearby mosque on Fridays. Principal Nickolas Stefanoff deemed this a health and

safety risk.

"These students would leave school property, where we would not be able to watch them," he said. "They would be gone for over an hour and a half,

■ See EAST, page 5

## WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

### Holiday food drive launched

Christmas collections for local food banks include one at the East York campus of Centennial College, located at 951 Carlaw Ave. (near Pape and Mortimer).

Drop off non-perishable foods in the main office, Room 101 of the campus, for the Daily Bread Food Bank.

Items most needed include: baby formula/food, canned fruit/vegetables, dry foods (pasta, rice, lentils, herbs, soup/sauce mix), coffee/powdered milk/tea/hot chocolate, peanut butter/jam.

Items may be dropped off from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. weekdays until Dec. 7.

### Say 'cheese' with Santa

Get your picture taken with Santa and shop for gifts this Sunday, Nov. 27, at the Stan Wadlow Clubhouse, 373 Cedarvale Ave.

Many vendors will feature hand-made products such as jewelry, home decor, jams, spa products and more. Entertainment will be provided by the East York Community Centre (EYCC) Arts Camp Singers and a belly dancer, Evyenia Karmi. Parking and admission are free.

Funds raised will go to The Weekend to End Women's Cancers. The event gets under way at 10:30 a.m. and wraps up at 3 p.m.

~ Leslie Marciniak

## ■ ARE YOU PREPARED?

# Taking a shot at the flu

Wash your hands frequently and get vaccinated, public health department advises

By OCTAVIAN LACATUSU  
The Observer

There's little worry so far about a 'flunami' this winter but health-care professionals say that's no excuse for forgoing the flu shots that began this month and continue into the new year.

Free shots started at the East York Civic Centre on Nov. 12, continued this past Saturday, and will resume a week from tomorrow (Dec. 3).

The clinics' hours are 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. and the civic centre is located at 850 Coxwell Ave. The shots continue on Dec. 10 and on Jan. 16.

The last clinic will run from 2 to 8 p.m.

Flu shots are also

available at many doctors' offices, some drug stores and even in some places of work and study at advertised clinics.

"The flu vaccine this year contains the same strains as last year, but we're recommending that the people who had their shots last year should have the vaccines done this year as well," said Dr. Michael Schwandt, public health and preventive medicine resident physician at the University of Toronto.

But there are other things that East Yorkers can also do to protect themselves and others from

the flu and run-of-the-mill colds.

According to the Toronto Public Health department, washing hands frequently is still one of the most effective techniques for stopping the spread of communicable illness.

So is properly covering up coughs and sneezes. And Schwandt recommended that those who are fighting a cold should stay at home to avoid spreading the sickness to classmates and co-workers.

For most people,

Schwandt said, the symptoms are things like lethargy, coughing and a runny nose.

But a mild case of the flu doesn't justify the risk of spreading it around: severe complications can still occur in children under two years of age and among the elderly and pregnant women.

Individuals with pre-existing respiratory problems such as lung diseases are the most at risk.

The immunization process takes some time after the shot. According to Schwandt, the vaccine takes two weeks or even slightly longer before the body's immune response comes into full effect.

"This is why we advise everyone to get themselves vaccinated as soon as possible, so that you're more likely to have full immunity," Schwandt said.

"A standard flu shot is known to provide protection for more than four months," he added, "though it generally begins to wear off by next year, so it's good to keep doing it."

Call 1-877-844-1944 or go to [www.toronto.ca/health](http://www.toronto.ca/health) for more information.

