

Photo courtesy of Toronto East General Hospital

Dr. Rajiv Singal stands next to “The Robot,” a revolutionary technology at Toronto East General Hospital. The Robot allows surgeons to perform surgery on prostate cancer patients in a minimally invasive way.

Wilson’s gift challenge has hospital up in robotic arms

By LOUISE ANDRE
The Observer

Brett Wilson, a former star of CBC Television’s “Dragon’s Den,” has donated \$100,000 to Toronto East General Hospital (TEGH), launching the Brett Wilson Gift Challenge. Wilson is challenging others to match his donation in order to reach \$1 million for TEGH’s robotic prostate cancer program.

“If I can get nine other guys at \$100,000, we’re done,” Wilson said. “I think it’s doable.”

Wilson was 43 when he found out he had prostate cancer and, as a result, underwent radiation therapy. He was treated in the United

States and was told by doctors there that the cancer was very advanced for someone his age.

Seven years ago, Wilson, now 55, had bladder spasms when he was at the beach with his son.

Using the GPS in his car, Wilson drove himself, in incredible pain, to the closest hospital: TEGH.

“I ran into a side-effect of radiation, which is cystitis, and the inside of my bladder gave out,” Wilson said. “I was bleeding from the inside in the worst way. Everything was falling apart.”

When he arrived at the hospital, staff asked him questions, but he remembers that he was in so much pain he

couldn’t say his own name.

One memory in particular remains vivid to this day.

“I still remember the looks of the faces of the team when I collapsed in the lobby,” he said. “They literally carried me into the emergency area and went to work.”

Dr. Rajiv Singal, robotics lead, said the technology they simply call “The Robot” is a new tool that allows surgeons to perform surgery in a minimally invasive way.

“The Robot makes a key-hole incision in the abdomen and the technology has arms that control surgical instruments. The surgeon manipulates the arms from a 3-D visual console that sits right next to the patient,” Sin-

gal said. “The advantage of that is there is better visibility, decreased blood loss and hopefully a more favourable outcome.”

Singal says the biggest disadvantage to the technology is its cost which, for the most part, has required philanthropic support.

“Brett Wilson’s donation is tremendous,” Singal said. “It will hopefully allow us to, through a funding point of view, making this technology more sustainable for the longer term.”

Brett Wilson stresses the fact men should get tested for prostate cancer early.

“Ignorance might kill you,” he said. “Knowledge won’t.”

All East York signs point to no casino

By SARAH TAGUIAM
The Observer

Yellow signs have popped up on lawns across East York, but they’re not real estate or roofers’ signs. Instead, in big, bold, black letters are the words “No Casino.”

Toronto-Danforth MPP Peter Tabuns is providing the signs to his constituents, hoping they raise awareness of the consequences of building a casino in Toronto — specifically in the Port Lands neighbourhood adjacent to Lake Ontario, at the southern end of his riding.

Along with Exhibition Place and the Metro Convention Centre, the Port Lands is being considered by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Commission (OLG) as a possible casino location, in its attempt to modernize gaming in the province.

A city-commissioned Ernst & Young report said a GTA casino could generate up to \$250 million in yearly revenue, potentially alleviating the city’s ongoing budget crunch.

East York resident Michelle Wolfenden planted a sign on her front lawn in November. Since then, neighbours and friends have expressed their thoughts on the issue.

Even though the OLG’s preferred casino location is the central waterfront and not the Port Lands, she said it’s important for all Torontonians, including those not living near the area, to voice their opinions.

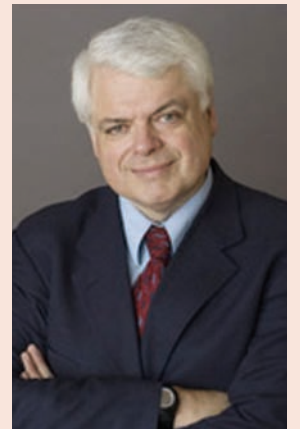
“Lake Ontario is our best asset and we need to be very thoughtful of how we develop it. I can guarantee you that anyone in urban planning would say that a casino is not the right thing for Toronto,” said Wolfenden, who also works for Canadian Urban Institute, a not-for-profit urban planning organization.

Despite this, Ernst & Young reported a downtown casino could potentially create 3,600-8,500 construction jobs for three years and 4,400-7,300 new jobs with the addition of an “integrated entertainment complex.” The accountants also said a casino would increase Toronto’s GDP by \$640 million and provide a \$27-million boost to property tax revenues.

But there are concerns about the social costs of more gambling, and Tabuns says experience shows that casinos actually siphon money from their surrounding neighbourhoods.

“We need money to stay in the cafés, restaurants and shops at Toronto-Danforth,” he said. “We don’t want to set up competitors that will take out millions of dollars from the local economy.”

Through canvassing, Tabuns said he found that 70 per cent of his constituents are strongly opposed to a downtown casino, while 10 per cent think it’s a good idea and 20 per cent are apathetic.



Peter Tabuns

Happy Holidays!

With this issue, the Observer concludes publication for the year. Our student staff is 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 will resume publication on Feb. 1.



