



Triple murder shocks East York

Abused woman fighting for custody of two sons, women's shelter reveals

By ERICA RAE CHONG
The Observer

A woman killed in Saturday's triple homicide was trying to leave a violent relationship and was fighting for custody of her kids, according to a spokesperson for Dr. Roz's Healing Place, an abused women's centre.

The woman was one of three victims found dead around 4:45 p.m. on Saturday on the third floor of an apartment building at 85 Thorncliffe Park Dr. Police publicly identified the victims on Monday as Zahra Mohamoud Abdille, 43, and her two sons Faris Abdille, 13, and Zain Abdille, 8.

Police discovered the grisly scene shortly after a man fell to his death onto the Don Valley Parkway (DVP) less than two kilometres away.

The man was identified on Wednesday as Yusuf Abdille, the husband and father of the murder victims.

Abdille reportedly stayed at the centre's shelter between July 10 and July 23 last year while she battled for custody over her sons. Her efforts were unsuccessful and she was forced to seek a place to live on the private market, as she did not qualify for affordable housing due to her income. It is unclear if Abdille returned home to her husband because she couldn't afford to rent a place.

"This is a systemic issue about eligibility and support," said Nawal Al-Busaidi, manager of Family Child and Youth Services at the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office.

Al-Busaidi organized Tuesday's community vigil for the family. She spoke yesterday to the East York Observer about the universality of the problem of domestic violence.

"Women of all races, races, cultures, and religions go through this," she said.

The Observer spoke to 10 residents at 85 Thorncliffe Park Dr. earlier this week, and all of them expressed shock over the incident.

"I came back from work around 7:30 p.m. and there were 10 cop cars in front of our building. It was really busy and

■ See NEIGHBOURS, page 2

FATAL FIRE



Stephanie Hinds /// The Observer

Fire officials are still investigating, after a Withrow Avenue house was reduced to rubble in a three-alarm blaze on Nov. 21. The occupant, an 81-year-old woman, was found dead on the remains of the main floor.

'I saw the fire from a window'

HGTV host summons help as neighbour's home burns to ground

By STEPHANIE HINDS
The Observer

Two local house fires in recent weeks have left one woman dead and raised concerns about safety and hoarding.

In the first case, an 81-year-old woman was found dead in the rubble of her East York-area home after a three-alarm blaze on Nov. 21.

The three-storey home at 282 Withrow Ave., just outside East York's southwest corner, was completely destroyed. Toronto Fire Division Commander Andrew

Kostiuk confirmed that firefighters found the woman's body on what was left of the home's main floor.

It is believed the owner of the home, whom area residents identified as Andjelka Starcevic, was a hoarder.

"She was at the front of the building, ground floor, much like we suspected," Kostiuk told reporters. "She was said to have been using a walker, so we didn't think she'd be up in one of the bedrooms."

Sebastian Clovis, a Withrow Avenue resident, was awakened by the light of the blaze.

"I saw the fire from a window and called the police. Then I started ringing people's doorbells to try and help," he told reporters. Clovis is familiar to viewers of HGTV as one of the network's hosts.

Fire officials say the blaze likely began in the basement or on the first floor of the home. It burned so intensely that the roof collapsed, and homes on either side of it will also need repair. The siding of one home began to peel due to the heat.

The entire side of the other home is being replaced, and the front window had to be broken during a rescue effort. There is visible soot and ash on the exterior of both homes.

As the fire on Withrow escalated from a two-alarm to a three-alarm blaze, firefighters were called from another fire downtown to assist in fighting the flames.

At one point, there were 15 trucks on the scene.

"I work 12-hour shifts from Friday to Sunday, so when I came

back and saw all the commotion, that's when I found out," says Tahir Hiro, who lives on Bain Avenue, one street north of Withrow.

The fire was completely out by noon, but emergency vehicles remained on the scene for much of the day.

Then a forensic identification specialist and a crane arrived to assist in lifting the debris and searching for the body.

While there is no indication that the fire is suspicious in origin, there is still a lot of investigating left to do.

"At this point, we have no idea what started the fire," Kostiuk said.

The other local fire, also said to involve hoarding, occurred last Friday afternoon in Monarch Park. See page 2 for the full story.

Celebrate the season in song

22nd annual Riverdale Share Concert blends music, holiday spirit

By PEDER MYHR
The Observer

This Sunday, Dec. 7 at 3 p.m., the always-anticipated Riverdale Share Concert will celebrate its 22nd year of holiday fun and spreading goodwill at The Danforth Music Hall. For Susan Dix-

on, the festival's long-time volunteer organizer, the concert will also officially launch the Christmas season.