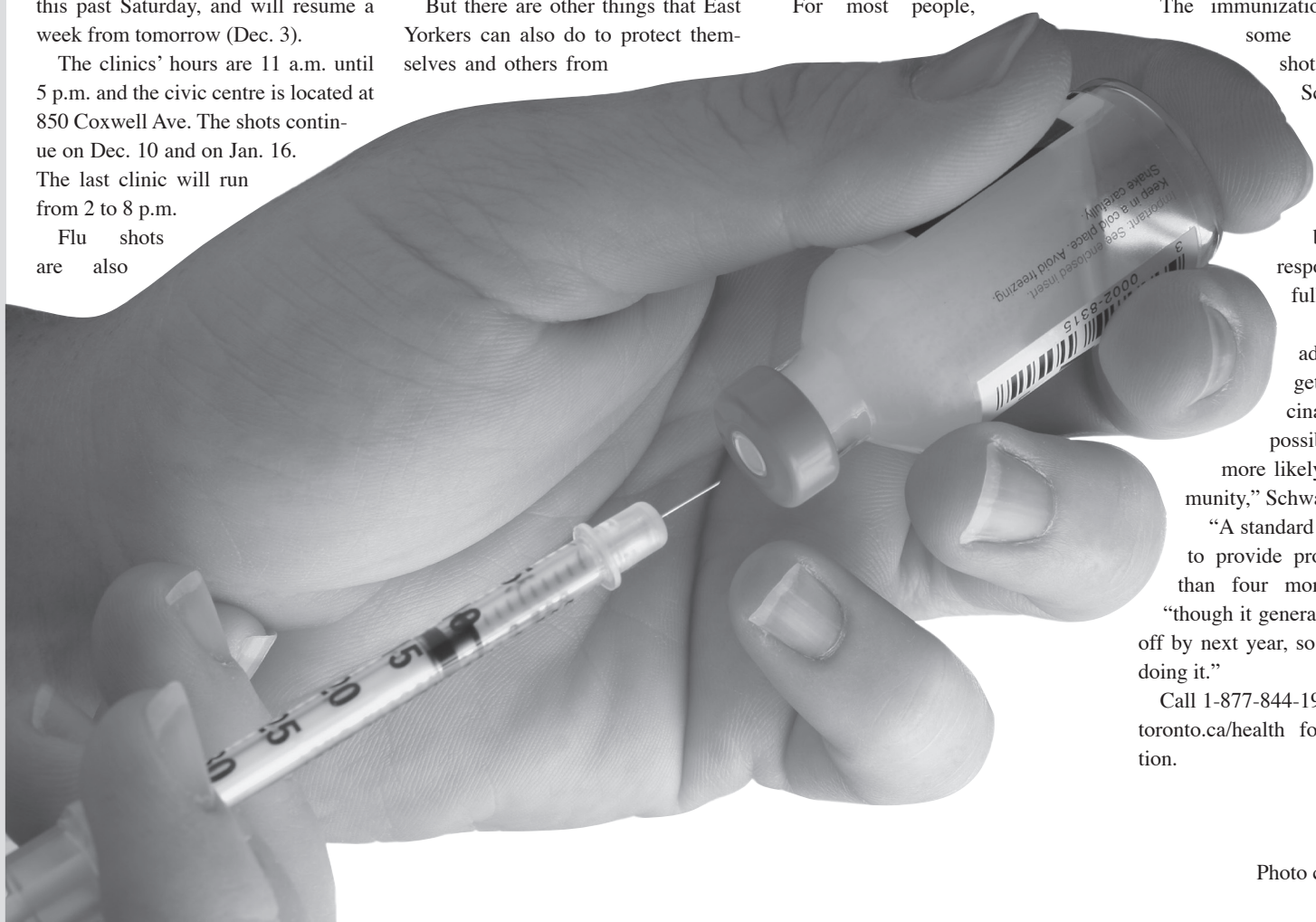


Photo courtesy of Fotolia

## A FEW FLU FACTS FOR YOU

- The virus can stay dormant for up to two days until a person becomes ill.
- Children under two years of age and seniors over 65 are encouraged to get the shot.
- The standard flu shot lasts for four months, after which it becomes less potent.
- It takes two weeks for the flu vaccine to create full immunity.
- People with pre-existing respiratory problems are the most at risk.
- Free flu shots clinics will be held Dec. 3 and 10 and Jan. 16 at the East York Civic Centre.

## Parents concerned after teacher arrested

By OCTAVIAN LACATUSU  
The Observer

About 200 parents attended a meeting at East York's Cosburn Middle School on Monday night addressing concerns over the arrest of a teacher allegedly in possession of child pornography.

James Robert Coulter, 41, was arrested on Nov. 17 after Toronto police received a search warrant for his home.

He is charged with three counts of possession of child pornography, one count of accessing child pornography and one count of attempting to access child pornography.

Coulter taught a split Grade 7/8 class and has been a teacher at the school since 2009 according to the school's spokesman, John Caldarone.

"There is concern about the troubling allegations, but at this point the charges don't

involve any students from the school. Also, the social work department is assisting, in case children have questions or concerns, so they have somebody that they can look to for support," he said.

Caldarone added that the meeting was an opportunity



■ Coulter

for parents to question police officers about the investigation and learn school procedures that guide staff when such allegations are made.

For Gayle and Wayne Fletcher, who have a daughter in her first year at the school, the allegations strike too close to home.

"This kind of thing happens in other places. This is right at home," Wayne Fletcher said, adding he felt

more relieved when police shared their investigation process.

Gayle Fletcher said parents shouldn't be afraid to be open with their children in providing guidance so that they can protect themselves.

"You try to protect your children... and you limit what you tell them," she said, but added: "You have to explain more than it is necessary. It's scary."



Braydon Keddie /// Observer

## It's the most craftiest time of year

Mary McGowan (right) helps the Catholic Women's League manage a craft sale fundraiser at St. Anselm's Parish in Leaside on Sunday, Nov. 6.

# Balls to the wall for E.Y. school

Controversial ball ban has parents and kids seeing red

By ANDRE WIDJAJA  
The Observer

A mother whose two children attend Earl Beatty Public School says that the use of balls has played a huge role in her Grade 8 son's childhood.

"They made all these games," Evelyn White said. "They were big on tennis balls with games like 'Stick

Ball' and 'Red A.'"

Last week, the school sent a letter home that prohibited the games from being played with anything but "Nerf"-style sponge balls.

The letter informed parents that hard balls, including baseballs, soccer balls, tennis balls and footballs were no longer allowed on the schoolyard.

The ban was the result of an accident where a parent suffered a concussion after being hit with a ball.

About 100 students protested last week to get their balls back, and White agreed

that the ban is an overreaction by the school.

"They need some kind of balls," she said. "They need something to play with or else they're just going to be playing with pine cones."

But Beaches-East York school trustee Sheila Cary-Meagher said that the school had to act quickly after the parent's injury.

"I think it could've been handled in a different way," she said. "But I also think the principal was in a position where she needed to get people's attention, and she sure did."

Cary-Meagher said that the schoolyard is too small and parents along with teachers get caught in the middle of the games being played.