For more stories, please visit us online at torontoobserver.ca

POLICE BRIEFS

Hit and run driver sought

Police are looking for a white two-door pickup truck with light blue writing on the doors after a 14-year-old girl was struck by the vehicle travelling eastbound on Doncaster Avenue near Main and Danforth last Friday, Nov. 28. The victim suffered non-life threatening injuries and the driver fled the scene. He is described as a white male, 40 to 50 years old, 220 lbs., with a white handlebar moustache. If you have any information, contact police at 54 Division by calling 416-808-5400.

Local woman mugged by trio

Police are seeking two women and one man after a woman was assaulted and robbed around Main and Danforth on Sunday, Dec. 2. The women got out of a vehicle and physically assaulted the victim, pushed her to the ground, and stole her purse. The assailants and the man then fled the scene in a red Pontiac Sunfire. The first woman is described as a white female, 19-23 years old, with a blond ponytail. The second is described as white, 19-23 years old, with long brown hair and a heavy build. The male suspect is said to be white, 23-25 years old, with a heavy build. Contact Crime Stoppers if you have information at 416-222-TIPS (8477).

~ Georgia Williams

GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY



Carleigh O'Connell // Observer

Toronto East Rotary Club director Virginia O'Reilly (left) and secretary Karen Somerville sell raffle tickets at the club's third annual arts and crafts sale. It was held at Eastminster United Church on Danforth Avenue.

Out of the Cold feels the warmth

By CARLEIGH O'CONNELL
The Observer

The Out of the Cold program for homeless people headquartered at Eastminster United Church on Danforth Avenue got a boost from a Toronto East Rotary Club fundraiser last month.

Artisans glued, cut, sewed and painted for homelessness relief and other good causes at the club's third annual arts and crafts sale on

Nov. 17.

"We do some hands-on projects that cost money, like planting trees in the Don Valley, Christmas Meals on Wheels and scholarships for kids," said Karen Somerville, event co-ordinator and secretary of the Toronto East Rotary Club.

But a quarter of the proceeds went to Eastminster's Out of the Cold program.

Out of the Cold helps provide safe refuge and

warm meals to Toronto's homeless community. Every Friday night, church volunteers serve dinner to 80-100 homeless people. They have facilities for about 45 guests to stay overnight, have breakfast in the morning and a bagged lunch to go.

Margaret Bilson is the program's recruiter and an Out of the Cold volunteer. She said they have "some great volunteers" who really get to know their guests.

"We see a lot of the same people all of the time and it really gives you a community feeling," she said.

During dinner hours, there is a clothing room accessible to visitors where they can pick up clothes donated by the community.

"The guests love it here," Bilson said. "They love the church and the great desserts donated to us. They really love their cake and ice cream."

Out of the Cold efforts cost about \$1,000 each time, so fundraisers like those run by Toronto East Rotary are integral to their success.

"I think the key thing about this is that it gets the community together and we raise a bit of money," Somerville said.

"A lot of the vendors are from the area, so we get to see a lot of talent as well. We are a very artistic neighbourhood."

Schools donate socks, underwear to the homeless

By DENNIS WU
The Observer

While most Torontonians are ready for the upcoming winter, many of the city's homeless are not.

Programs such as Out of the Cold exist to help provide their basic needs during this frigid season. This year, the program sought out Toronto Catholic District School Board Ward 11 Trustee Angela Kennedy to ask schools to donate socks and underwear. More than eight schools have shown support so far.

"I'm really pleased with the response that I've received," Kennedy said. "We know that schools are inundated with these kinds of requests so I'm grateful for any kind of participation."

Most people don't pay



Dennis Wu // Observer

From left to right: Monica Donovan, Kathleen Treacy and Laurie Delafranier stand in the clothing room of the Out of the Cold program.

much attention to their choice of briefs, but for a homeless person, it can often be a worry. Marie Foley is a volunteer and fundraiser for Out of the Cold. She has purchased \$250 worth of men's underwear that will all be passed out in just over a week.

"The guys have no place to wash their underwear, so they usually wear it for a week or so and then they turn it inside out," Foley said. "That's why almost every week they need new underwear."

Aside from clothing, the program also provides

food and shelter for people coming to the small hall at St. Catherine of Siena Church at 1099 Danforth Ave. Bill Slattery oversees the program, and hopes more people and companies donate generously to the cause.

"One hundred cases of

apple juice may not be a major thing to them, but it can supply us for a year," Slattery said. "If the can is dented, we don't care as long as the stuff inside is still good."

He remembers a man who has travelled the country, but Slattery hasn't seen him in over a year.

"We're not really sure if he's still alive. On one hand he was friendly, but on the other hand he'd be miserable," he said. "If he didn't get his corner of the room he would pout and cause trouble, very much like a child."

Although the people coming in lack material goods, he feels the thing they need most is friendship.

"We try to provide them with companionship. We sit down and talk with our guests and they become our friends."

OUR ANNIVERSARY: 1972-2012

Here's to the next 40 years...

As we say goodbye to 2012, we take one last look back at four decades of the East York Observer



EAST YORKERS PAY RESPECT
overlooking the Don Valley Parkway motorcade travelled from CFB Trenton

Crown seeks adult sentence
By MEGHAN HOUSLEY
A judge has ordered the teen convicted of the murder of Stefanie Rengel to undergo psychiatric assessment. The 17-year-old, identified only as M.T., under the Criminal Justice Act, is waiting while Superior Court Justice Ian Nordheimer decides if she is to be sentenced as a youth or as an adult.