"We work so hard during the fall to bring a great show to the community and then with the concert, it really puts me in the spirit of Christmas," she said. "I love it so much. There's really a magical feeling in the air."

This year's concert boasts something for everyone, bringing a mixed bag of 19 acts to The Danforth Music Hall.

The show will feature 11-time Juno winner Murray McLachlan, Devin Cuddy, son of Blue Rodeo front man Jim Cuddy, Kim Stockwood, Pressgang Mutiny and Drew Gonsalves of Kobo Town.

There will be local performers like the Frankland School Choir and The Wexford Gleeks, a circus performance, dance troupes, comedy and lots of family-friendly fare like the beloved trio Sharon, Lois and Bram.

■ See SINGING, page 3



Photo courtesy of Riverdale Share

Jim Cuddy performed at the concert in 2013. This year, his son Devin Cuddy will be featured.

WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

Put your money where their mouths are

East York Meals on Wheels is asking workplaces to try a different kind of food drive this holiday season. They're being challenged to get involved with the "Winter Warm-Up" program that offers help to those whose health, age or ability makes it difficult for them to shop or cook healthy meals for themselves. For \$90 and up, workplaces can buy a variety of sponsorship packages, ranging from a daily hot meal for a month to sponsoring an annual day-trip. Donations via Visa and Mastercard will be accepted by telephone at 416-424-3322. Money orders payable to East York Meals on Wheels can be mailed to Winter Warm-Up Program, East York Meals on Wheels, 2 Thorncliffe Park Dr., Unit 52, Toronto, ON, M4H 1H2.

Candy Cane Tea comes to town

Prestaign-Woodbine United Church will hold a Candy Cane Tea and Bazaar on Saturday, Dec. 6 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the church, 2538 St. Clair Ave. E.

Math, writing skills needed

Share your reading, writing and basic math skills with another. The East York Learning Experience is looking for literacy volunteers willing to be trained to teach other adults. For information, call 416-425-2666.

~ Katherine Forte



Roxana Chiriac // The Observer

Ring around the Christmas tree

East York children practise their skating technique at the Dieppe Park Skating Rink, which opened for the season last Saturday. The rink is located at 455 Cosburn Ave.

■ POLITICS

Fragedakis hoping to collaborate

East York councillor optimistic about next four years with Mayor John Tory

By ALI NAQVI
The Observer

The generally good vibrations at city hall this week — as the Ford era officially ended and the Tory era began — were tempered by some bad vibes among the East York representatives.

Incoming councillor Jon Burnside complained that his predecessor, John Parker, hadn't saved constituent files for him.

And the East York councillors were passed over when the new mayor announced his new team.

Still, councillor Mary

Fragedakis said she's optimistic about the start of the new municipal regime. She said she's hopeful that John Tory's tenure will be "more productive, unlike the last four years."

Councillor Burnside, now representing Ward 26/Don Valley West, told reporters that when he moved into his office, he discovered that the files on constituent concerns that had been maintained by defeated incumbent John Parker had been shredded.

That followed advice from the city clerk's office to all councillors that constituent files should not be shared for reasons of confidentiality.

Meanwhile, Mayor Tory unveiled his administration — including committee chairs and the councillors whom he's tapped as his lieutenants on the mayor's



■ FRAGEDAKIS

cabinet, called the executive committee.

Conspicuous for their absence were newcomers like Burnside and left-leaning councillors like Janet Davis from Ward 31/Beaches-East York and Fragedakis from Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth.

Still, Fragedakis said, she's upbeat about the next

term of council.

"I hope there will be less drama and less scandals compared to the past four years," she said.

When it comes to her own agenda, she said, "My ongoing top priorities are to improve traffic and congestion and community safety."

As for SmartTrack, the Tory plan for public transit improvements, "I want to see more details on SmartTrack," Fragedakis said, "and see the plan more articulated in a more fleshed-out manner, with more details."

Generally, she said, "I hope to work more collaboratively and in a productive manner with the newly elected mayor.... That's my hope and that's my expectation. We are here to advance issues that are important to all the people in the city."

Hoarding hampers firefighters' efforts

By ARTURO CHANG
The Observer

Firefighters had to fight both fire and obstructing piles of useless belongings when they arrived at a burning home on Monarch Park Avenue last Friday, Nov. 28.

No one was hurt in the blaze.

Toronto Fire was called to the scene at around 2 p.m. after flames erupted in the single-storey bungalow, near Coxwell and Mortimer avenues. Platoon Chief Kevin Shaw said the fire likely started in the basement, and the home, which belongs to a 60-year old man, was very difficult to get into because of apparent hoarding.

"The crews, when they got there through the back door, were only able to get in maybe two, three feet," Shaw said. "Pretty much floor to ceiling of just debris in the building."