The ban has garnered international media attention, including mentions on the Rush Limbaugh radio show and on Saturday Night Live.

The school has organized a community meeting for this coming Monday, Nov. 28, in its lunchroom.

Organizers hope the meeting will help facilitate discussion among parents and faculty to table other options and a plan for the future.

## COMMUNITY

# Hospital staff dances to build bridges

By FARHANA UDDIN  
The Observer

It was a fall evening of music and dancing for Toronto East General Hospital staff at their first fundraiser for the Building Bridges program — a day-treatment plan within the hospital's Child and Adolescent Mental Health unit.

The program aims to help children aged 12 to 18 who have difficulty attending school due to mental illness.

Program nurse Janet Gunthro says a teacher comes to the hospital to help children develop better study skills.

"It's a therapeutic program that also has academics, so children are able to earn school credit," she said, adding that many children in the program haven't attended school in at least two years.

Donations received at the fundraiser, held at Remarks Bar and Grill on Coxwell Avenue, will go toward paying for transportation and community outings.

"If the kids haven't been

attending school, then they also haven't been engaging with others socially," Gunthro said. "So we want to take them out more, get them interested in their community."

The money also helps pay for the program's breakfast plan.

"We previously noticed that the kids would arrive in the morning and they were hungry, falling asleep and were not able to learn," she said. "So this will also help pay for nutritious food."

The hospital raised just over \$700 through its initial fundraiser.

"We had some nice donations from people at the party," said Theresa Downton, Child and Adolescent Mental Health secretary.

She added that the fundraiser accepted unwrapped gifts for children and teens as admission.



Further East York coverage at [torontoobserver.ca](http://torontoobserver.ca)

# Singalong strikes a chord with the community

By NATASHA JAFERI  
The Observer

"The Mustard Seed" isn't exactly a name that conjures thoughts of melody and harmony. But on Nov. 8, about 30 people living around the southwest corner of East York gathered to exercise their vocal chords at the venue with the counter-intuitive name.

The Mustard Seed is an outreach centre in Riverdale, and about 30 people of varying ages and backgrounds filled a room inside on that Tuesday night to first mingle and then sing.

Jenny Crober, a pianist and the artistic director of the East York Choir, accompanied the group.

The get-together was billed as a Neighbourhood Singalong, one of a series organized across Canada in

conjunction with Canada Sings, a low-key, Toronto-based organization whose website summarizes its manifesto: "We celebrate the joy of communal singing throughout Canada by welcoming all to come and sing their favourite songs."

The Neighbourhood Singalong label is self-explanatory; the idea is simply to hold neighbourhood singalongs across Canada that are easily accessible and non-threatening to pitch-imperfect vocalists.

The Nov. 8 event started at 7 p.m., with group leader Mark Bell guiding participants through various tunes — from *Ode to Joy* to *Love me Tender*.

A vice-principal by day and song leader by night, Bell has been running regular local singalongs since last year.

"A group of us got together and talked about wanting to get people to sing for fun," he said.

"It's not a choir and you don't have to come into rehearsal.... A lot of people have talked to us and say, 'I don't have time in my busy life to join a choir and do two hours a week rehearsal, but I still want to sing and have singing in my life.'"

The group meets the second Tuesday of each month for one hour to sing, at changing locations. A listing can be found at [canadasings.ca](http://canadasings.ca), under "Find a Singalong."

"It's fun," said Crober, the East Yorker accompanying the group on piano, "and for me — my choir is a lot of work. I do two, three hours of rehearsal a week. So coming here, it's much more relaxed."



Natasha Jaferi /// Observer

Mark Bell, wearing the white "Canada Sings!" T-shirt, leads the local group of choristers with universal jingles.



Photography by Shannon Keller /// Observer

Sara Shields' artwork is on display in the Corridor Gallery of Centennial College's East York campus. This is her first solo exhibition and all of her pieces are for sale. The show is running over the next two weeks and is open to the public.

# Former student goes solo

Centennial hopes others will discover Corridor Gallery

By SHANNON KELLER  
The Observer

There's an aptly titled exhibition on display at a little-known East York art gallery.

The show is called "The Movement Meets You

Halfway," and the artist as well as the gallery's curator hope East Yorkers will do just that — and discover not only Sara Shields and her art, but the Corridor Gallery too.

The Corridor Gallery is familiar to students at the East York campus of Centennial College. Located at the north end of the second floor in the building located at 951 Carlaw Ave., the space regularly hosts art by students, faculty and even



For more East York stories, visit us online at [torontoobserver.ca](http://torontoobserver.ca)

local artists.

But now and over the next two weeks, the gallery is experiencing a first. The current exhibition is the premier show there by a graduate of the college.

"I'm proud on Sara's behalf," said David

McClyment, the co-ordinator of the art program at the campus, and curator of the Corridor Gallery.

"She is the first student graduate to actually come back into the school and mount a solo exhibition of her work, and not only is

she the first student to do that, this is her first solo exhibition. So that's amazing that she's done it."

For her part, the artist said she's thrilled to have her first solo exhibition. Shields said she's received positive feedback since the show opened.

"I know there's something in my art that really speaks to people. I think it looks amazing on the walls and I think it will inspire the

art students that are now at Centennial to not give up on what they're doing," she said.

