



YO-YO MANIA
More than 1,000 come to world record event at zoo
See page 7

TEARING UP ROADS
Ongoing construction in Scarborough
See pages 4 and 5



THE EAST TORONTO
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FIONA PERSAUD/The Observer

Lest we forget

Members of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 258 pay tribute at a Remembrance Day service at Scarborough Civic Centre on Nov. 6.

Farmers sprout at Bendale

AMANDA KWAN
The Observer

Amid the steady stream of cars and looming highrises, 26 raised garden beds are waiting to be harvested for the last time before winter arrives.

The market garden, on the front lawn of Bendale Business and Technical Institute near Midland and Lawrence Avenues, gives students the opportunity to try their hand at urban agriculture.

The project is a joint venture between the school and FoodShare, a non-profit food organization in Toronto.

“It got started just as an idea that we could grow our own food,” horticulture teacher Shane Jones said.

Bendale Market Garden is believed to be the first school-based market garden in the country.

Students are involved in the entire process from field to table. They even sell the produce at an on-site farmers’ market.

Small beginnings

They started with two small “footprint” gardens at the back of the school. After receiving a provincial grant, they expanded the project to the front lawn.

“It’s also highly visible, which is what we wanted,” Jones said. “It’s about building awareness and showing people that they can build their own gardens, they can grow their own food.”

Students planted a variety of vegetables — carrots, swiss chard, bok choy, callalou, cucumber and tomatoes — into 26 raised beds.

Co-op student Anton Crawford got involved with the garden after his guidance councillor asked him if he wanted to do something hands-on.

“I really like it because urban gardens are really good for the environment,” he said. “Food is grown closer to home and you actually know what is on your vegetables. I never knew it was so fresh and good-tasting food.”

Mixed emotions on Remembrance Day

Two women veterans share stories and memories of WWII

KIRSTEN PARUCHA
The Observer

Not all veterans celebrate Remembrance Day. Mary Rainville, a female veteran of the Second World War, is one of them.

“I stay away from Remembrance Day,” Rainville said. “It brings back too many sad memories. I used to, but then it got too hard for me.”

Rainville, 86, stopped attending Remembrance Day celebrations after her husband died 14 years ago. However, she still wears a red and black poppy.

“It means a lot,” she said when asked what the poppy means to her. She intended to say more, but was overwhelmed by tears. “It makes me proud,” was all she could muster.

During the war, Rainville was stationed in London, England, as a clerical worker for the Canadian Air Forces. Her husband, Vincent Rainville, was an army engineer who served in France and Kent, a

small city outside of London.

“I didn’t like being apart from my husband, but there wasn’t anything I could do about it,” Rainville said.

Fortunately, Rainville and her husband were never in the midst of the war, but there were several close calls. When asked if her husband had any encounters with the Germans, Rainville was again overwhelmed by tears.

“He was in a basement with some Americans when German troops arrived,” Rainville said.

“They weren’t supposed to be fighting, so the Americans told them not to shoot their guns. So they tried to leave through gullies in the basement. At the end of the gully was a dead German. He was missing the lower half of his body.”

Rainville was first recruited in 1943, and returned to her hometown, Quebec City, just before the war ended.

When she returned, Rainville and her husband moved from Quebec City to North Bay, Ont. They eventually



KIRSTEN PARUCHA/The Observer

During the Second World War, Mary Rainville (left) was a clerical worker stationed in London, England. Mary Chadwick, was a naval nurse stationed in Nova Scotia.

settled in Thessalon, Ont., and raised two kids. Rainville currently resides in the Tony Stacey Centre for Veterans Care in Scarborough.

Another female veteran at the centre had slightly more positive tales to retell.

Mary Chadwick, 91, joined the Canadian navy in 1942.

As a wren, she was stationed in a naval hospital in Halifax and Cornwallis, N.S.

“I absolutely loved working in the hospital,” Chadwick

said. “I liked being a nurse. It was a good experience.”

Chadwick’s three years of service weren’t all filled with happy memories.

“One of my brother’s ships was torpedoed by the Germans on the coast of Iceland,” Chadwick said. “William was 22 years old when he died.”

Chadwick received the news of the death of her eldest younger brother via a government telegram.

“My mother was really

devastated when she got the news,” Chadwick said. “But I bit the bullet and tried to carry on. I celebrate Remembrance Day with him in mind.”

Chadwick returned home from the war in December 1945. Born and raised in Toronto, Chadwick returned to the city. She eventually married and raised two sons.

For more of their stories, visit torontoobserver.ca

Hospital welcomes stem cell bank

Initiative allows new parents to save umbilical cord blood for future treatment

KIMBERLEE NANCEKIVELL
The Observer

The Scarborough Hospital has partnered with Inception, Canada's largest cord blood banking program to bring a different kind of health insurance to the wider community.

According to Barbara Milana Scott, the hospital's maternal newborn and childcare program patient care director, stem cells harvested from cord blood can be used in treating about 75 diagnoses, including some childhood cancers, leukemia, juvenile diabetes and cerebral palsy.

"Currently about 82 per cent of all of the stem cells that are harvested — whether it be cord blood or bone marrow — are from Caucasian people," Scott said. "So the chances of members of diverse communities finding a match if they need it are very slim."

Both Scott and Gerylne Ochab, vice-president of sales and marketing for Inception, said the hospital's diverse patient base was key in the decision to form a partnership.

The new partnership promotes the availability of cord blood banking and educating families on the uses of cord blood through information sessions.

"Banking your child's umbilical cord blood is painless and it's not going to take a lot of effort," Scott said. "Every year and every month they're coming up with new treatments to use these stem cells."

Ochab said Inception also works to keep health-care providers informed so they can offer the latest information to their patients.

A couple of weeks into the partnership with Inception, Scott says the numbers of patients deciding to bank their newborn's cord blood is being tracked to determine the success of the initiative.

"I'm hoping to see that more patients that belong to the diverse community are actually benefiting from the option of banking their cord blood," Scott said.

Scarborough residents have always had the opportunity to bank their children's cord blood, Scott said, but many were not aware of it. "We don't want one patient



KIMBERLEE NANCEKIVELL /The Observer

Michael Bachour (right) shows new son Elisandro to Scarborough patient care director Barbara Milana Scott. Bachour and his wife banked their son's cord blood.

to walk out of our doors and say, 'I didn't know and I wish that I did know.'"

She said on average the procedure costs \$1,100 for harvesting, treatments and the first year of storage, plus an average of \$100 for every year the family chooses to store the blood after that.

"Our moms will say: 'We

spend hundreds of dollars on the best strollers, the best highchairs, the cutest outfits. If we gave up something, we could afford this insurance policy on our child,'" Scott said.

Another new program, Wings of Hope, has been launched as part of the partnership. It provides free cord

blood harvesting to parents who cannot afford it but who show a need.