Shaw said the home was filled with everything from furniture to stereos and microwaves. A garbage truck had to be called in to help dispose of some of the items so firefighters could finish squelching hot spots.

Neighbours said that the man, who lived by himself in the house, was known to be a hoarder. He wasn't home at the time of the fire.

■ CRIME

Neighbours find murders 'astonishing'

'I'm still watching the news to find out more,' one man says

Cont'd. from page 1

a lot of police officers were inside the building, in the hallway and in the lobby chatting," said Aashna Thakkar, a resident of the

35th floor.

"This is a very safe area," said Marwa Sheikh. "We have 24-hour security at the front desk and we have security cameras. It's just a very family- and community-oriented building."

Serge Kalachou, who has lived in the building with his family for two years, says this is the first time some-

thing like this has happened there, as far as he knows.

"The situation is still unknown. Should I be worried? Should I not be worried? I'm still watching the news to find out more," he said.

Yasir Iqbal, a new immigrant from Pakistan who has lived in the building for the last six months, said this incident changes his impression

of the city's safety.

"This is the first time I've experienced such an event and it's very astonishing for me," Iqbal said. "I came here with the idea that Canada is a safe country with a low crime rate, so it's surprising for me to learn that three bodies were found here."

~ With files from Samira Mohyeddin

Opera mob descends on library

Obeah Opera gets ready to perform at the upcoming 2015 Pan Am games in Toronto

By **NICHOLAS MISKETI**
The Observer

It's not every day that an a cappella singing flash mob takes over a library — but that's just what happened last Friday night, Nov. 28, at the Carlaw Avenue campus of Centennial College.

And the results were recorded on video for posterity and promotion.

Volunteer extras, who were in on the act, still looked pleasantly surprised as performers emerged from among them in song.

Christina Hough, a student at the East York campus who was involved with the production, said she enjoyed the experience.

"I love the music and it was especially awesome to hear it in this space," Hough said.

Vocalists from Obeah Opera, a local Afrocentric troupe, performed one of the theme songs from their theatrical piece for the video. "Di Moon Song," about the opera's main character, Tituba — a slave girl among the first women ac-

cused of practising witchcraft during the Salem witchcraft trials of the 1690s — is the original work of creator, composer, librettist and performer Nicole Brooks.

She wrote and composed it as a Caribbean folk song and says incorporating different genres of urban music into the opera made it connect with more people.

"Everyone seems to have some kind of tie to it," Brooks said. "It crosses cultures and generations."

Last year, Brooks pitched her opera's concept to representatives of PanaMania, the cultural component of the Toronto 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am games. Next summer, Obeah Opera will showcase their performance at the games as one of 27 commissioned acts.

In anticipation of that moment in the international spotlight, a group of Centennial students produced the video for a class assignment. They plan to release it as a promotional video in the hope that it will go viral. One of them,



Nicholas Misketi // The Observer

Nicole Brooks (centre right) leads vocalists from Obeah Opera in a musical flash mob at Centennial College's East York campus library. Centennial students filmed the performance for a viral video assignment intended to support the opera's fundraising campaign.

Glance Lawrence, helped to lead the video's production, and said that her group intends to support the ongoing fundraising efforts of Obeah Opera with the video.

"The hope is that it does go

viral," Lawrence said. "We want to link it back to the campaign they will put in place for people to donate."

While the Toronto games have provided some funding, the opera needs additional

funds to stage the performance. Brooks has set a goal of \$250,000 to help build the set, design the period costumes and assemble a cast of 25 vocalists.

"This is a collective work,"

Brooks said. "Now, I'm calling on the public to contribute and see if they can make this a reality."

For more information, or to donate, visit www.nightwood-theatre.net



Photo courtesy of Riverdale Share

Members of the Frankland School Choir wowed the crowd at last year's Riverdale Share Concert. They'll be back for an encore this year.

Singing to help those in need

Cont'd. from page 1

Mike Tanner will be hosting the event. He says it's a real honour being a part of such an exciting group of performers.

"It's just such an amazing experience," he said. "It's such a diverse group, but they all blend together in such a truly special way. It's really something."

The star of the night will undoubtedly be the big man himself — Santa Claus.

The event is 100-per-cent volunteer-run. It hopes to generate over \$30,000 and collect food items for families in need in the community.

Susan Dixon says helping those in need is what makes The Riverdale Share Concert well

worth all of the work that gets put into it.

"(This) is such an amazing community and we really care about each other here," she said. "So what we can do with Riverdale Share is help out those that need it. And that is what community is really about; helping each other."

Admission is \$20, plus a non-perishable food item.