Shields is 21 years old but already displays a mature and sophisticated style. McClyment said her art shows "conceptual focus."

The exhibition and sale are open to the public, and McClyment added that this is a special opportunity to purchase artwork of a high calibre at a low price.

# Despite dire times, true love packs a punch

By FARHANA UDDIN  
The Observer

Through good times and bad, wins and losses, punches and scrapes, victories and championships, Miranda Jollymore and East York-born Ibrahim Kamal promise to always be in each other's corner.

Such are the vows the couple took at their wedding — held inside a boxing ring.

The couple, well known in the world of Canadian boxing, tied the knot Nov. 20 at the same place they met four years ago: the Cabbagetown Boxing Club.

Jollymore recalled how Kamal stuck by her after a 2008 spinal cord injury that brought an end to her competitive boxing aspirations. At the time, Kamal was still representing Canada in the amateur league.

"He was travelling a lot and I was sad that I was injured," she said. "But I

remember when I needed surgery, he dropped everything and drove back from Montreal to see me. That's when I realized, 'Wow, this guy really loves you.'"

At 26, Kamal is an eight-time Canadian National Boxing Champion with a 6-0 record since turning pro. Jollymore, 33, is a boxing instructor and former competitive boxer who started a charity called MJKO to help educate youth in Toronto's at-risk areas.

Jollymore comforted and encouraged Kamal, he said, especially after he retired from the amateurs and turned pro in 2011.

"That was a difficult time for me because I was overwhelmed with the business side of pro boxing and felt like people were trying to use me," he said. "But she was always there, reassuring me and telling me that I have all the time in the world to think things through."

Both took an interest in boxing after enduring abuse in their lives, they said.

Kamal learned to fight in the early '90s when he and his family were living in Libya. A tiny-framed kid, Kamal was often bullied and beaten by other children at school, he said.

"It started with me learning to defend myself, and also my brother and sister," he said. "I'm the oldest so I felt that I needed to take care of them."

For his bride, however, boxing came later in life.

Jollymore was always into sports, she said, but hadn't considered boxing until years after being raped when she was 15.

"I did a lot of sports but no type of self-defence, so I decided to learn how to box," she said. "It was boxing that gave me the courage to tell anybody what had happened to me. It taught me how to hold my head high and defend myself."



Photo courtesy of Rick Bender

Boxers Miranda Jollymore and Ibrahim Kamal exchanged vows on Nov. 20 at the same place they met four years ago: the Cabbagetown Boxing Club.

# Community policing starts with a 'hello'

By OCTAVIAN LACATUSU  
The Observer

On a late-night shift 21 years ago, Peter Sloly, an officer with 54 Division, was in his squad car and saw a mother and young daughter standing at the corner of Gledhill and Lumsden in the cold November rain.

Surprised, Sloly turned around, pulled in front of the woman and rolled down the window.

As the woman burst into tears, he found out she was involved in a domestic incident with her husband and had nowhere to go.

Sloly, now deputy chief of the Toronto Police Executive Command, said it was for the first time he'd understood that policing was more than just locking up the bad guy.

During a community meeting last Monday at D.A. Morrison Middle School, Sloly said it all starts with a hello.

"There is a need to reach out in the most honest and most inconvenient circumstances and say hello," he said.

"Use that to break the ice and help provide some public service to the people that need help."

Sloly explained that networking and communication is crucial in any community.

"Our most important force is people. We don't work in isolation, these are networked relationships."

"Schools work with hospitals and work with the local police, that's how healthy communities function," he said.

According to Sloly, despite increased police efficiency and lower crime rates, fear of crime is going up while trust in police is going down.

Sloly added that the problem doesn't end with the public's perception of police. "We don't trust each other like we used to," he said.

"We don't hold a beer across a fence or settle simple disputes. We stay inside, we don't go outside and we don't call the police sometimes when we should call the police."

Sloly said when police do arrive, the public is often reluctant to co-operate.

"When the police arrive, we don't even trust the police to help us," he said. "We don't give them the necessary information, so as a result, crimes go unsolved."

Sloly believes the next step in community policing is involving modern media and technology, and the youth that use them.



Aneta Tasheva/// Observer

Joel Salatin signs a copy of his new book, *Folks, This Ain't Normal: A Farmer's Advice for Happier Hens, Healthier People, and a Better World*. The Evergreen Brick Works hosted an event on Nov. 9 where Salatin discussed his ideas about food and farming.

# From farm to fork

By ANETA TASHEVA  
The Observer

Joel Salatin believes that in a perfect world, people who don't live on farms would still dabble in livestock — chickens in particular. This way, more people would have access to organic eggs... and keeping the chickens wouldn't cost more than other "pets."

"The average dog eats as much, and poops as much, as 11 chickens," Salatin said.

On Nov. 9, the Evergreen Brick Works hosted Salatin

for a talk and book-signing event. Salatin, who runs a family-owned farm in Virginia, spoke about his new book, *Folks, This Ain't Normal: A Farmer's Advice for Happier Hens, Healthier People, and a Better World*. He also took questions posed by spectators.

One audience member inquired whether several chickens could provide enough eggs for an average family. Salatin responded that if people limit the production of eggs to meet their own needs, the chickens would lay a sufficient number

of eggs. He added that people wouldn't find it difficult to find food for the chickens.