Justice for Stefanie
Patricia Hung, Stefanie Rengel's mother, leaves the courthouse with her husband, James Hung, on March 20, after the verdict was read.

Macphail winner gives back to her community
By FARRAH COLE
Tireless, fearless and relentless are just some of the adjectives used to describe the recipient of the 16th annual Agnes Macphail Award: community advocate Patricia Moore.

East York turns out the lights
By MIKE CRISOLAGO
A gentle warning to all East Yorkers: don't say that you have nothing to do on Saturday night. Stretch, pray, meditate, explore the sky, burn some beeswax. Or, just sit in the dark.

Macphail winner gives back to her community
The riding then known as York East in the Ontario legislature in 1949, Macphail had a long career as an activist, particularly in the area of human rights. She died in 1964.

Justice for Stefanie
M.T. did not stab Stefanie. But as her initial interrogator, Sgt. Steve Ryan, said, without M.T. there would have been no crime. She never met the victim, but perceived Stefanie as a rival for the affections of her boyfriend. So, in reams of Internet text messages introduced as evidence, she posted her boyfriend to kill Stefanie and threatened to kill Stefanie and threatened to kill Stefanie.

EDITOR'S NOTE
Since September, we've been flipping through the files of the East York Observer, as a reflection on this newspaper's 40th anniversary.

Centennial College started the Observer in 1972 as a student "laboratory" for the first college journalism program in the province — and as outreach to the community around the college.

Since then, the Observer has multiplied into three Observers — the East York Observer that you're reading, its companion website, torontoobserver.ca, which features East York content and also coverage from across the GTA, and the new Scarborough Observer feature magazine.

On this occasion — our last East York Observer of 2012, as the student staff readies for their Christmas break — we conclude our retrospective of pages drawn from four decades' worth of archives with a front page from 2009 that seems to capture the breadth of issues and events that we're privileged to bring to our 7,000 readers every two weeks.

The cover of that March 27 issue featured stories representative of both the best and worst of life in this metropolitan community: a motorcade through East York with the bodies of four Canadian soldiers killed in the Afghan war; the trial following the murder of a 14-year-old East York girl; preparations for East York observances of Earth Hour, and the community's highest award for civic volunteerism.

And on this note, the Observer ushers out its anniversary year and prepares (with a new student staff) to meet the challenges of 2013 — and our fifth decade!

Patio owners don't want to butt out

By **ARIELLE QUIGLEY**
The Observer

While the proposed expansion of the city's smoking ban to include restaurant patios may be good for people's health, it might have a negative effect on local businesses.

Toronto Public Health (TPH) met last month to discuss the possibility of extending Toronto's anti-smoking bylaws to include restaurant patios, hospital property, sports fields and the entrances and exits of most city buildings.

Nellie Maione, owner of King's restaurant on Pape Avenue, said the majority of her customers are smokers who enjoy smoking on the patio. She is concerned that if the smoking ban is extended, her restaurant will become a take-out.



For more on the smoking ban story, check us out online at torontoobserver.ca

"At the end of the day, it is a choice and it is being taken away and it will affect my business," Maione said.

TPH recognizes that there will be some impact on businesses. According to Janet Davis, city councillor for Beaches-East York, consultations will be held in 2013 with stakeholder groups, businesses and the public.

"It's very clear that by extending the prohibition of smoking into other areas, that will continue to further reduce smoking in the city of Toronto, which continues to be a very significant public health issue for our population," Davis said.

Maione said customers who come into her restaurant know that smoking is allowed on the patio. If they do not like that, they choose another restaurant.

"It's the outdoors. You're not enclosed — you're outside," she said. "As much as you're sitting out here having cigarette smoke around you, you also have the fumes from the cars and the environment."

TPH has gotten complaints about smoking on patios for several years. Davis said this kind of ban already exists for other cities and municipalities in Ontario, including Ottawa, Kingston and Thunder Bay.

"I do believe that the elimination of smoking in public places has been accepted and has been a success and this is one further step that will make those restaurants and bars even more pleasant places to be," Davis said.

David McKeown, the city's chief medical officer, will be releasing the results of the consultations in early 2013. Upon hearing the results, city council will vote on the bylaw extension.



Photo courtesy of Fotolia

COMMUNITY SAFETY



Shantal Otchere// Observer

A parent attending the Maryland Park meeting places a red dot on playground items she would most like to see to be included in the revitalization design.

Lighting tops wish list

But city says lights for Maryland Park not in the budget

By **SHANTAL OTCHERE**
The Observer

Residents of the area around Victoria Park and Danforth avenues are concerned about safety and lighting in Maryland Park.

So Janet Davis, the councillor for Ward 31/Beaches-East York, held a community

meeting last month at the Dentonia Park clubhouse, seeking constituents' input on improvement plans for the park, located just northeast of Danforth and Dawes Road.

Many at the Nov. 13 meeting agreed that installing more lights would deter what they believe to be a problem with young smokers and drinkers loitering in the area at night.

"At night it stops being a kids' park," said Matthew Hallet, a local father of two.

"My number one wish would be lighting... so neighbours can see and we can see the park and we can see our children."

But Susan Anderson, a project manager for the city's parks department, said revitalization project funds are not available for lighting.

Anderson estimated hydro services alone would cost at least \$15,000.

Still, Davis assured residents that she will address their lighting concerns.

"I will figure out how to

get light from another budget," she said.