"Our hope is that any patient who truly wants and needs this, there would be some sort of option in terms of a payment plan," Scott said. "We don't want to see any patient turned away because of a financial burden."

Butt causes blaze

COURTNEY ROBERTS
The Observer

The blaze that broke out at 41 Kimbermount Dr. on Oct. 30 was likely an accident caused by a cigarette, officials say.

"A mattress is a highly combustible material," Toronto Fire Capt. Randy Piercy said. "A cigarette smolders, sets the mattress on fire and then the mattress erupts into flame."

Twenty-year-old Ying Tang, a Centennial College student, and another unnamed woman died in the fire. Yuanjie Guan, 22, remains in critical condition with severe burns.

Crews arrived on scene after dispatchers received a call from a concerned neighbour who saw smoke clouds coming from the residence.

Officials found Guan standing on the front lawn with burns to his feet, legs, arms and head. He was taken to Sunnybrook hospital where he was placed in an induced coma with burns to 60 per cent of his body.

Damage to the home is estimated at \$400,000 said Toronto Fire Capt. Mike Strapko.

A complete loss

Workers for the insurance company arrived on the scene Nov. 3.

"It's a complete loss. Actually, the entire house is going to be gutted out," said Guillermo Arenis, a State Farm Insurance worker.

He says it's difficult to assess the exact cost of damages at this point because the students' possessions are not covered under the homeowner policy.

In terms of rebuilding the house, it will be a long while before it's in livable condition, Arenis said.

"It might take about eight months to a year," he said. "[The house] has to be gutted out and then you have to get permits to rebuild it."

Tang and Guan rented rooms in the home owned by Tang's aunt.

Centennial College communications officer Mark Toljagic described Tang as a well-liked student who worked hard in her hospitality courses.

"She was an excellent student who enjoyed cooking and socializing with friends," Toljagic said. "Ying will be sorely missed here at the college."

Pandas coming to zoo despite cost concerns

SARAH MOORE
The Observer

The pandas are coming to Canada again, but where the \$20 million needed to bring the two cute and cuddly bears to the Toronto Zoo will come from and whether it will be a worthwhile investment is not yet black and white.

According to Coun. Giorgio Mammoliti, who sits on the zoo's board of management, several corporate sponsors have inquired about funding the initiative that will see a male and female panda lent to Canada for up to 15 years starting in 2012.

"Right now we just want [the funding] to come from sponsors and we are hoping that we can find someone who is prepared to pay the full cost, and then make their money back and more," Mammoliti said.

According to Mammoliti, it will cost the zoo about \$10 million to house the pandas, plus another \$10 million in fees to the Chinese government to keep them. But not everyone thinks it will be

money well spent.

"As far as we're concerned the best use of all monies would be to actually get the facility into proper repair and catch up on that backlog rather than adding new animals," said Julie Woodyer, campaign director of Zoocheck.

Mammoliti estimates the pandas will be a huge draw for the zoo, especially with the Pan Am Games set to

roll through Scarborough during the bears' visit.

I've been at this for too long to say that we aren't getting them

-Coun. Mammoliti

"We'll see a jump probably to the tune of about 700,000 people a year," he said.

"We're going to get people coming to Toronto, seeing the pandas, falling in love with them and wanting to come back specifically to see them."

The councillor estimated the zoo's attendance will increase from 1.3 million guests to approximately 2 million guests after the pandas arrive.

Several animal protection agencies are concerned that housing these endangered pandas may not be in the ani-



■ The giant panda is considered an endangered species with an estimated 2,000 left in the world.

■ Human development has greatly encroached on their habitat.

■ Their diet consists of several strains of bamboo, which are low in nutrients so they spend a lot of time eating.

■ The panda is a slow reproducing animal and the Chinese government has successfully artificially bred the animals. The Toronto Zoo will also be attempting to breed the animals when they come to the city.

Statistics provided by Born Free U.S.A.

mals' best interests.

"I find that the arguments that this is educational or that it relates to conservation to be a farce," said Barry Kent

Mackay, Canadian representative for Born Free U.S.A. "Most people who visit zoos go to be entertained. It's a prestige thing for the zoo."

Mammoliti disagreed and said educating the public, breeding the animals and putting money into conservation are at the top of the zoo's mandate.

Dr. Ming Tat Cheung, chair of the Panda Acquisition Task Force, said that the \$2 million per year being paid to the Chinese government is to go toward conservation initiatives and will bind the two countries together.

Mammoliti has been working with the Canadian and Chinese governments for almost 10 years to bring the animals to the zoo.

While the financing is still not finalized, Mammoliti is confident the animals will be in Scarborough come 2012.

"I've been at this for too long to say that we aren't getting them," he said. "We've been spending countless hours on this to ensure that these animals get to Toronto and we will strike the right deal to make sure that happens."

The bears will stay at the Toronto Zoo for a minimum of five years.

The remainder of their time in Canada will be split between the Calgary Zoo and the Granby Zoo in Quebec.

Community Briefs

STC reveals its new look

On Nov. 17 the Scarborough Town Centre will be unveiling the renovations that have been underway for two years. As well as a ribbon cutting ceremony it will be launching a Scarborough Walk of Fame and new Santa's workshop.

Walk down by the creek side

Don't know much about Highland Creek? Join William To in Milliken Park Nov. 13 to learn more about the creek, such as where the creek starts, how to keep it healthy and other details. The water walk, by Toronto's Chinese for Ecological Living group, will be hosted from 1:30 to 3 p.m. in three languages: English, Mandarin and Cantonese. Participants are required to meet at the park's recreation centre for the start of the event.

Register for MS Society dinner

The Scarborough chapter of the MS Society of Canada is hosting a dinner Nov. 24. Attendance is free for society members but is requested that registration be completed in advance. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$5 for children under 12. The event is taking place at the Blue Danube, 1686 Ellesmere Rd. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. For more information, call 416-922-6065.

Bridlewood branch gets boost

The Bridlewood branch of the Toronto Public Library is getting a makeover and the community is invited to learn about it. The branch will be relocating in December to a larger unit in Bridlewood Mall. Library staff will be on hand Nov. 19 from 4 to 8 p.m. to review the branch's new floor plan and answer questions.

Cancer care is community's call

The Scarborough Hospital invites the community to a town hall meeting discussing the future of cancer care and the TSH's role in building an integrated model of delivering cancer care within the community. The meeting will update residents, staff, doctors and volunteers about the hospital's progress. The event set for Nov. 16 at 7 p.m. in the Irene Stickland Centre at the Birchmount campus.

Thompson drives for TTC chair

Ward 37 councillor hopes to improve Toronto's transit system

FIONA PERSAUD
The Observer

Michael Thompson wants to take the wheel at the TTC and steer a better route for Scarborough commuters.

The Ward 37 councillor is a contender for the coveted position of TTC chair, a spot that's up for grabs this December when current chair Adam Giambrone's term on city council ends.