"Almost any kitchen, if you're in there a lot, cooking from unprocessed food... will generate enough scraps — meat, vegetable peelings — to keep enough chickens going for the eggs for that same kitchen," Salatin said, "and that was historically the role of chickens."

In sharing his experiences at Polyface Farm, a pasture-based, beyond organic, local-market farm, Salatin hopes to

encourage North Americans to eat natural foods. He believes Canadians and Americans eat similarly in that they generally consume too much processed food. This is dangerous to the health of consumers as well as future generations. His generation is the first in history to experiment with abnormality in food, Salatin said.

At the Brick Works' farmer's market, staff strives to make a connection between farmers and consumers, said spokesperson Anthony Westenberg.



Leslie Marciniak /// Observer

Fresh pizza is made to order at Pizzeria Libretto. The west-end's popular, upscale pizza restaurant opened its eagerly anticipated second location on Nov. 21 on Danforth Avenue, just west of Carlaw.

# East York trustee defends Valley Park prayer sessions

'We're not the first school to do this': Gershon

Cont'd. from page 1

and some wouldn't return."

So the school began allocating space for prayer, and that led to protests — including a rally at Queen's Park this past summer.

"There is a gender issue related to prayer," Stefanoff conceded, but he added: "At the end of the day, it is a choice for these students whether they want to go to

prayer or not."

Gershon said that she appreciated the level of civility at her Monday night meeting, and that people made excellent points on both sides of the argument.

She called it another step in religious accommodation in the public school system. "Many felt that with this, our public schools are no longer secular. Yet we accommodate other students' religious practices," she said.

"We allow Sikhs to wear the kirpan, we don't schedule tests during Jewish religious holidays

and we honour aboriginal practices."

In answering criticism that the space for prayer times disrupts things non-practising students, Gershon said that the opposite is true.

"Now they all come back at the same time, and instead of being gone for over an hour, they come back after 30 minutes," she said.

"We are not the first school to do this. This has been happening for over three years all across Toronto. It helps keeps students in the public school system."

## EDITORIALS

## Support cyclists

**"I can't support bike lanes. Roads are built for buses, cars and trucks. My heart bleeds when someone gets killed, but it's their own fault at the end of the day."**

— Rob Ford, 2007

The war against cyclists continues. Many drivers see them as a nuisance. Mayor Rob Ford wants to cut bike lanes. And the layout of the city makes cycling more dangerous.

The death of Jenna Morrison earlier this month — killed in an accidental collision with a truck at the western edge of downtown Toronto — has highlighted how in this war, the bicyclists are losing.

East Yorkers are reminded of the death of Jack Roper, 84, in August. He died after his bike collided with a car at the busy intersection of Greenwood Avenue and Plains Road.

This is a congested city. But the congestion comes from cars and trucks, not from bicycles. And to suggest that cyclists get off the road will only increase traffic. If they're forced out from behind their handlebars, many will have no choice but to get behind the driver's wheel — escalating the bumper battle.

The Toronto Bike Plan released by the city under then-mayor David Miller called for a doubling of bicycle trips in the city by 2011. It also called for improved safety measures.

In truth, under the Ford administration, very little has been done to continue the work started 10 years ago. In 2007, then-councillor Ford opposed using city funds to build bicycle lanes. Since becoming mayor, Ford has successfully scrapped the Jarvis Street bike lane construction and his bike plan released in July did not include any additional lanes or enhancements.

Cycling advocate and councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong has called for a physical separation between roads and bike lanes. But that proposal too is being essentially ignored.

People can hold as many vigils as they want. But until the municipal government revives the original Toronto Bike Plan or something very similar, until the government supports initiatives that work in co-operation with the cyclists it's currently content to demonize, nothing will change.

Soon, the sad sight of ghost bicycles — bikes painted white and secured at roadsides to memorialize fallen cyclists — will become a regular feature along our streets.

~ Kristin Annable

## COLUMNS

## Not-so-real reality TV

TLC's new series, *All-American Muslim*, has sparked a torrent of negative reactions. The show depicts the large Muslim community in Dearborn, Michigan — a suburb of Detroit. And alongside some praise, there's been a chorus of hateful comments since the first episode last week.

Critics, some sounding like they're from fringe groups, argue the show is whitewashing Islam and misleading Americans about the true nature of the religion.

Apparently if you're not primitive, violent and barbaric, you can't be Muslim.

Sorry for not fitting into the stereotypical mold of what Hollywood and mainstream media perpetuate as Muslim.

As with other religions, Islamic practices differ from person to person and from region to region.

But this simple concept of variation is proving too difficult to swallow for some.

People are often shocked to hear that I'm from Afghanistan, and Muslim.

I've been told I cannot possibly be a Muslim because I wear sleeveless shirts and

shorts, and I swim and ride a bike.

Other bizarre comments: I'm not the right colour for someone from Afghanistan. I'm not brown enough. I'm not white enough. I'm not Asian enough. I'm too beautiful. Some don't realize that Afghanistan is an ethnically diverse society.

## Alima Hotakie



I even recall one cheeky remark several years ago, when a man inquired that if I were Afghan, why was I without a headscarf and a moustache? (Presumably, his false notion of Afghan women included images of them rolled in cloth and dipped in excessive facial hair.)

Within my own family there is considerable diversity. Among my relatives are some who are secular, some who are devout Muslims and even some practising Buddhists.