Constituents also suggested removing rusted playground equipment and incorporating natural elements such as shrubs and flowerbeds into the new park.

At this point, plans for the park are in the preliminary stage and designs will be developed in coming months.

Anderson said she hopes to finalize a design by next spring, adding another meeting will take place before the end of the year.

Tree adoption turns new leaf

By **AKIHIKO TSE**
The Observer

Almost a year after 95 new trees were planted at Withrow Park and "adopted" in the spring, organizers say the program, despite the scarcity of city intervention, has been "a good success."

The park, a block south of Danforth Avenue between Carlaw and Logan, is now home to 30 different species native to Ontario and the rest of Canada. They were given to the Friends of Withrow Park through city councillor Paula Fletcher's office and represent an effort to foster community engagement while maintaining the health and well-being of young trees with shallow root systems.

Adopters commit to a tree for three years and during this time must water them at least once a week, remove weeds from the base and mulch the

trees to slow evaporation. Saplings can survive a lack of rainfall once they have established a deep enough root system.

"It was a tough year. It was super dry so (water) was desperately needed," said Jennifer Volk, an organizer with the Friends of Withrow Park adopt-a-tree program, adding the city "sent the watering truck once this summer to the park."

To date, 25 trees remain available for adoption, but Volk said efforts to sustain the park's tree canopy is increasing involvement and helping the neighbouring community thrive.

"It makes it a more vibrant place and it just makes people care about the park more," she said. "It's becoming a very nice community hub over there."

The city's parks department is responsible for watering the over 300,000 trees that have been planted through various programs across Toronto since

2001. Garth Armour, supervisor of Natural Environment and Community Programs for the city, said there is a routine maintenance schedule for the trees.

"But in conditions such as weather that we've had this year, we can't water trees enough," he said. "So the activities that (adopt-a-tree programmers) are doing are really enhancing the success rate of the trees that we've planted and increasing the likelihood that the trees will flourish."

Armour said the popularity of tree adoption programs helps augment a sense of belonging with parks and natural environments.

"These types of programs are very popular with the public," he said. "They like to ensure the success of the tree plantings and the vegetation community right across the city and I believe the public will continue to show interest in these types of programs."

Wynne sets her sights on a win

Liberal leadership candidate hopes to use her experience to govern the province

By **MORGAINE CRAVEN**
The Observer

One of East York's "favourite daughters" is among seven candidates running to succeed Dalton McGuinty as leader of the Ontario Liberals.

Kathleen Wynne, the MPP for Don Valley West since 2003, is considered one of the two or three frontrunners, especially after winning the endorsement of Deb Matthews, the provincial health minister, last week.

Wynne herself has held a number of McGuinty cabinet portfolios, including education, transportation, and most recently, both municipal affairs-housing and aboriginal affairs.

If Wynne, 59, succeeds, she will be the first female Ontario premier. That will be decided at the party's convention, scheduled for Maple Leaf Gardens, Jan. 25-27.

Wynne sat down with the Observer to discuss her platform and campaign:

Q: How did you make the decision to run for the Ontario Liberal leadership?

A: Well, when the premier made his announcement, we were all pretty surprised. Because I have had the experience of leading four ministries and I've been in office since 2000, I felt that I had something to bring to the table in terms of my experience. And I think right now, we need someone who can reach out and bring people together.

Q: Was it a difficult decision to leave cabinet?

A: One of the hardest things about this was stepping down from the work that I was doing. I was very engaged in both ministries, in both Municipal Affairs and Housing and Aboriginal Affairs, and was on the verge of bringing some recommendations in on some issues that I found particularly important, so that was a hard decision to make. This is a bit of a leap into the unknown.

Q: What would a term with Premier Kathleen Wynne look like?

A: I want to try to govern. I would propose we put together a throne speech and we finalize a budget and we go back to the legislature and attempt to govern. I would want to have a quick, but complete discussion about what goes into the budget and what problems we are facing. I would work with the opposition leaders to get support to implement the budget.

Q: Education was supposed to be McGuinty's legacy. If you were elected, what would yours be?

A: Having spent the past nine years in the legislature and being part of the team that helped repair damage done by the previous government, I would hope that my legacy would be strong public services, that we'd have an economy that was thriving and that we shared understanding across rural and urban divides of what we want to be as a province. We are the biggest province.



Morgaine Craven /// Observer

Don Valley West MPP Kathleen Wynne is among the frontrunners in the race for the Ontario Liberal leadership. The provincial party picks Dalton McGuinty's successor next month in Toronto.



● For the complete interview with Wynne, visit us online at torontoobserver.ca

Q: What would you say to critics who believe the next premier should come from outside the former McGuinty cabinet?

A: The experience I bring is invaluable: my ability to have a critical view on what we've done, to acknowledge all of the great things that we've done, to be able to start at the point where we are at now and learn from the things that we have not done as well as we should have. I take responsibility for being a part of the cabinet and for voicing my opinion all the way along.

Q: The Globe and Mail has said that you "give a voice to Liberals who think the party has drifted too far to the right with centralist control." Do you think the Ontario Liberal party has drifted to the right?