"One quarter of Toronto's population lives in Scarborough and a large portion rely on transit," said Thompson, a former TTC commissioner.

Thompson, who supports the Sheppard LRT, said there needs to be a blended approach of various forms of public transportation, including light rail, buses and subways, for the system to profit.

"The Sheppard [subway] line has an annual deficit of \$10 million," said Thompson, adding the future Vaughan subway would cost the city \$14 million a year due to a



lack of ridership.

The city needs to think more broadly about improving all elements of transportation, which includes steps to minimize the impact of rush hour traffic and traffic light timing, he said.

"If the system is running appropriately, it will reduce frustration," Thompson said.

Improving the level of riders' satisfaction and ensuring that their experience is a positive one is a

"centrepiece of concern," he said, adding riders have a part to play as well.

"There is a level of respect that is due to the riders [by employees] and by the riders to employees," Thompson said.

Thompson said he accepts the need to

raise fares but doesn't agree with how the hikes were brought in.

"People ought to pay a fare for the distance they travel," said Thompson. "That way, people will really pay the real cost to travel."

Nine commissioners will be appointed to the TTC board for a two-year term when the new

council is sworn in. One of the nine will be named chair.

Thompson was re-elected last month with an 83 per cent majority and over 15 thousand votes. He has represented Ward 37 since 2003.

As the chair of the Scarborough Community Council in 2006, Thompson campaigned to create the first TTC transit strategy for Scarborough.

"I have many ideas and a vision," Thompson said.



MICHAEL THOMPSON

Smart Boards a wise choice for schools

BRADLEY FEATHERSTONE
The Observer

They may be smart, but they sure are pricey.

Smart Boards can be found in growing numbers in schools all over the city. The touch screen whiteboards allow students to be interactive with their lessons.

Cedar Drive Public School got its first Smart Board last year and has since added two more. The dream is to have one in every classroom, but they're just too expensive, principal Karen Robertson said.

"They cost about \$1,400 and that's just for the Smart Board," Robertson said. "Then you have to add the markers, the screen, and a



BRADLEY FEATHERSTONE/The Observer

Fara Clermont high-fives her teacher Joan Debie after playing a game of hang man on the Smart Board.

laptop to go with it. Then you have to add the digital projector. So by the time you're done, you're probably looking at around \$3,000 when you do the whole package."

Smart Boards, although more costly, encourage learning methods that are more endearing to students than pens and paper.

"It's awesome," said Fara

Clermont, a Grade 6 student at Cedar Drive. "It helps us with math and multiplication."

George P. Mackie Public School has had Smart Boards for four years now. They now have five in total, and with only one class for each grade, this means that nearly every classroom has a Smart Board. The school paid for it all through parent council fundraising, according to Cedar Drive vice-principal Cheryl Yamamoto, who recently transferred to Cedar Drive from George P. Mackie.

George P. Mackie may be close in proximity to Cedar Drive – about a 15-minute walk away – but the neighbourhood surrounding Mackie is much wealthier in comparison to Cedar Drive's.

Cedar Drive doesn't have

parent-council fundraising.

The school serves children from Scarborough Village, one of the poorest neighbourhoods in the city. Due to the area's low income levels, the school gets money from the Inner City Model School fund, a TDSB program that gives extra funding to schools in less affluent areas.

The program helps bridge the gap between schools in rich and poor areas, offering schools like Cedar Drive a chance to access technology such as Smart Boards.

"It helps make up the difference for needier schools that can't afford technology. We should be just as equitable as every other school," said Robertson, who is hoping for more Smart Boards in Cedar Drive classrooms.

Death prompts new traffic light at Finch and Blackbird Gate

KIMBERLEE NANCEKIVELL
The Observer

Traffic signals have been installed at the intersection of Finch Avenue and Blackbird Gate after a fatal pedestrian accident there a year ago.

Scarborough's community council recommended the city install the traffic signals after a 63-year-old woman was struck and killed at the intersection while trying to

catch a bus in October 2009.

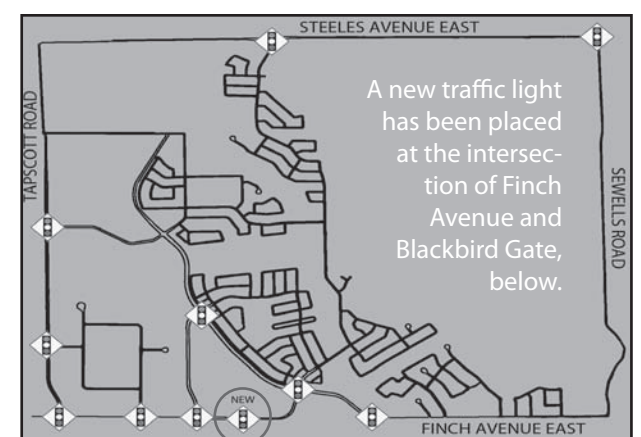
"They'll be turned on as soon as Hydro gives us a connection," said Robert Declair, the city's supervisor of traffic signals.

The community council recommendation went against a Transportation Services report, which deemed the signals unnecessary.

"We do regret what happened there," said Marko Oinonen, Scarborough district manager of traffic operations.

"But to install traffic signals, there has to be an established pattern of the problem. An isolated situation doesn't necessarily justify or warrant the installation of signals."

The transportation report included Toronto Police collision reports for the intersection for the four years prior to the fatal accident. The collision reports included just one other accident: a rear-end collision involving two cars due to wet roadways.



Despite the evidence against the need for the traffic signals, Ward 42 councillor Raymond Cho gathered the names of 147 residents in support of the installation

and presented it to city council. The recommendation was approved in January and construction began in September.