I have cousins who wear the hijab. And I have cousins who've married Dutch people, Swedes, Germans, blacks — and others who have opted to marry within their own culture and faith.

So while *All-American Muslim* limits its focus to one group of Muslims in one American community, its depiction is a refreshing alternative to the usual post-9/11 representations of Muslims.

At least this show provides viewers with a glimpse of reality that is closer to the Muslim-American experience than the narrative that sustains false and uniform images of Muslims as extremists and terrorists.

## Olympic dreams

Are East Yorkers and the rest of Toronto ready for another Olympic bid?

The Pan American Games' arrival in Toronto is still more than three years off but that hasn't stopped east-end councillor Michael Thompson from dreaming aloud about The Big One: the Summer Olympic Games in 2024.

Thompson suggested that the city's experience with the Pan Am Games could lead, in turn, to an Olympic bid. While the Ford brothers running city hall haven't climbed on-board this proposal so far, it has become an interesting topic for discussion in city circles.

The Pan Am Games, and the companion games for athletes with disabilities, the Parapan Am Games, will run from July 10 to Aug. 14, 2015. Between now and then, a lot has to happen across southern Ontario: improvements to Toronto's transit system, the swimming pool at the Scarborough campus of the University of Toronto, the Hamilton stadium, a state-of-the-art track and field facility and more.

But while we all hope that Toronto's mounting of the Pan Am Games will do the city and its original bid proud, we shouldn't push our luck. The Ford administration has signaled its hostility to the kind of municipal infrastructure that would be required for a successful Olympic bid and staging of the Games. City hall's current embrace of car culture over public transit is just the most obvious example. Can you imagine a city that is already near permanent traffic gridlock trying to move hundreds of thousands of people between the airport and hotels and athletic venues with the world-class efficiency that would be required?

Councillor Thompson feels the economy and city will be vastly different by the time the bid is due. We doubt it. But even if it is, whatever money is then available will surely be needed to repair the tatters in the civic fabric that are already starting to show.

Borrow money for more stadiums and swimming pools (and hope we won't have to spend 30 years paying it back like Montreal did)? How about spending whatever we may have on more daycares and nursing homes (and everything in between) instead.

The Olympics are a shiny pipe dream that a lot of Torontonians would like to see come true. But even with the Pan Am Games, Toronto should probably continue to keep the Olympics in their place: Dreamland.

~ Lloyd Quansah

## Mental health and teens

About one in five teens have mental health problems that need to be addressed. But of those, only 20 per cent (again, one in five) are able to access the services that they need.

These are the statistics that I

## Alissa Randall



got from Myra Levy, the clinical services director for East Metro Youth Services.

On Nov. 1, her agency opened up a new mental health space called the "What's up" walk-in clinic, where teens aged 12-18 can see a therapist for free. The clinic is open five days a week, no appointment is necessary and no health card is needed.

The provincial Ministry of Child and Youth Services recently acknowledged that Ontario teens needing help face long waiting lists — from six months to a year.

So it's great that East Metro Youth Services is addressing this — although the new clinic at 1200 Markham Road near Ellesmere isn't exactly convenient for East York youth — and some serious initiatives closer to home would be equally welcome.

Clearly, it has already taken too long to move mental health among youth higher on our list of social priorities. The current waiting lists only contribute to the severity of the problem that a teen might be facing in his or her life. It means that a teen in need

may have to delay working out an issue for weeks or months. And in that time, small problems can dramatically escalate.

Consider the spate of tragedies involving Ontario teenagers lately. In Ottawa, a gay teen committed suicide after he was bullied online and at school, after he attempted to start a Rainbow Club.

In Mississauga, a teen allegedly killed his best friend in a murder-suicide. And there have been other terrible tragedies that might have been averted had the teens involved reached out for help and had help been available.

I continue to hope that youth and mental health will climb up our city's and province's priority list.

We need more services like East Metro Youth Services' What's Up clinic — that youth can access without worrying about appointments or whether they have their health cards with them.

We want our youth to be successful and happy. And part of that is wanting our youth to be able to reach out for professional help at a moment's notice.



Geoffrey Mosher/// Observer

Cutback proposals for city libraries have included a 9.5-hours-per-week reduction at the Pape-Danforth branch. The library board has voted against those cuts, but city council will decide.

# Libraries facing cuts

By GEOFFREY MOSHER  
The Observer

Despite a 29-per-cent increase in library usage over the last 10 years, the Toronto Public Library is being forced to propose service and spending cuts before the end of the year.

Mayor Rob Ford has requested a 10-per-cent budget reduction from every department — possibly reducing the library budget by nearly \$17 million.

The Toronto Public Library held one of seven community consultation meetings on Nov. 13 to allow community members to give input on the proposed budget cuts. The

meeting was hosted by the director of branch libraries Anne Bailey, as well as Mary Fragedakis, the city councillor for Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth, and her colleague, Ward 30 councillor Paula Fletcher.

About 50 residents came to discuss the proposed reductions at the Pape-Danforth library branch. There was a simultaneous meeting at the S. Walter Stewart branch.

Fletcher questioned the wisdom of such cuts and wondered why the cuts have been imposed unevenly.

“Ten per cent is the number the city manager and Mayor Ford asked all departments to meet. Remember, the police did not meet theirs,” she said. “How can the library board make their 10 per cent without making service cuts? Is the 5.7 per cent (already found) enough? What happens after this year? Will it

happen again next year or the year after?”