Tickets can be purchased on the organization's website, www.riverdaleshare.com; or at The Big Carrot, 348 Danforth Ave.; Treasure Island Toys, 581 Danforth Ave.; and It's My Party, 423 Danforth Ave.

For up-to-the-minute news on the organization, you can follow it on Twitter @riverdale-share.

Pharmacies make it easier to get flu shot

By **BRANDON BERNARD**
The Observer

It's the most sniffly time of the year.

And while many of us get off relatively easily with muscle aches, fatigue and fever, about 350 Canadians die each year of the flu and its complications, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada's website.

And that, says pharmacist Abraam Rofael of the Care and Health Pharmacy on Danforth Avenue, is a shame, especially since there's a simple way of preventing it or reducing its severity — a flu shot.

"There are too many Canadians dying every year because of the flu," Rofael said as he filled prescriptions at the local pharmacy.

"Getting the flu shot is the only way to prevent it."

The flu sends about 200,000 people to the doctor each year in Ontario, while another 1,000 are hospitalized, according to

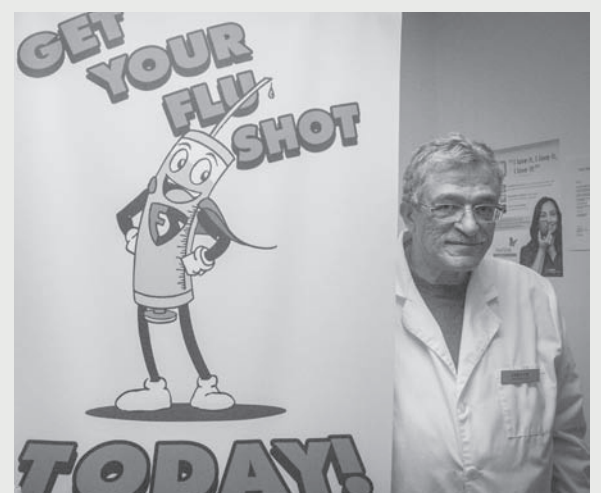
the province's official website, www.ontario.ca

Free flu shots are available at doctors' offices, public health clinics and now at some pharmacies.

The latter choice was added to make it easier for people to get their vaccine, Rofael says, although it's not available to children under the age of five. Those between one and five must go to a doctor's office or public health unit, according to www.ontario.ca

"It's a good service for the patient. They can take the flu shot anywhere, anytime," Rofael said of adding pharmacies to the list of places offering the vaccine. "They don't have to make an appointment; they don't have to wait for the doctors."

Those at greater risk of developing flu-related complications include the elderly, pregnant women, people with other health problems and children under five.



Brandon Bernard // The Observer

Pharmacist Abraam Rofael says the best way to prevent the flu is to do like the sign says.

Ootes eases move from Ford to Tory

Former East York politician heads new mayor's transition team, just as he did four years ago for Ford

By KATHERINE FORTE
The Observer

He's familiar to East Yorkers as an elected politician, but even though he's retired from the campaign trail himself, Case Ootes still walks the halls of local power.

This fall, he's been reprising his role as head of the new mayor's transition team. He did it four years ago for Rob Ford, and he's just wrapping it up now for John Tory.

"I first got elected in 1988," Ootes said in an interview with the Observer at city hall.

He continued to represent East York as the representative for Toronto-Danforth at city council, after the province's forced merger of the former Metro Toronto municipalities.

"I was at amalgamation. I was a deputy mayor for Mayor Lastman, so I have a background knowledge of city hall and how it works," Ootes explained.

tes explained.

His final council term ended in 2010, but he almost immediately went to work for Rob Ford, as Ford replaced outgoing Toronto mayor David Miller.

Four years later, an encore. This time, the John Tory transition team has been comprised of 10 people, including the mayor-elect's principal secretary and chief of staff, as well as citizens selected by Ootes and Tory. Ootes' past city hall experience is something that he says is essential in his role as chief of the transition team.

"I know the politics of city hall, how things work on the council floor, how things work behind the scenes and so on," Ootes said. "I have that background, which is really important when you're doing a transition from mayor-elect to mayor."

The transition team assembled almost immediately after Tory's Oct.

27 victory over Doug Ford and Olivia Chow, and it's just tying up loose ends now, considering that the new city council, with Tory at its head, met officially for the first time this past Tuesday.

"The mayor needs a transition team because you're going from one administration to another.... It's basically a five-week intensive process," Ootes said. "We started the day after the election and have been going ever since."

Ootes noted the differences in working with Ford and Tory.

"The mayor-elect (Tory) is very involved in the process. He reads all the manuals before the briefings and so his having read the manuals gives him the information that he needs to focus in on, and then direct staff to come up with some plan," Ootes said. "He's much more hands-on."