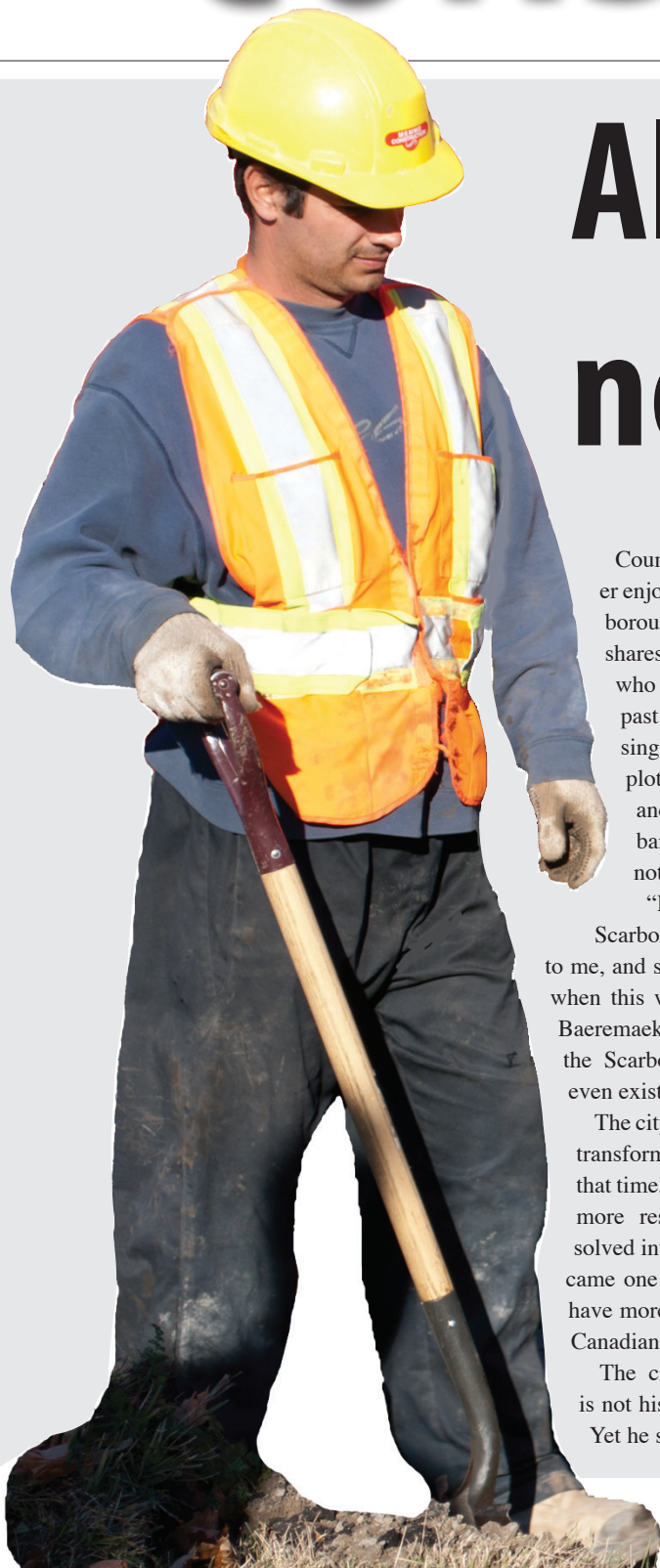
Cho was unavailable for comment.

FEATURE

STORIES AND PHOTOS BY
BILLY COURTICE
AMANDA KWAN
JOSH UNGAR
The Observer

With the city's population growing rapidly, can the roads, housing and transit keep up?

SCARBOROUGH UNDER CONSTRUCTION



All grown up and no place to go

Highrises forced away from suburbs

Councillor Glenn De Baeremaeker enjoys stepping out into his Scarborough backyard in privacy. He shares the dream of many people who moved to Scarborough in the past 30 years. He wants his cozy, single-family home on a spacious plot of land, far from the hustle-and-bustle of downtown's urban cluster. But is this dream a notion of years past?

"People who have lived in Scarborough all their lives come up to me, and say, 'Glenn. I can remember when this was all just dirt roads,'" De Baeremaeker says. "Thirty years ago the Scarborough Town Centre didn't even exist."

The city has experienced an extreme transformation in those 30 years. In that time, it has gained nearly 300,000 more residents, and it's been dissolved into the City of Toronto. It became one of three cities in Canada to have more foreign-born residents than Canadians.

The city De Baeremaeker serves is not his grandfather's Scarborough. Yet he still feels that Scarborough is

an escape from the city.

"There are still plenty of places here where you can still walk to your school," De Baeremaeker. "There are still safe little cul-de-sacs with grassy lots."

De Baeremaeker says the highrise condominiums filling out the areas along arterial roads would not be closing in on the single-family homes anytime soon.

"It will be at least 20, 30 years until we ever see that," he says. "It takes that few decades before you can see that transformation."

Highland Creek RE/MAX agent Suzette Thompson says it could be even longer than that before Scarborough is engulfed in the city.

"I think that Scarborough will always be a place to raise a family, even 20 years down the road," Thompson says. "It will still be predominantly single-family homes on bigger lots for years to come."

She does admit, however, that Scarborough's space for spacious lots is spent.

"We are definitely running out of room for detached houses," Thompson says. "In 15 years we will be completely out of room."

The official city plan is to keep highrise "urban villages" north of Highway 401 says Coun. Ron Moeser. The majority of condominiums in the future will be built at centres like the Scarborough Town Centre before the city looks to build in established neighbourhoods closer to the lake.

The lack of space for construction doesn't disappoint everybody, however.

Centennial Community Residents' Association (CCRA) president Jeff Forsyth wants the highrise growth far away from his cozy Port Union area neighbourhood.

"We don't have many issues just how it is here," Forsyth says. "We try to stay away from all the issues in the big city."

The city's growing condominium sales also pose problems for traffic and transit in the area, as the roads are already strained.

Environmentalist Jim Robb of Friends of the Rouge Watershed said that better GO Transit and TTC options have been largely ignored, while City Hall continues to approve condo developments in formerly undeveloped areas.

I think that Scarborough will always be a great place to raise a family, even 20 years down the road
-Suzette Thompson

Three local roads make hall of shame

Timo Puhakka used to drive regularly on Lawrence Avenue when he was visiting a friend at Scarborough General Hospital. During that time, he had more maintenance issues with his car. Since then, he has noticed a decrease.

"If you're driving in the centre lane, you're going to be hitting potholes and bumps from where the patches are different levels," says Puhakka, who is President of the Guildwood Village Community Association.

"It costs money. You can expect all sorts of problems because your car is being bounced around."

The Canadian Automobile Association recently released their list of the Top 20 Worst Roads in Ontario. Three of the Toronto streets on the list pass through Scarborough: Lawrence Avenue, Steeles Avenue and Kingston Road.

Road conditions are one of his constituents' top concerns, Ward 38 councillor Glenn De Baeremaeker says.

"Lawrence Avenue is like a washboard," he says. "(It's) a very unpleasant feeling when

you're driving your car at 40 or 60 km an hour. It makes people feel unsafe and it makes people concerned about their cars."

The CAA's list wasn't a surprise to city officials, says Joe Condarduri, manager of Transportation Services for Toronto.

"We knew about them. It's just that we can't get to them for various reasons."

One reason is coordination. Before Transportation Services can start construction, they have to wait for other city agencies to complete their work, Condarduri says.

"We want to make sure all the sewers are done properly, the water mains are done, all the gas utilities are done," he says. "Then we go in and do the street."

But the main reason is a lack of funding. The city has a \$280-million backlog of road repairs. And that figure is expected to increase to over \$400 million in the next five years, De Baeremaeker says.

But this year's backlog would have been higher if Toronto didn't get \$70 million dollars

from the federal government's infrastructure stimulus fund, Condarduri says.