A: Well, that's what the Globe says. I describe myself as a progressive. I really believe government is a force for good in our communities. I'm very interested in resolving issues that have developed between us and teachers and the broader public sector. I'm not the type of person who believes it's the best idea to impose public sector agreements, for example. My hope would be that there are collective agreements in place and we won't have to impose legislation in the new session. I think that we have been in very difficult economic times; we had to make some very difficult economic decisions. Those of us at the table really grappled with that. Some of the processes around those

decisions haven't been what they could have been and the premier has acknowledged that and so my hope would be that we can repair those relationships and then put in better relationships going forward.

Q: How do you plan on restoring good will and resolving issues with Ontario's teachers?

A: For a number of years, since I was minister of education and we went through the last round of negotiations, there was some discussion about whether there should be a more formalized provincial bargaining process. It has to be co-created and if there is a distance between me and other politicians at this point, I really believe in open collaboration. Let's share ideas about the process. One of the first things that has to happen is bring the leadership in and then bring the school boards, because they didn't feel like they were part of the process, and that was partly because there is no statutory role for school boards in any provincial process. I would want to bring them together and have that conversation.

Q: What will you do to help fight the \$14.4-billion deficit?

A: We need to continue to make the difficult decisions. When I say I want to work on

labour, that doesn't mean I want to back off compensation constraints. I think we have to continue to do that. The bigger issue is that we need to bring industry to Ontario. We need to look at other areas of the world that have business, that have capital, that want to come to Ontario. We need to make sure we've got the right conditions in place so those businesses will come. We have to have a plan where businesses can be confident about what we've invested in our infrastructure. In the GTA, that means transit investment and that we take action to take care of the gridlock.

Q: If you are elected as premier, you will be the first female. What does that mean to you?

A: Having been somebody since I entered school pretty much believing that there is a two-tiered mentality in Canada and the Western world; women have had to fight for recognition... I don't think that's the case now, but we're not on an equal playing field.

Q: Do you think that you will bring a "female voice," so to speak, into politics?

A: I want to be selected on my merits. I have never felt like as a politician, that I represent one group, but the fact is that women — and this will sound like a generalization — are socialized differently. We tend to have a different experience of the world, because of how we're raised and how the world treats us. I was privileged to chair women's caucus and it was women's caucus that raised anti-poverty to the larger caucus. I can honestly say that anti-poverty would not exist if it were not for women's caucus convincing that this mattered, that this is something that matters to voters and to the health of the province. My hope would be, as premier, that I would bring that.

■ EDITORIALS

A train derailed

Beleaguered Toronto mayor's battles continue

It's not every day that someone in a high position is told to "sit down and shut up."

But at Toronto city council, friction and disunity characterized by angry confrontations, scarce reconciliation and fractured discourse have hampered and made a farce of municipal affairs.

And at the heart of it all is Mayor Rob Ford, whose playbook on governance has largely been overshadowed by an uncanny knack for dominating the headlines – for all the wrong reasons.

Last week, Justice Charles Hackland ruled that Ford violated municipal conflict of interest rules and ordered him removed from office, after Ford spoke and voted on whether to reimburse donors \$3,150 that was solicited for his private football foundation using city resources.

Some have argued that the judgment reflects an undemocratic decision disproportionate to the scope of the infraction, and Ford remains mayor while his legal team prepares for the appeal early next year. But the ruling remains a culmination of numerous "sacks" on the embattled politician whose brief tenure is now firmly in jeopardy of being defined for his risible and inauspicious public display of personal blunders.

Having been elected on the promise of fiscal responsibility and cutting the city's profligate spending (or "gravy" – the one-word political rhetoric he will most likely be remembered for), Ford came through a tough start to his spell by passing a more balanced budget and negotiating past impending labour union disputes. He also managed to navigate, albeit precariously, a council split between his conservative allies and his left-leaning opponents.

However, Ford remains embroiled in a \$6-million defamation lawsuit as well as an audit of his election campaign finances from 2010. Other incidents include his infamous standoff with a Toronto Star reporter outside his Etobicoke home, the dispatching of two TTC buses that unloaded its onboard passengers to pick up Ford and his Don Bosco Eagles football players, and his notable absences from council meetings to coach the team. And now, his and brother Doug Ford's intimidation tactics against fellow councillors, among them Janet Davis of Beaches-East York, stand out as ugly blemishes.

These controversies that Ford frequently finds himself in have led to him fumbling his political endeavours and the aspirations that he had hoped to score on for "the taxpayers." And whatever happens with his appeal, Ford now carries the onerous burden of being the first public official to be judicially ordered out of office in a major municipality in Canada.

~ AkihikoTse

A boost for Leaside

The Leaside area is getting a makeover. Laird Avenue was previously an industrialized area characterized by factories and auto shops, but new plaza developments have been opening up and down the strip for residents to enjoy.

The newest and probably snazziest of them all is the development of Leaside Village, which is only partially open as most of the shops are still under construction.

The main attraction at this new development is the Longo's, built into a heritage building that used to be a train station.

According to First Capital, the company in charge of Leaside Village, within a five-kilometre radius, there are 425,282 residents inhabiting the area, with an average household income of \$120,547.

On top of the Longo's, a Five Guys Burger and Fries has opened up, as well as a Mucho Burrito, Beer Store, Pet Valu, Bulk Barn and Linen Chest.

One of the stores expected to open is Cupcakes, which may sound familiar as the franchise featured on the television show The Cupcake Girls. The franchise is based in Vancouver and the Laird location will be its first in Toronto.

For a former industry-heavy area, one has to admit that landing this store isn't too shabby.