As well as the transition team, Ootes has also been chairing the

Transition Advisory Council, a secondary source of information for the transition team.

"This is a group of people; they meet for three hours, they get a briefing from staff and then there is a discussion," Ootes said. "The mayor-elect is there to hear them out and at the end, he summarizes

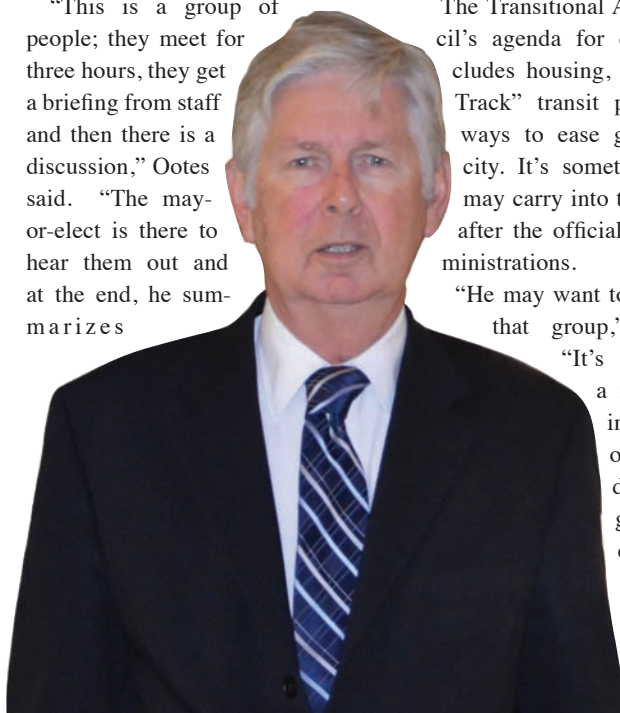
what he's heard from that group. So it's input to the transition team to help him refine his agenda."

The Transitional Advisory Council's agenda for discussions includes housing, Tory's "Smart-Track" transit plan and other ways to ease gridlock in the city. It's something that Tory may carry into the future, even after the official change in administrations.

"He may want to continue with that group," Ootes said.

"It's important for a mayor to have input from a lot of people from diverse backgrounds, and diverse experiences."

■ OOTES



■ SPORTS



Ramon Lafée// The Observer

(L-R) Terry Caffery, Dr. Sidney Soanes, Peter Krol and Christine Pellerin were all smiles at last Friday's Leaside Sports Hall of Fame induction ceremony. Leaside's Athlete of the Year, skater Ayanna Badali, was also at the event.

Leaside sports greats honoured

Late football star Joe 'King' Krol among those inducted into Leaside Sport Hall of Fame

By RAMON LAFÉE
The Observer

Not only are they in the community's heart, but from now on, they'll also be in its hall of fame.

Former hockey players Jack Caffery and Christine Pellerin, football star Joe "King" Krol and figure skating judge Dr. Sidney Soanes were inducted into the Leaside Sports Hall

of Fame in a ceremony held at Leaside Arena last Friday.

The event also celebrated the announcement of Leaside's Athlete of the Year, skater Ayanna Badali.

"It's just a great honour after all the hard work that I have done on my sport and in school, in Leaside High School," Badali said. "It feels like all the hard work has finally paid off."

The native and resident of Leaside won Ontario provincial speed skating titles in 2013 and 2014, competing for Team Ontario.

Badali is now training for the Canada Winter Games, to be held in Prince George next year. She hopes to represent Canada at the 2015 World Junior

Championships in Osaka, Japan.

"My advice to anyone who wants to get into speed skating is that age is not an issue. If you are older, don't give up to excel and try hard on the sport," Badali said. "I started late as well and honestly you can still follow your dreams."

Joe Krol was one of the most beloved Argonauts players, leading the team to five Grey Cups. He died in 2008 and is remembered as one of Canada's greatest athletes ever. Krol is also in the Canadian Football League Hall of Fame.

Representing his father, Peter Krol accepted the award.

"This is a great honour for me, my

family and friends who came here. We were really looking forward to it," Krol said.

"My father was a well-respected player for the Argonauts. I never realized how good he was until he stopped playing and then I started hearing all these things, because I was quite young when he was playing."

Krol also gave a piece of advice for young people who are making up their minds about getting into football.

"If you love the game, stick with it, because you're never going to regret it," he said.

"It will teach you a lot of discipline and keep you in good shape as well."

New school policy aims to keep you in the loop

By HASSAN MOHAMUD
The Observer

The tentative approval of the "Good Neighbour Policy" at a fall meeting of the Toronto Catholic District School Board should eventually make for a better-informed community, according to East York's representative to the board.