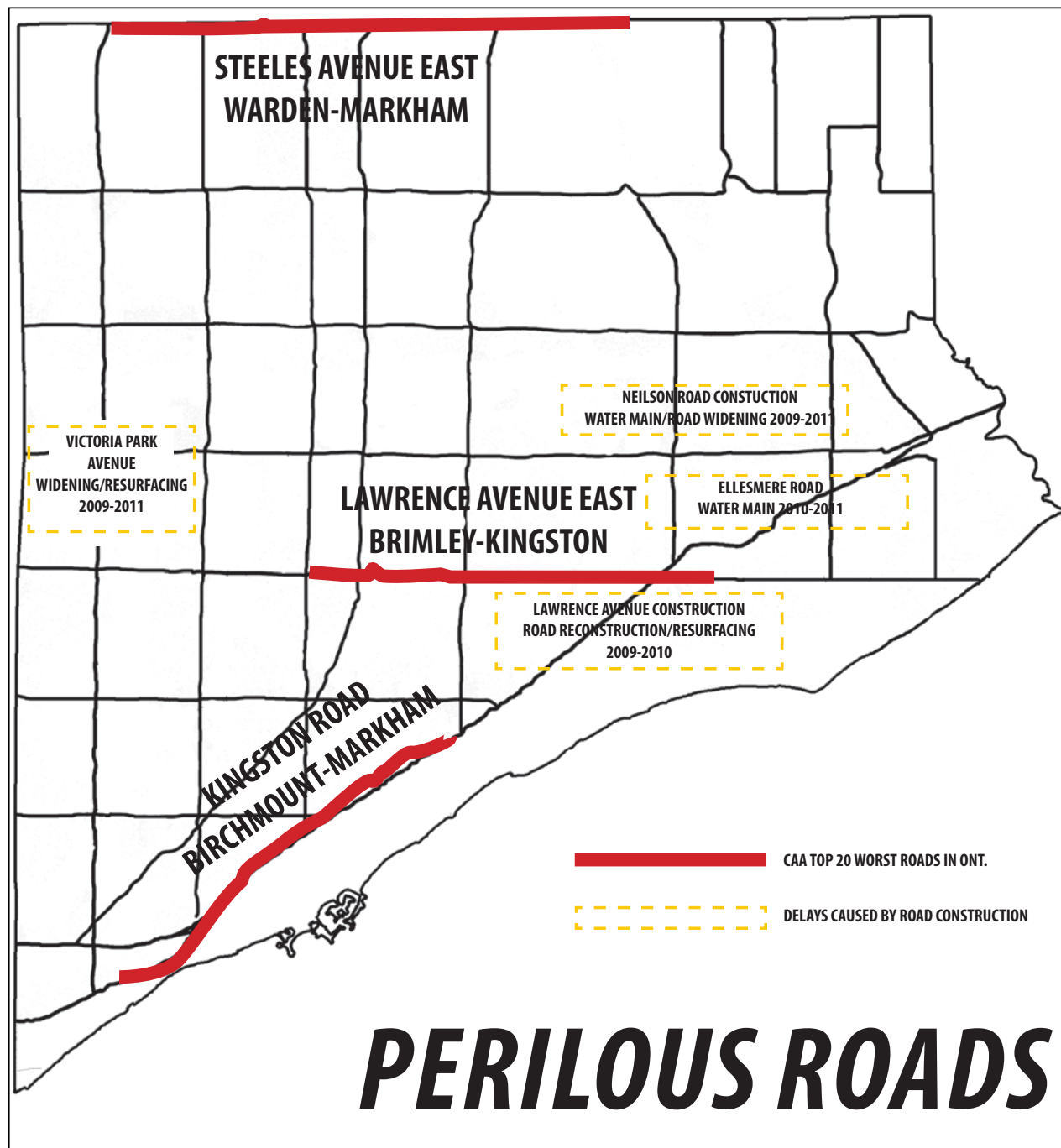
In suburban areas like Scarborough, the backlog is partly due to how these communities were built, De Baeremaeker says.

"Large swaths of Scarborough were constructed within 10 to 20 years of each other," he says. "In the 50s and 60s, we built Lawrence, Ellesmere, Finch, Steeles.... The roads have now all reached their 50 year lifespan and they all need repair at the same time."

De Baeremaeker says the solution would be to spend more money on roads, but that would mean an increase in taxes — an option his residents don't support.

One of Rob Ford's campaign promises was to devote more money toward eliminating the backlog.

"That's excellent news for us," Condarduri says. "But we'll see it when we see it."



City transit-ions

One of Scarborough's most nagging issues is its waning transit system.

"Rob Ford plans to take away transit from a lot of people," De Baeremaeker says. "Transit City was going to spread a wide net of services and lead to huge improvement in efficiency."

By the time the 2015 Pan Am Games roll around, Scarborough was supposed to be equipped with multiple light-rail transit trains that would finally give the residents in East Scarborough a transit option besides slow, lengthy bus routes. Instead, Ford plans to cancel the LRT trains and extend a subway line to the Scarborough Town Centre.

"Ford's plans don't help anyone living east of McCowan Road or north of highway 401 whatsoever," De Baeremaeker says. "If you live in areas like Malvern or West Rouge, you're getting absolutely nothing."

Rougeville Community Association president Shamoon Poonawala says that transit setbacks are only adding to the area's growing traffic problem.

"Transit is very subpar on this side of the city," Poonawala says. "Until you get people proper transit, nobody

is going to give up their cars."

What has disturbed many critics even more than Ford's current plans are the financial implications that cancelling Transit City will have for a city already struggling to get out of debt.

"The plans for Transit City are already done, funding has been obtained and construction has been contracted out," De Baeremaeker says. "Ford plans to step in, stop everything we are doing and smash the entire plan into smithereens."

"The TTC can't even handle its own operating costs, how can anyone promise extras?" questioned Dr. Nelson Wiseman, a political science professor from U of T.

"I did the calculations, and it looks like the subway will cost an additional four billion to what he (Rob Ford) has been saying," De Baeremaeker says. "How can you give us a subway without increasing taxes?"

De Baeremaeker says it is unlikely that anything will be ready for the 2015 deadline.

"In my opinion, nothing will be done for the Pan Am Games. Ford is making us go backwards," De Baeremaeker says.



Cars line up on Neilson Rd. at one of many construction sites around Scarborough.

Pandas not black and white issue

Zoos are no place for pandas. And the reasons Toronto Zoo board members are using aren't captivating enough. Toronto is a "multicultural community that we haven't enjoyed for the last 35 years" and the bears would "bring us aspects of the community," says Peter Evans, acting zoo CEO. But what exactly is his message?

If he means moving Chinese animals to the zoo will somehow create more cultural diversity in Canada, that's not a good enough reason to spend millions of dollars.

Coun. Giorgio Mammoliti predicts zoo attendance will increase by 700,000 a year. The zoo could see a jump in revenue, of up to \$10 million in the first year. But this isn't a certainty.