Bailey reviewed proposed cuts to hours and services in an attempt to understand how the changes could affect citizens and the community. The proposed hour cuts would see the Pape-Danforth and S. Walter Stewart branches lose 9.5 hours per week. Both branches would open at 12:30 instead of 9 a.m. on Mondays and Thursdays and would close at 5 on Fridays instead of at 8:30 p.m.

Bailey said these changes would affect a wide demographic. She said that different times of day are important to different groups of people, with mornings being more important for seniors and children and evenings and weekends more important for students and youth.

Bailey also said that the other portion of the mandated

budget reduction will come from a 12-per-cent cut in purchases for the library’s collections of materials.

“This will mean fewer copies of books purchased, longer wait times for holds and fewer titles purchased.”

On Monday, the library board rejected cuts to hours and asked staff to look into further layoffs and other measures instead.

City council will make the final decision on the type and extent of cuts.

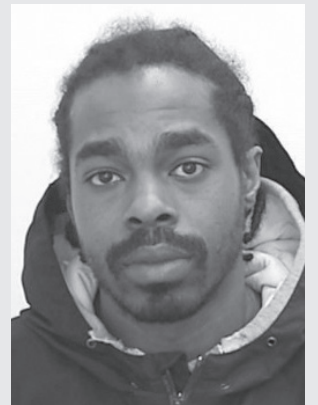
“You might think there is no hope, but library users giving their opinions are making a difference,” Bailey said.

More information, including the presentations from both the Pape-Danforth and S. Walter Stewart consultations, can be found at <http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/about-the-library/budget-2012-survey.jsp>

## POLICE & CRIME

### Police seeking man, 30, in connection with guns case

The Major Crime Unit of Toronto police’s 54 Division, in conjunction with the Canada Border Services Agency and the TPS Guns and Gangs Unit, executed a search warrant on Nov. 10 at a home in the Dawes Road and Danforth Avenue area.



■ KERI McKNIGHT

Muna El Badri, 23, of Toronto, faces 185 charges, including importing or exporting a prohibited weapon knowing it is unauthorized, possession of a prohibited weapon for the purpose of trafficking, possession of a prohibited weapon and careless storage of ammunition.

Police say that they seized a pistol, a machine gun and 100 stun guns disguised as cellphones.

Police are still looking for another person in connection with the case: 30-year-old Keri McKnight of Toronto. They say he should be considered armed and dangerous.

Anyone with information on his whereabouts is asked to contact police at 416-808-5400, Crime Stoppers anonymously at 416-222-TIPS (8477), online at [www.222tips.com](http://www.222tips.com), or text TOR and your message to CRIMES (274637), or Leave A Tip on Facebook.

### Motorist learns gas pumps are not drive-throughs

A car drove into a Shell gas station near Coxwell Avenue and O’Connor Drive early Saturday morning and crashed into one of the gas pumps, starting a fire.

The vehicle left the scene, but police apprehended a man a short time later and charged him with drunk driving. Firefighters extinguished the fire and nobody was hurt.

### Women taken to hospital after being struck by van

Two women were taken to hospital with serious injuries after they were struck by a cube van on Don Mills Road just north of Overlea Boulevard on Nov. 16.

Police say the women were pedestrians crossing from the northbound into the southbound lanes when they were struck by a Ford van with U-Haul markings.

The accident occurred at 5:37 p.m., and Don Mills Road was closed temporarily while it was investigated.

~ Octavian Lacatusu

## YOUR SAY

### How would the library cuts affect you?



Barry KERR

‘Instead of going home, I can come here and read magazines. It’s peace and quiet and it’s a necessity for a city.’



Eva LAM

‘I would have nowhere else to go because I come here twice a day; it is a large part of my life.’



Krista JAMES

‘The less hours, the less available the library is to everyone. People get used to going at particular times. It makes it inconvenient for everyone.’

## MUSIC



Natasha Jaferi // Observer

Jenny Crober, artistic director of the East York Choir, leads its members in a rehearsal for the upcoming "Winter Solstice" concert. It will be held on Dec. 3 at Eastminster United Church.

## Singing a song of winter

By NATASHA JAFERI  
The Observer

With only 13 days left until their Winter Solstice concert, the East York Choir met for an extended rehearsal on Monday night.

About 85 choir members sat inside the sanctuary of Eastminster United Church at Danforth and Jackman avenues, singing songs from different eras and languages. Among them were special guests Les Allt, who accompanied the choir with an Irish flute, and Charlie Roby, who played mandolin.

Jenny Crober, artistic director of the choir, led the group — and if she heard any imperfections during rehearsal, she'd stop the choir and they would start over again.

"The character changes and if you get the character, the tempo will take care itself," Crober said to the choir.

"We started this repertoire in September and it's not a long season; we don't have many weeks to pull all these pieces together. It's

quite a challenge," she said. "All together there are 17 songs and some of them are quite long."

With the East York Choir celebrating its 25th anniversary, there are a few treats for concertgoers. Among the 17 songs, one stands out and is very dear to the choir.

British Columbia composer Stephen Hatfield created the song *Winter Solstice* for the East York Choir.

"It's very exciting. Never, ever has this choir had this honour and not only that, but Stephen Hatfield, who's composed this for us, is the finest choral composer in North America, if not the world," Crober said. "It's just an incredible honour to have him do this for us."