Ward 11 trustee Angela Kennedy explained that the policy, which includes notifying neighbours situated near a TCDSB school when it comes to things like events and construction, was provisionally approved without much debate.

"What I can do with that now is consult with my own schools in Ward 11 to get their feedback and any amendments or changes if there are areas in the policy that people are not happy with," she said.

Kennedy just won another term on the separate school board, and she said that in addition to the eventual finalization of the Good Neighbour Policy, she hopes to work on the issue of geographic boundaries for school admission.

"I will be canvassing each one of my schools in Ward 11 individually to ask them if the current boundaries that are being used for admission of students are the ones that those schools are happy with," she said.

East York shows holiday spirit



Photos by Evan Pang

Alexander the Great Parkette, located at the corner of Logan and Danforth avenues, turned on the Christmas lights last weekend. Passersby stopped to take photographs and enjoy the festive spirit.



Photos by Sana Fatani

(L-R) Fiona Atkins, Veronica Loranty, Maddy Driscoll and Danielle Loranty display their handmade Christmas cards at a workshop at Todmorden Mills Heritage Site on Saturday.



Happy Holidays from the staff of the East York Observer! With this issue, we conclude publication for the year. Our student reporters and editors are preparing for Christmas break and then internships in newsrooms in Toronto and beyond. We'll re-open our offices with a brand new staff in early January, and resume publication soon afterward.

■ EDITORIALS

Ferguson's lessons

Make sure we do not go down the same road

East Yorkers can be excused for their bewilderment at last week's events in Ferguson, Missouri. We live in a cosmopolitan community ourselves, and there are certainly disparities connected to the mix of backgrounds that we see among our residents. But nothing like the dysfunction of Ferguson.

Still, many people here, like many south of the border, were watching the run-up to last week's grand jury decision to not indict police officer Darren Wilson.

A quick refresher, for those who may need it: Wilson shot and killed Michael Brown, an 18-year-old unarmed black student, after an altercation between the two on Aug. 9. Brown and his friend Dorian Johnson were walking in the middle of the street, shortly before Wilson drove up alone in his police vehicle, and asked the men to move to the sidewalk. It was only then when a confrontation occurred between Brown and the officer, which led to Brown being fatally shot.

There were peaceful protests as well as violent riots in the days immediately afterward, but they had subsided — until last week, when, on Monday, it was announced that a decision had been made by the grand jury to not indict Wilson. That revived some of the anger from the summer, and as the night wore on, there was another flurry of rioting, looting and confrontations with police officers. And not just Monday night. And not just in Ferguson. There were even (mercifully peaceful) protests in Toronto last week... and now, another wave of protests in the U.S., after another grand jury decided on Wednesday to not indict a New York police officer after he used a chokehold on a suspect and the suspect died.

The shooting reminds us all of the longstanding racial tensions between African-Americans and the police. Ultimately, the protests weren't just about Brown's death; they were an expression of deep frustration among a constituency of the Ferguson community. Some residents were tired of not being heard, and a decision that seemed to ignore cries for justice was the final straw.

The disappointing images of fire and chaos were a response to this betrayal — and a lack of trust in the criminal justice system in the United States. Here at home, we can consider ourselves fortunate that relations between authorities and minorities haven't reached anything like this crisis point. But in East York and the rest of Toronto, we still have our controversies around things like racial profiling and carding; let's just make sure that we don't slide down that slippery American slope.

~ Donston Wilson

Stop judging religions

Extremist members don't represent the faith

Anyone familiar with East York knows that our neighbourhoods are densely populated with people from various ethnic and religious backgrounds — neighbourhoods such as Thorncliffe, Flemingdon Park and Crescent Town.

Considering this variety, and our close quarters, it's important that East Yorkers be on guard against stereotyping religious groups. For as long as extremist members — of any specific religion — paint a distorted image of that faith, uninformed citizens may well come to believe that extremists represent it entirely.

This is a grave mistake.

People need to understand that they cannot generalize the actions of one, 20, 300 or several thousand individuals, as representing a group of faith across the globe.

There are more than seven billion people living on this planet. In a 2010 demographic study, constructed by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, approximately 5.8 billion of them were classified as religiously affiliated. That's 84 per cent. In East York, data from Statistics Canada suggests that about two-thirds of residents claim a religious affiliation.

The vast majority of our religious neighbours are decent and peaceful people. But some are forced to try and mend a tarnished image left behind by extremists of their faith. In a fast-paced world spinning with prolific media, it becomes easy to associate tragic headlines with religious labels — and increasingly difficult to separate them.