What is certain, however, is the \$12 million cost for walls to confine pandas. Or rather, "cave-like dwellings," according to various publications — is a far cry from their lush green wildlife.

The zoo would be taking away the freedom the pandas get when living in their natural habitat.

Sure, they may live longer giant pandas can live 25-30 years in captivity, unlike the 10-20 years in the wild but what about their quality of life?

Like other animals confined in zoos, studies have shown pandas can suffer from behavioral problems, become overweight and are unable to mate normally. Also, the birth and survival rates of cubs in captivity have been so low that most are now bred by artificial insemination.

Instead of parading \$20-million pandas in "cave-like dwellings," there are other ways to educate the public on conservation issues. Host fundraisers, give speeches, or get children involved in school environmental clubs and projects.

The Toronto Zoo just had the Yo-Yo for the Dodo event to raise awareness for endangered species. There's an example.

Money should be spent on preserving wildlife habitats and reserves instead of building facilities for pandas.

The zoo should be promoting captivity as a way of improving the well-being of pandas, instead of viewing them as cash cows — or in this case, cash pandas.

It can at least try to put at ease the minds of people who are sensitive about the captivity of animals.

-Alice Hoang

Walkers: Let there be street lights

With pedestrian fatalities on the rise, what will it take to make streets safer? Installing additional traffic signals is one idea.

But wait, they require fatal accidents to take place first. Perhaps Toronto should focus on prevention instead.

Traffic signals were recently installed at the intersection of Finch Avenue and Blackbird Gate after a fatal accident last year. But apparently the recommendation for the new traffic signals was deemed "unnecessary" because there had not been a precedent set. In other words, this isolated incident wasn't enough to warrant a new traffic signal.

But it's a wonder that precedence isn't set, since Toronto began the year with 11 pedestrian fatalities in the first 11 days. And while most of the blame for these accidents usually falls on the injured parties, it's irrelevant because any safety measure used to prevent accidents should not be deemed unnecessary. After all, pedestrian fatalities are the ones who don't get to walk away.

Toronto police launched a safety campaign Nov. 8 to protect pedestrians against the dangers of the road, revealing that pedestrian deaths make up about 50 per cent of traffic fatalities. At least that program is one step in the right direction.

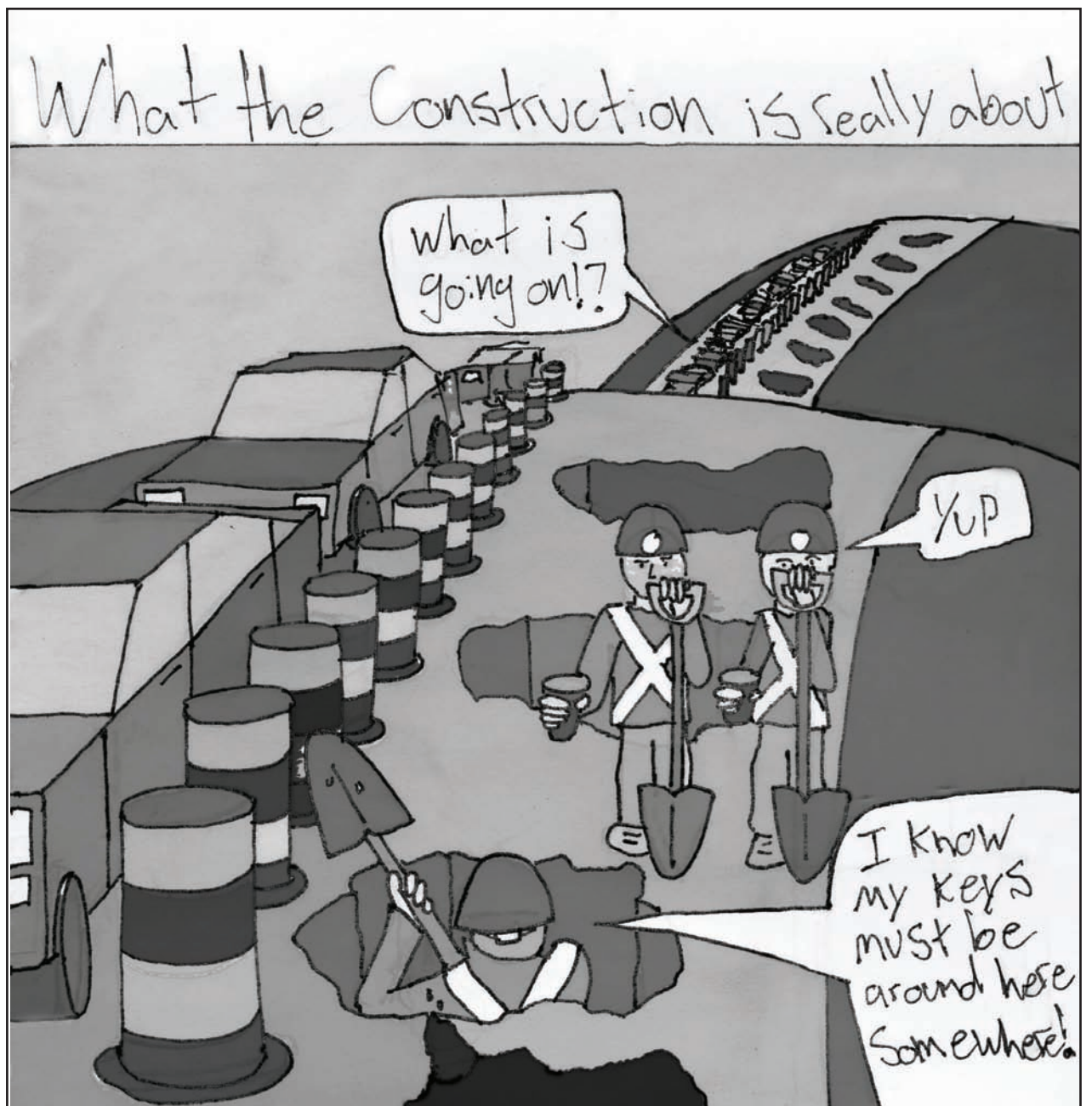
Now, there don't seem to be a lot of obstacles that prevent installing these necessary traffic signals. The typical cost is between \$2,500 and \$3,500. It's safe to say that many of the parties involved in these pedestrian fatalities paid city taxes so that services like traffic signals would be available for safer streets.

To add insult to injury, the new traffic signal at Finch Avenue and Blackbird Gate is still waiting for hydro to connect it. Could it be that this "unnecessary" installation is being used to cool resident complaints instead of providing safer streets?

Perhaps it's time the city took a better look at how to prevent pedestrian fatalities. The easiest way to reduce the number of pedestrian fatalities is to lower speed limits, narrow streets so that it won't take long to cross, and install lights to help pedestrians and drivers navigate more efficiently.