But with the current upgrading to the area, there are still some concerns that need to be looked at. And among the biggest of those would be the TTC, or more to the point, the lack thereof.

Laird has only one bus coming once every 20 minutes, and that stops running at 10:30. If that's when you finish work, that can be an issue.

In order for this area to truly be seen as an area for everyone, the buses are going to have to run later in order to accommodate people who don't have a car.

These new developments will have issues that need sorting out, but for East York residents, it's ultimately all for the better.

~ Melissa LoParco

■ COLUMN



Matt Wocks // Observer

The 2012 Observer staff is ready to move on to new challenges. Some of the student reporters are heading out on job placements at various media outlets, while others are planning to attend graduate school.

2012 Observer staffers bid adieu to East York

This is the final edition of the East York Observer for this semester, and the feeling of accomplishment among the Centennial College journalism students who comprise the staff is bittersweet. We have to acknowledge that the last four months have been a major test in time management. This was one "cycle" (as we say) when even those journalists less scientifically inclined would have happily advanced the argument for human cloning.

Being unfamiliar with East York in many cases, and being new journalists thrown into the fray of community coverage, it has been a challenge for us to identify and connect with sources for stories. In our active newsroom, almost 30 reporters competed for East York stories. This, compounded by the demands of school assignments in several other courses, supports the longing for at least three copies of ourselves.

Our first issue back at the end of September started with a bang. Actually, it started with a fire at the Canadian Tire on Laird Drive. That edition's front page featured a story about a proposed condo project at 90 Eastdale Ave. and the concern it ignited among residents. We also introduced a recurring feature page, paying tribute to the 40th anniversary of the East York Observer — with reprints of pages going all the way back to the 1970s, when this publication was founded.

Did you know that more than a third of Thorncliffe Parks residents are children under 14? If you read our second issue on Oct. 12, you would have seen that as well as read a great editorial about proposals for a Toronto casino.

In the Oct. 26 issue, one of this college's very own professors was the subject of a feature story... and for good reason. The journalism program's Ted Barris was featured after receiving a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. (We tried to maintain our objectivity in the coverage — but we have to admit that we were more than a little proud of our accomplished teacher.) It was also in this issue that we paid tribute to Halloween. Spooky

stuff indeed.

With Premier Dalton McGuinty stepping down and Don Valley West MPP Kathleen Wynne stepping up to try to replace him as provincial Liberal leader, our Nov. 9 edition was heavy with breaking political news. But we also acknowledged Remembrance Day with a full centre-spread of articles, including a heartwarming story of the bond between father and son represented in a handmade wooden desk.

One of the great things about having a newsroom in the middle of East York is the ability to cover local breaking stories. A sexual assault shocked the Broadview neighbourhood between Danforth and Mortimer and was featured on the front page of our Nov. 23 issue. And speaking of breaking news, that issue also covered the last-minute Rihanna concert held at the Danforth Music Hall.

We have loved serving the community of East York. Besides covering local news, the experience has afforded us the opportunity to take national issues and give our readers a more focused understanding of the matter. We've also appreciated the feedback we've received from readers on the articles we've written.

We stand on the shoulders of other journalism students who have held the Observer banner high. Congratulations to them for the Observer's four decades of publication. And best wishes to the new student staff who will succeed us starting next month.

In closing, we also say thanks to our faculty advisors for providing us with a nurturing environment to use our voice and a glimpse of the real world, knowing all too well that we will soon be peers. And finally, thank you, people of East York, for allowing us the opportunity to share in your lives.

~ Dileen Simms and Matthew Wocks



For more about all things East York, check out www.torontoobserver.ca

New ridings put people in 'cracks'

By AKIHIKO TSE
The Observer

If five apartment buildings in Thorncliffe Park are absorbed into the newly drawn federal electoral riding of Don Valley East, their residents may "fall between the cracks" of community and political engagement, say representatives of the Thorncliffe Park Tenants Association.

At a public consultation hearing, held on Nov. 16 at Metro Hall, Dennis O'Leary of Aird and Berlis LLP argued on behalf of the association that the neighbourhood's unique and homogenous identity means that residents' issues are unique to Thorncliffe Park, not Don Valley East.

He said having 10-15 per cent of that population shifted to Don Valley East would mean that the association would have to spend double the time and resources raising issues with representatives from both that riding and the newly drawn riding of Toronto North, formerly Don Valley West.

"It is a self-contained community," O'Leary wrote in his submission to the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario. "No one else in Don Valley East will identify with these five buildings in Thorncliffe Park."

Every 10 years, as a result of newly published census data, which most recently showed Ontario's population increased from 11,410,046 in 2001 to 12,851,821 in 2011, the commission is tasked with keeping the number of residents in a riding as close to 106,000 – the province's total population divided by the number of its ridings – as possible. Consequently, the province's electoral districts will increase from 106 to 121 next year.

Toronto's 4.5 per cent population increase (111,779) in the last 10 years means various electoral boundaries need to be redrawn to ensure an equal distribution of voters, said commission member Doug Colbourne.

Don Valley West MP John Carmichael said communication is vital to ensure a seamless transition across the ridings.

"There's going to be significant adjustments to what we're used to," he said, adding the changes could be positive if two political representatives now take an interest in area issues.