The question becomes: how can we become knowledgeable of different religions, while understanding the difference between real faith and extremism?

The answer is simple. Know thy neighbour. And there are many ways to learn about different faiths. Public schools offer religion courses for students; public libraries contain large selections of books including religious texts or books introducing readers to various faiths. Numerous free e-books are also available online and the Internet allows web-surfers to easily research the beliefs of others.

And you can always ask.

"Can you tell me about your faith?"

Communication is the first step toward peace.

~ Roxana Chiriac

■ COLUMN



Samantha Turchan /// The Observer

Members of this year's East York Observer staff are moving on to their internships. A fresh roster of reporters is waiting in the wings to take over starting in January.

Farewell from 2014 staff

Our first assignment for the journalism program at Centennial College was certainly memorable. Two weeks into the course, most of us were shocked to learn that we had to interview people — real people — almost immediately.

Armed with nothing but hand-held Marantz audio recorders, we awkwardly stood in the midst of people participating in the Terry Fox Run — people whom we hoped would have an amazing story for us to relay to our teacher, in the form of a practice newspaper feature.

But look at us now. With this edition, most of us conclude our relationship with the East York Observer that our program publishes from Centennial's East York campus. The paper is now going on Christmas hiatus; next semester we'll be on our internships; and a new crop of student-journalists will be taking over the Observer newsroom at 951 Carlaw Ave.

But while finally being done our work for the term is a great feeling, it also carries some sadness. For the past three semesters, we've worked hard together — spending early mornings and late nights working away on assignments both for Observer and for our other courses. We've met deadlines, stressed out together and had the cafeteria workers running around replacing the coffee that we've binged on to keep ourselves awake.

We've done things that many of us had never done before and we've hopefully honed ourselves from unsure students into confident and multifaceted journalists.

Some of us already live in East York, but some of us have had to commute from the other side of the GTA to get here each day. Whatever the distance, during our time writing for the East York Observer, we have all felt like citizens of East York.

We got to know this community and practised covering local news from Leaside in the north to the Danforth in the south, and from Crescent Town in the east to Evergreen Brick Works in the west. When we started on the East York beat, many of us were so shy that we'd try to interview people by e-mail, rather than telephoning, or (heaven forbid!) actually going out and speaking to people face-to-face.

But now we have little problem with cold-calling strangers or scouring the community in-person for a possible story.

Mind you, we have developed the longest list of rejections in our lives from possible sources this year. But we have also amassed impressive lists of contacts that will undeniably be a great help throughout our futures in journalism.

It's fair to say that most of us came here hoping to concentrate on the prestigious role of writing and/or the glamorous job of broadcasting. But we leave with skills in everything from interviewing to photography to web design.

Now it is time for our familiar group to disperse and to go off to our placements in professional newsrooms outside East York — and in many cases, far outside Toronto. Then, after graduation this spring, paid work somewhere. (Fingers crossed!)

But no matter where we are, we will all be connected with our time at Centennial College's East York campus. The campus from which dozens of eager journalists fanned out to explore the community, got to know East York's residents and uncovered interesting stories that hadn't yet been told in our community. Like interviewing idealistic first-time candidates running for municipal office, or interviewing military veterans with moving war stories in the run-up to Remembrance Day.

In January, the Observer will be staffed by new, promising journalists who will spend their days and nights in the news lab developing friendships and their journalistic skills as we once did not too long ago.

We would like to wish the Observer's incoming roster of reporters and editors luck, and we'd like to thank our faculty for guiding us along the way — and helping us through hard times during our stay.

And, of course, we would like to thank the wonderful community of East York for letting us share your stories and reading our newspaper that we worked so hard on. Best wishes and good luck to you all!

~ Natalia Makarski

The East York

OBSERVER

CENTENNIAL COLLEGE

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Photos courtesy of City of Toronto Archives

Ghosts of Christmas (and TTC) Past

We continue our series of photos portraying East York as it once was — drawn from the archives of the City of Toronto. These 56-year-old pictures show two views of TTC buses decorated for Christmas and driving along Eglinton Avenue near Laird Drive in Leaside during the festive season of 1958.

■ THE ARTS

Tune in to Podcast 1 Trillion for unique tales



Lucy Qi//The Observer

Ben Emeny communicates with his niche audience via Podcast 1 Trillion.

Radio show becomes a reality with the help of broadcast students

By **LUCY QI**
The Observer

Behind the tinted glass of a radio control room on the first floor of Centennial College's East York campus, a new on-air personality has been born.

What started off as just a vague idea has taken root in the mind of Ben Emeny, and with the help and support of his classmates and professors, "Podcast 1 Trillion" has taken off.