For now, a traffic signal stands at the intersection of Finch Avenue and Blackbird Gate, waiting to be given the green light. Hopefully it will increase safety in the area so that further unfortunate accidents will be prevented.

-Angela Rotundo



BRADLEY FEATHERSTONE/The Observer

Deposit cord blood in public bank

It is rumoured that Walt Disney had his body frozen after his death so he could be revived in the future if modern science makes it possible.

Today, Scarborough residents have the opportunity to do the same — well, kind of.

The banking of umbilical cord blood, which is rich in stem cells, may have made it possible to one day cheat death.

It may not have the science-fiction movie feel that thawing yourself out years after your death does, but being able to store what may be the key to biological invincibility does seem a bit too good to be true.

Imagine that your perfectly healthy baby one day grows up to develop an agonizing, life-threatening illness and that you, as the parent, did not store any of their blood that could end up saving their life.

Never fear.

Private cord blood collection agencies have the answer.

For a few thousand dollars, you may be able to ensure that your family will be invincible to many of the most life-threatening diseases known to man.

Sounds pretty great, right?

I mean, how can you put a price on the ultimate form of life insurance?

What they don't tell you is that in most cases doctors cannot use a baby's



Sarah Moore

For a few thousand dollars, you may be able to ensure that your family will be invincible

own cord blood for treatment because the disease they are trying to treat is most likely already in that blood.

Ok, well if that option's out, maybe a family member could use it down the road if they get sick, right?

Blood from a relative will be a better match than relying on what can be found at a public blood bank.

That's not quite true either.

The amount of usable stem cells in umbilical cord blood is far less than what anyone over approximately 100 pounds would require for a successful

transplant.

The blood is a better match, but it can only be used for children, and even then, the transplant success rate is still not 100 per cent.

So really, privately banking umbilical cord blood upon conception is a really pricey form of life insurance which may never pay out in the end.

Sure, there are benefits. Individuals in minority groups, or with less common blood types, may have a harder time finding a suitable match if the need presents itself.

The private banking of umbilical cord blood could also be useful if there are young children in the family and the family has a history of illness and disease.

Otherwise, privately banking a child's cord blood may not yet ensure that the child will grow up to be impermeable to disease.

Like any insurance policy, there's a risk that you may not see a payout on your investment.

However, donating cord blood to a public bank increases the likelihood of a payoff for someone.

They say "blood is in you to give," but perhaps the best option, is to donate a newborn's cord blood to a public bank where there is a guarantee someone will benefit.

THE EAST TORONTO OBSERVER

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Annie lights up Scarborough stage

Production creates family atmosphere among actors

MEGAN HARRIS

The Observer

Devin Cecchetto has been waiting a long time for her starring role in *Annie*.

Though rehearsals for the Scarborough Village Theatre's production of *Annie* began two months ago, Cecchetto's preparations actually began six years ago. She made her acting debut as Molly in her elementary school's performance of *Annie*.

Lead role

Cecchetto, now 12, was thrilled when she heard this time around she had the lead role.

"[The producer] said, 'You're Annie!', and I was like 'Oh my gosh!'" she said.

On Saturday night, an audience of about 200 people gathered to watch the show's third sold-out performance. Tickets for all dates are sold out, with the show running

until Nov. 20.

The audience appeared captivated throughout the evening, from the time the orchestra began the show with the opening notes of familiar song, 'Tomorrow', until a standing ovation was given to a grinning Cecchetto.

Acting experience

Cecchetto has always been passionate about performing. She has participated in several school plays, and has been in the Canadian Children's Opera for 3 years, and in the Toronto Beaches Children's Chorus for 4 years.

Cecchetto and other cast members said while they love being on stage, part of the fun is the process of putting together a musical like *Annie*.

"I like preparing a show, and seeing it go from the page to the stage," said James R. Woods, who plays Oliver Warbucks. "It's taking the things that are in the script and in the core, and watching



Courtesy of Raph Nogal

Twelve-year-old Devin Cecchetto, who plays Annie, sings "Maybe" in Scarborough Village Theatre's sold-out show.

them come to life with a new group of actors every time."

David Rudat, who played three different roles, described the atmosphere backstage as "family-like."

"If you don't know something, someone will help you out," Rudat said. Taking part in *Annie* was also special to

him because his two daughters, Sydney, 12, and Roslyn, 10, are also in the show.

Shannon Cottrell, a producer for *Annie*, says that the show has been in the works since February, when artistic staff were hired. Auditions took place in June and rehearsals in September. With

every production, an audition call goes out, and anyone can call in to book an audition. Cottrell says that for *Annie*, they were "overwhelmed with people wanting to audition."

Cottrell said that she finds the actors at Scarborough Village Theatre very profes-

sional, even the children, some of whom are as young as ten. She said working on *Annie* has been a great experience, and she'll be sad to see it end.

"Every time you leave one little family, it's hard because you'll never have that experience again," Cottrell said.

Yo-yos a no-go at the Toronto Zoo

Participants fail to break world record

MEGAN HARRIS

The Observer

Though the air was chilly, spirits remained high at the Yo-Yo for the Dodo event at the Toronto Zoo on Nov. 6.

The event's purpose was to raise money and awareness for endangered species and set a Guinness World Record for the largest amount of people simultaneously yo-yoing.

Canadian yo-yoer, Edward (Fast Eddy) McDonald, was also in attendance, attempting to set his own world record for completing the most "hop the fence" tricks in one minute.

Despite the large crowd at the event— 1,376 people came out— a new record wasn't set. The previous world record remains at 2,236.

McDonald also failed to set a record, which is currently 144 tricks in one minute.

Though McDonald and participants were disappointed, everyone appeared to enjoy meeting other yo-yoers, and learning about endangered species. Booths set up at the event gave visitors in-



MEGAN HARRIS/The Observer

Edward (Fast Eddy) McDonald tries to set his fourth Guinness World Record for yo-yoing at the Toronto Zoo's Yo-Yo for the Dodo fundraising event held on Nov. 6.

formation about polar bears, hornbills, Komodo dragons, and Ngege fish, which will all benefit from the \$2,600 raised that day.

Guinness World Records adjudicator Carey Low moderated the record attempts. He said he loves judging such events and seeing how excited people get.

"Every one of these things is totally different, and every time, the people involved are

really fun, passionate, and energetic," Low said.

Many participants were avid yo-yoers, coming from clubs such as Yo-Yo Toronto. One of the club's newest and youngest members, Jeremy Bell, was at the event.

Though he is just 11-years-old and has only been yo-yoing for six months, the group let him join because of his passion for the activity.

"I love learning new tricks

and trying new yo-yos," Bell said.

Another event participant, Donald Cook, drove overnight from Vermont with his daughters Olivia, 11, and Selena, 4, to attend. Cook said himself and his daughters are big fans of animals, and their favourite zoo to visit is Toronto's. He has been an avid yo-yoer since childhood, something he passed on to his daughter Olivia.