The population in Thorncliffe Park, according to 2011 census data, grew by 7.4 per cent to 19,275. Abbas Kolia, president of the Thorncliffe Park Tenants Association, said switching the five apartment buildings' approximately 5,000 people would have no impact on the target quota.



Eating at the Obama

Nick Tragianis /// Observer

Emmanuel Debass was 'inspired and fascinated' by Barack Obama's rise to the U.S. presidency four years ago, and so he decided to name his cafe after the 44th chief executive.

Danforth and Greenwood cafe honours Obama's second term

By NICK TRAGIANIS
The Observer

Barack Obama and Emmanuel Debass are both preparing for a second term.

The U.S. president will be sworn in again on the steps of the Capitol on Jan. 21.

The East York restaurateur who named his establishment after the president will pass that Monday in a more routine way — continuing to serve his trademark vegetarian food to customers at his Danforth eatery.

But according to Debass, it would have been business as usual at the Obama Cafe even if Mitt Romney had won the Nov. 6 election. Certainly,

Debass says, he wouldn't have renamed his coffee shop.

"Just in case Obama lost, there was an editorial cartoon in the Toronto Star where they were going to make it the Romney Bistro," he recalls. "Fortunately, it didn't happen. It's another four years."

Debass's tiny shop on Danforth near Greenwood Avenue is now four years old — as old as Obama's presidency itself.

"It's been the first Obama cafe in the world. There's an Obama restaurant in Los Angeles, but mine is the Obama Cafe. It's been that way for four years."

Debass had been vacationing in his native country of Ethiopia when Obama became the 44th president. Like others around the world, he said he was inspired by Obama's rise to the world's highest office.

"I was very fascinated and inspired by Obama winning against (Republican Sen.

John) McCain at the time," Debass said. "I was very excited. So I decided when I came back to Canada, I would open up an Obama cafe. And I did."

The cafe sports a unique, all-vegetarian menu. The signature dish of the cafe is called the Obama Vegetarian Platter, made up of cabbage, lentils and spinach, in addition to other greens. Unsurprisingly, the cafe's signature drink is also a presidential namesake.

"Since I'm the founder, and Kenya is partly where Obama is from, I decided to blend the two coffees and make them the signature. They became the Obama Coffee," he said.

The shop is decorated with many unique, Obama-themed artworks. Photo collages of Obama's historical moments hang from the walls, in addition to election signs and a life-size cardboard cutout of the President.

The coffee and atmosphere

make Mulugeta Desta, a close friend of Debass's, a frequent visitor of the cafe. The two met on a trip to Egypt, and were both captivated by the president.

"I support Obama, and it's everything I like about him," Desta said. "Here, it's healthy because it's vegetarian, and the food is delicious. [Debass] needs more money and more advertisements, but for the future, it's a good idea. That's why I'd love to support it."

As for that future, Debass has high hopes around expanding his business: franchises across Ontario, Canada, and even the U.S. are on his radar.

"We've already made history," he said. "There should be more Obama cafes across the word for remembrance."

—With files from Lilian Asante

Massey program is all about bonding with baby



Shantal Otchere /// Observer

The Massey Centre's CEO, Ekua Asabea Blair, is passionate about tackling early childhood mental health.

By SHANTAL OTCHERE
The Observer

Volunteers at East York's Massey Centre for Women hope to tackle infant mental health with programming aimed at helping young mothers bond with their babies.

Just a few weeks after the close of this year's Tree for Life campaign, the CEO of the Broadview Avenue agency, Ekua Asabea Blair, said she's thrilled to receive much-needed funding for the initiative.

The Maternal Infant Mental Health Program was established in 2010 and Blair believes the program helps make the difference between successful children and kids who later become disengaged.

"We know through research

that if that bonding doesn't take place it really impacts the emotional development of this child. If (infants) don't get that attachment in the early years, sometimes these kids develop learning disabilities (or) sometimes they develop anti-social behavior at an early age," she said.

"Sometimes these issues will lead to high school dropout rates (in later years) for these children, so what we're doing here is so critical."

Blair said the program enhances communication between teen mothers and their children through fun activities.

"(The program) promotes attachment through play, using play therapy to help the young moms and the babies bond," she said. Blair said that while "babies do find ways to communicate," some

young mothers might need help to better "pay attention" to these subtle cues.

Jane Fergie, a volunteer with the facility, said that even as the "lead agency" for early learning programs in the Danforth area, funding is always needed to maintain their efforts.

"It's perceived that government funding is sort of the core funding but the government has cut back quite a bit, so agencies are expected to aid the funds that they need in order to run all the programming," she said.

With the help of Hospital for Sick Kids child psychologist Dr. Jean-Victor Wittenberg, Blair says the program, as well as the centre's many others, will help young parents "learn the skills that they need to become good parents."

Radio station reflects black community

New kid on the block G98.7 much more than just music, director says

By **GEORGIA WILLIAMS**
The Observer

Few people know that just outside the northwest corner of East York, tucked inconspicuously off busy Don Mills Road, stands Toronto's newest radio station. While just last week, G98.7 celebrated its first anniversary as the only black-owned radio station in Canada, it's also busy proving that it's much more than a novelty.

It isn't easy competing in the fifth-largest radio market in North America, but since its launch on Nov. 28, 2011, G98.7 has garnered a loyal fan base and created its own presence on the radio landscape of Toronto, due in part to its keen staff and the vision of founder Fitzroy Gordon.