Emeny, a graduate of the graphic design program at the college's

campus on Carlaw Avenue, is now enrolled in Centennial's new "Advanced Script to Screen" course taught under the auspices of the broadcast and film program.

Emeny says that he signed up for the new course because of his passion for screenwriting — but through it, he's discovered that he has a knack for radio.

"It's a great learning experience and a chance to focus on an audio medium as opposed to visual ones," Emeny said.

"By creating a channel we become less online and more real, more involved, and more connected with the listeners."

Emeny says Podcast 1 Trillion was created for an audience that could best be described as "niche"

— both in terms of interest and listening habits.

"Podcasts are an alternative to mainstream media. Our stories can be shared on subway rides home, at the school, wherever," Emeny said.

Downloadable from the web at the listeners' convenience, the shows will feature interviews with professionals in broadcasting and film.

"We want to provide journalists, video-makers, and storytellers alike a source and output for their creativity."

So far, two episodes have been recorded. Each is 16 minutes in length. They can be found at centennialondemand.com.

"We are in the process of get-

ting our own website, and also looking into putting it on iTunes to download," Emeny said. "We encourage everyone to listen in."

His collaborators in Podcast 1 Trillion include fellow classmates Ragean Gillesepe, Chrysanthy Michaelides, Lianne Gluck, Nick Paddison, Pradeep Raj, Andrily Koval, Meera Rao, Jacob Dunvo and Arjun Chopra.

"We really enjoyed making the podcast," Emeny said, but it's the audience who will "make this happen and continue to fuel our enthusiasm."

"They are sure to relate to the topics," he added, and through feedback, "offer us fresh insights to make each show better than the last."

Leaside Junior Wildcats defeat top-tier Chinese team

By **DOUA HREICHE**
The Observer

The Leaside Junior Wildcats of the Provincial Women's Hockey League squared off against some international competition in late November. The 10th-ranked team in the league faced off against Team China, the 14th-ranked team in the International Ice Hockey Federations' Division I Group B.

Those standings may have made it seem like a battle of a hockey David versus Goliath, but David emerged triumphant, with a 3-0 win over the Chinese.

After a scoreless first period, the Wildcats struck in the second with a goal by Cynthia Cavanagh on assists by Bronte Mutukistna and Olivia Kariunas. From there the Wildcats wouldn't look back.

They would strike again near the end of the second period with a goal by Emma Pye with assists from Jessica Robichaud and

Mariah Hinds.

Team captain Katriona McNeilly would tack on the final goal of the game in the third period. Mariah Hinds picked up the assist.

Jennifer Smith, the president of the Toronto Leaside Girls Hockey Association, said that this was just the latest exhibition match-up between the two teams. They've squared off against each other the last handful of years.

"These girls that were on the ice today, one or two of them have played Team China before, but for most of them, this is their first time playing a national women's team," Smith said.

Although it was a 3-0 win for the Wildcats, the game was still a challenge for the team. The girls playing on the Wildcats range between 13 and 18 years old, while the average age on Team China is about 22.

"They were older, so they were a bit more physical than I think we were used to, and they moved the puck really well," Katriona



Doua Hreiche// The Observer

Members of the Leaside Junior Wildcats are all smiles after their 3-0 win over Team China.

McNeilly said.

For Leaside, this was a well-played competitive game, but it ultimately represents just another stepping stone in another competitive season.

"We are continuing in our league; this is a great opportunity to get a game under our

belts where we can try out some different combinations, some different plays," said Kim McCullough, Leaside's head coach. "So as of this weekend we continue with our league play and we've got only one-third of the way through our regular season, so we still have a long way to go."

An East York camera clickfest



Donston Wilson /// The Observer



Donston Wilson /// The Observer

(Clockwise from above) Patrons peruse the baked goods, Santa Claus pops by and a dog makes new friends at the True Davidson Acres Long-Term Care Annual Holiday Bazaar on Nov. 29. Channing Decker (centre), one-half of the Danforth's homegrown tag-team, The Fraternity, sends his opponent Shane Sabre (left) of The Goat Brigade into the boot of a fan at ringside. Decker and tag-team partner Trent Gibson entertained the lively crowd at the 'Smackdown in Greektown' pro-wrestling event at Estonian House on Nov. 16. Shai Kohen of the White Ribbon Campaign leads a seminar about traditional gender roles and stopping violence against women at Centennial College's East York campus on Nov. 19. Artist Monica displays her monoprint art (the piece in the upper-right corner) during the Don Valley Art Club's fall show and sale at the Todmorden Mills Heritage Museum.



Sana Fatani /// The Observer



Donston Wilson /// The Observer



Natalia Makarski /// The Observer



Nicholas Misketi /// The Observer