"Yo-yoing is a challenge," said Olivia. "It's something you can just pick up and have some fun, and it doesn't cost all that much."

Prof's new rock doc shakes geology scene

ALINA SMIRNOVA

The Observer

After filming documentaries in over 20 countries, geologist Nick Eyles still appreciates Ontario's landscapes the most.

"I have a peculiar fondness for the Canadian Shield," Eyles said. "As good as Ethiopia was, it's not as good as Georgian Bay."

The University of Toronto Scarborough professor recently finished a five-part documentary, *Geologic Journey II*, for CBC's *Nature of Things*. His first series, which focused



NICK EYLES

on Canada, is now part of the curriculum for 45 per cent of Canadian schools.

The film shows scenes from around the world such as active volcanoes, majestic mountains and societies that deal with tectonic movements resulting in earthquakes and eruptions.

The image of geology as boring comes from teaching that emphasizes textbook work and underemphasizes field work, Eyles said.

"It's taught totally inappropriately in many schools and universities," he said. "It

bores people and puts them right off."

But learning about the earth and experiencing something like a volcano can be humbling, executive producer Michael Allder said.

"You realize you are a part in this big opera that goes on every day," Allder said. "Every single place we went to had something about it that really attracted my curiosity."

The series started as an idea for a film about the Bruce Trail along the Niagara Escarpment, where he often walks his dog, Allder said.

After the success of the first series, the second was finished this year and runs until Nov. 25. Eyles said he considers the second one to be more effective scientifically because he was able to work together with CBC to research it prior to shooting.

Geologic Journey II was also the best part of his teaching career, Eyles said.

"In an average year, I might teach 500 students. The first episode of this series was seen by 660,000 people," he said. "All those people had a lesson in geology — and they liked it."

SPORTS & LEISURE

Chess club checks into new home

JOSEF JACOBSON
The Observer

After an unsettled 50 years, the Scarborough Chess Club (SCC) may have finally found a permanent home.

The SCC, for much of its half-century existence, has moved from venue to venue due to operating costs and fluctuating membership. For the past year, the SCC has met in the Birkdale Community Centre.

"It's a great facility. It's the right size for us and it's really accessible," said SCC treasurer Andrew Philip. "As long as we pay our dues on time, it looks like we're going to stay here."

Club trying to settle down

This stability is a welcome change, said club president Maurice Smith.

"We were at Macey Hall [when the club started in 1960], which was around Victoria Park and Danforth, and we've moved at least seven times since then," said Smith, who joined the SCC in 1976.

The club almost closed on many occasions due to enrolment trouble in the face of computer chess dominance in the '90s and 2000s.

"People started playing chess on the Internet and I saw



JOSEF JACOBSON/The Observer

The Scarborough Chess Club meets every Thursday at the Birkdale Community Centre, which has been their home for the past year.

membership start to drop," Philip said. "We were down to about a dozen people in the mid '90s. It looked pretty grim."

More players are now favouring face-to-face chess over online chess, Smith said.

"Now with the young players, they start learning on the computer and then they come

to the chess club," he said. "Now the Internet seems to be helping us."

In the 2004-2005 season, the club again came close to folding because of membership and venue woes. The club's home at the time, Royal Canadian Legion Hall Branch 42, was up for sale, which led to the SCC's fourth move in

five years, to the Jack Goodlad Community Centre.

"About five years ago, we were down to probably our lowest: between 20 and 30 members," Smith said. "People were staying at home and playing on the computer rather than going to a chess club."

Though membership turnover remains a problem, a

spike in the number of younger players is keeping the club healthy and competitive.

"Interest has grown," Smith said. "We have a lot of young players now. I played a 7-year-old two weeks ago and he was crushing me."

The SCC celebrated its Golden Jubilee this past summer and plans to continue pro-

moting chess in Scarborough by sponsoring tournaments and inviting grandmasters like Alexei Shirov to give lectures.

"He played simultaneous games with club members," Smith said about Shirov's last visit. "He played 25 members of the club at once. Two of us beat him, six drew him and he won the rest."

Sports Briefs

RH King boys volleyball team tops East Region

The Birchmount Park Collegiate Institute boys volleyball team lost their Nov. 9 East Region Senior Tier 1 game against RH King Academy by a score of 3-2. With the victory, RH King earned the East Region title. Both teams will play again as they face off next week in the AAAA City Championships.

Woburn juniors advance to city championships

Woburn Collegiate Institute East Region junior boys volleyball team defeated West Hill Collegiate Institute in a 2-0 sweep of their three-game series Nov. 9 for the East Region title. Woburn will ride the momentum of this win into the City Championships.

Passion keeps Scarborough cricket alive

Despite funding and exposure problems, league celebrates 30 years

JOSEF JACOBSON
The Observer

Organized recreational cricket has been around a long time in Scarborough but funding issues continue to hinder its development, members of the Highland Creek Cricket Club say.

"Cricket is like hockey when it comes to equipment: it's expensive," club treasurer Paul Casinathan says. "But it's starting to grow at a grassroots level. Our goal as a team is to expand and have younger people play."

The Scarborough Cricket Association is set to celebrate its 30th anniversary at its annual banquet on Nov. 20.

So what is the driving force behind the longevity of cricket in Scarborough despite financial woes?

"It's the passion," Highland club batsman Sean De Saram says. "You have immigrants coming every year and they want to keep their tradition."

"Among the Asian and West Indian communities, [cricket] is very popular,"

says Robert Parish, secretary and wicket keeper. "But I think it's starting to expand beyond the traditional audience. Everything bodes well for the future."

Along with specialty television channels and vast Internet coverage, increased funding at the school level has also helped nurture cricket in Canada, club members say.

Despite the growing interest in cricket, City of Toronto politicians are not capitalizing on the opportunity to reach immigrant com-

munities through the sport, says captain Adam de Costa.

"The biggest expense for most teams is the playtime and the city is not doing anything to help," he says. "They keep raising the rates."

Toronto also has to work harder to maintain Scarborough's cricket grounds, says batsman Rajiv Krishna.

"The city doesn't cut the grass short enough and the ground is uneven so the ball won't even make it past the 30-yard circle," Krishna says. "In the last

year, we got Astroturf grounds. Astroturf is cheaper and convenient and easier to play on."

But overhauling cricket grounds can be a huge expense.

"To fix something like that, [the city] has to redo the whole grounds," de Costa says. "It costs \$10,000 each to redo a cricket ground and \$3,000-\$4,000 just for the pitch."

De Costa says this makes it difficult to find grounds for recreational cricket, since there are only eight cricket grounds in Scarborough to be shared among the association's 29 teams.

For a map of Scarborough's cricket grounds, visit torontoobserver.ca



Highland Creek Cricket Club members (from left) Rajiv Krishna, Sean De Saram, Adam de Costa and Paul Casinathan.

JOSEF JACOBSON/The Observer