Choir member Michael Pollard, 45, expressed how much he enjoyed the workshop with Hatfield.

"We're highlighting amazing Canadian composers, especially Stephen Hatfield," Pollard said. "It's really great to get inside a head of a composer and hear where he's thinking about his mu-

sic. And when he starts to put his passion on every note, you can't help but sing it in a special way."

Crober has been with the choir since the early '90s and was hired as a conductor in 2004. She wants to let people know what to expect during the concert.

"We have a real variety. We do early music, music from the 16th century. We do many songs in different languages; we do Latin, French, German in this concert.

You hear sort of a folk music in some of them and others are much more classical, so it's a real mix," Crober said. "I always mix stuff up and I always bring in some wonderful guest artists. And the founder of the choir, Stephanie Piercey-Beames, is the soloist, and she's from Gatineau, Quebec."

The concert takes place Saturday, Dec. 3 at 7:30 p.m. at Eastminster United Church, 310 Danforth Ave. The audience will include Stephen Hatfield, who will attend to hear the performance of his work.

## CONCERT NOTES

Members of the East York Choir will hold their Winter Solstice concert on Saturday, Dec. 3 at 7:30 p.m.

The event will take place at Eastminster United Church, 310 Danforth Ave.

They will perform the song *Winter Solstice*, which was written for them by British Columbia composer Stephen Hatfield.

## Have a few laughs at Eton House

By LESLIE MARCINIAK  
The Observer

*Standing on the Danforth*, Eton House's popular Tuesday open mic night, celebrates its seventh anniversary next month with jokes, drinks, and even a cake.

In a city littered with open mic nights that come and go, many agree that the show's host, Jo-Anna Downey, is the reason the room, at Danforth and Eton avenues, is a draw not only for humour-savvy regulars, but returning comics too.

Downey also hosts the popular *Spirit's Comedy Night* on Wednesdays, but expressed her fondness for the intimate crowd at the Tuesday show.

"I have an interesting relationship with my Tuesday show audience. I have to have a good show for them," she said.

Tyler Morrison, creative director for the Cottage Country Comedy Festival, credits Downey's rapport with the audience for the longevity of her shows.

"Jo-Anna builds a really good community with her shows," he said.

Comedian Hunter Collins has appeared on *MuchMusic's Video on Trial* and tours the country performing sketch and stand-up. He said he enjoys his time on the Eton House stage.

"You can't do the same jokes twice here; the crowd remembers you," he said.

Over the years, many well-known comedians have graced the East York stage, including Derek Edwards, Debra DiGiovanni, Nikki Payne, Kenny Robinson, Mike Wilmot and Hannibal Bures, who has written for *30 Rock* and *Saturday Night Live*.

The seventh anniversary show is on Tuesday, Dec. 13 at 9 p.m. Comics on the bill include Kate Davis, Rob Pue, Ryan Belleville, Mark Walker, Cleve Jones, Cal Post, Hunter Collins, Martha O'Neill and Mike Wilmot.

## Club's biggest fan has houseful of artwork

### Loves to mix and match paintings from shows

By DENNIS WU  
The Observer

The interior of Janice Palmer's three-story house is plastered with paintings. While some might say her home is cluttered, she says it is interesting.

"Most of the paintings I have in my house show something about my own personality either in the subject or the colours," she said, "and so it's really a portrait of myself all the way around the house."

Palmer frequents the Don Valley Art Club's (DVAC) art shows to maintain her passion.

The DVAC is holding its Large and Small Picture Show 2011 at the Paper Mill Gallery at Todmorden Mills Heritage Site on Pottery Road until this Sunday, Nov. 27. The club has a long history in the Toronto art scene, at

over 60 years old with more than 170 members.

After a quick walk around the gallery, Palmer's eyes fell on three paintings. The first was a vibrant red, orange and yellow painting of trees in autumn. The other two paintings featured broad, vertical, brown strokes and a tree drawn in black ink, respectively.

While there are paintings all over her house, there is a method to her madness.

"I intermix types, but I tend to keep colours together," she said. "I have a huge red one on the third floor so this autumn one will go with it."

The ink drawing will be matched with a similar one already in her bathroom. She has yet to decide where the brown painting will go.

While she admires and buys paintings, she admits that her art skills are lacking.

"I can't draw a damn thing!" she said. "But I appreciate what others can do."

The talented artists behind the paintings were also present at the show.

Maureen Morrison is a DVAC member

who showcased a \$2,000 painting titled *Winter Warmth*. It is a large, white and light blue painting of her and her husband's condo in Muskoka Bay.

"I was trying to capture winter and our place. We've been doing a lot of construction work so the look on the exterior is changing," Morrison said. "So I went back to the first time I ever saw this place, which was 13 or 15 years ago and painted it as it was then just so I have the record."

She said painting is her passion and that selling a piece of work she likes can be difficult.

"By the time that you paint them it becomes like a child. You don't want to part with it. But yes, it is for sale," Morrison said.

She said a good painting is one where the painter paints something they like.

"This is opposed to going to schools and the teacher tells you to paint a road and a colour tree, but it's not yours," she said. "You have to make the subject yourself."



Dennis Wu // Observer

Maureen Morrison poses beside her painting, *Winter Warmth*, at the Don Valley Art Club show.