"The real goal was to bring a radio station to the GTA that reflected the black, Caribbean and African community," Program Director Wayne Williams said, "but (to) also include anybody and everybody that was interested in that music, and

format in the community as well. You know you want to invite everybody to the party."

Aside from being program director and teaching a broadcast class at Humber College, Williams has been involved with the station since its inception. He also hosts a popular daily show called The Groove Factor, Monday through Thursday, 3-7 p.m.

"It's nice to be a part of something, especially at this level, from the ground up... the first of its kind in Canada. It has never been done before," said Williams.

While the radio station may be the soundtrack to the party, it is also the backdrop for political exchange as well. Last month, Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the prime minister of Jamaica, Portia Simpson Miller, visited the G98.7 studios. It was the Jamaican leader's first visit to Canada since taking office, and both she and Harper sat down for an on-air interview.

On the official G98.7 website, Gordon called their visit "a testament to the important role that G98.7 is playing as a voice for, and representative of, the black and Caribbean population in Canada."

The radio station also sponsors and partners with various local organizations to bring a wide array of events to the city. Last month, they helped to put on Choir Fest 2012 at the Canada Christian College in East York.

"Sending our street team and news reporters out to different community events that reflect what's happening in the community... letting them know we're there for them, is how we set ourselves apart," said Williams.

And that is complemented by the unique sounds of African music, reggae and R&B that G98.7 plays for the whole GTA.

"I like the diversity of the music," said Jessica Walster, a local listener. "You don't hear the same songs over and over."

■ **Wayne Williams**



Courtesy of Eric Leong

Eric Leong and his friend Han Yong-fei present their winning entry for a new popemobile at celebrations in Italy in October.

Design fit for a pope

By **NINO MEESE-TAMURI**
The Observer

"Designed in East York." It may take getting used to, but that label may soon decorate the Pope's newest ride.

Native East Yorker Eric Leong and friend Han Yong-fei from the Umea Design Institute in Sweden stunned the car world when their interpretation of a new and improved Popemobile came out on top in an international design competition in October.

"It was a big surprise for us," Leong said. "When you enter a contest, you never expect to win. You just never know what will happen."

The team initially struggled to work effectively across two continents. Despite early difficulties, though, the duo pulled through and finished the project in only a few weeks of work.

Designing the world's most-famous vehicle does come with some baggage, though.

The teams were given a strict set of requirements to integrate into their ideas. The main points to consider were security, visibility and eco-

friendliness.

Ever since the assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II in 1981, bullet-proof glass became mandatory, but Leong and Yong-fei beefed up the security by adding Kevlar-belted tires and bomb protection to their design.

New cutting-edge technologies were also used to decrease the fuel-thirst of the car, to please eco-minded Pope Benedict XVI.

An extendable solar panel on the roof in combination with a new spray-on-battery help power the fuel-saving hybrid engine. The use of new lightweight materials also helps keep the weight down.

"My favourite part about the design is how we integrated different features to make it seamless," Leong said. "If you look at the Popemobile now, (the rear end) feels stuck on. We wanted to design the modification as part of the car rather than just as an accessory that you pop on."

The team chose the new Volkswagen Cross Coupe as a platform for their Popemobile, but were limited in the extent of its modifications by the

brand-conscious car industry.

"We were not allowed to change the vehicle too much," Leong said. "We could not touch the front end because we needed to keep the brand identity of the vehicle."

The choice of a German car brand for their design was not intended to play into potential brand preferences of the Pope.

"No, the cars were not all German. Some other people used Land Rover or Lexus. We just ended up picking Volkswagen. It had nothing to do with the fact that the Pope is German," said Leong, laughing.

Even though designing the Popemobile is definitely up there in his list of favourite memories, Leong has plenty of appetite for a future in car design.

"There are still other things I would like to do. Designing sports cars has always been fun for me, but even projects such as new trains or buses are interesting," he said. "Unfortunately, Canada is not the best place to be in if you want to do car design. Anyone like me who wants to do it has to leave the country."

Raise your flag: East Yorkers come alive with pride

By **LESLIE EMMONS**
The Observer

Almost 15 years after amalgamation's legal elimination of the borough, East York pride remains alive and well — and some people will soon be showing it by flying the former municipality's flag.

The East York Historical Society is currently taking orders for 27- by 54-inch flags that will cost \$60.

EYHS past-president Margaret McRae, said this is the third set of flags that her organization has sold to the community.

"We started out first with four-inch flags that we were selling for \$10, two years ago," she said. "Last year we sold three- by six-foot flags, and this year we're getting them slightly smaller."

McRae said the new flags are ideal for people who live in smaller houses, and she hopes those who purchase them will display them.

"I was kind of disappointed because with the big flag a lot of people ordered them, but aren't flying it," she said.

The East York flag features the former borough's official three-colour logo: a blue and white E.Y. with a red maple leaf behind it.

That logo, as McRae remembered, was developed years ago through a contest created by former East York mayor Alan Redway.

"I think it was because there were core values there, that I personally am afraid may be disappearing," he said. "Core values like interest and involvement in the overall community, concern about your neighbors and actually spending money frugally as well."

The former mayor, who has lived in East York since 1969, is optimistic that these principles will remain with the new residents that have more recently made East York their home.

For those interested in purchasing a flag, contact Margaret McRae at 416-429-7821 or marg.mcrae@gmail.com

■ **Alan Redway**

