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Scarborough's best
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SPECIAL EDITION

Best of 2009

Asian fusion meets
the art world in
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THE EAST TORONTO OBSERVER

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'Tis the season to be wary

Fraudulent charity boxes

RIMA RAMOUL
The Observer

The stores are beautifully decorated, songs are flowing from every door and people are in a generous, giving mood.

But they are being warned to be extra cautious to ensure their donations reach the right places and people.

The Toronto Police Service has warned of an ongoing fraud this holiday season.

Donation canisters supposedly representing SickKids Foundation have been found to be fraudulent.

The canisters are seen inside malls, restaurants and storefronts.

Though the canisters look like the real deal, police say the telephone number listed on them is not affiliated with the foundation.

SickKids Foundation was disappointed when the fraud was brought to their attention, president Ted Garrard said in press release.

"There is a tremendous need for the community's support, especially at this time of the year when we typically see an increase in donations to SickKids," he said. "We hope this incident does not impact the legitimate fundraising programs being conducted on our behalf."

Police advise those who wish to open their wallets this holiday season to make their donations directly to the charities. To confirm the authenticity of a fundraising campaign, call 416-813-1218 or email public.affairs@sick-kidsfoundation.com.



MATTHEW ALLEYNE/The Observer

A messy start to a long winter

After a long fall, the first storm of the season saw motorists putting their driving skills to the test and pedestrians fighting to keep their feet dry on Wednesday. This car wound up taking out one of the city's new road signs on a light standard.

'We live in fear' monks say

Second suspected arson at temple sparks worries of more anti-Buddhist attacks

TRISTAN CARTER
The Observer

Scarborough Buddhists say they fear for their safety after their temple erupted in flames on Nov. 27 in what is suspected to be the site's second case of arson in seven months.

"We have come here to live in peace," said Ahangama Rathanasiri, a monk at the temple. "Now we don't have peace. We live in fear."

Police and fire services responded to the call at the Maha Vihara Buddhist Meditation Centre on Kingston Road just before 2 a.m.

Monks living beside the temple were unaware of the fire until the fire department arrived. A TTC driver reported the fire while on the job.

"He had passed by in a bus," Rathanasiri said. "So when he saw this he immediately called the police."

Bottles of flammable liquid were discovered on the porch where extensive damage occurred to the outside of the building, according to reports.

"Police have determined, along with fire services, that

it was arson and the investigation is ongoing," said Constable Wendy Drummond.

On May 16 a similar fire erupted at another entrance of the building where bottles of flammable liquid were also found.

Police have not yet apprehend those responsible.

"We enlisted the services of our police dogs and they did attend and were able to track a bit of a trail but unfortunately the trail ended and it didn't result in any arrests," Drummond said. "At this point we do not have any suspects."

Increased patrols

The attacks on the predominantly Sinhalese temple have occurred at a time when civil war is happening in Sri Lanka between the Sinhalese and Tamils.

This latest attack occurred on the same day as the Tamils' "Martyrs' Day" which commemorates Tamil fighters who have died in the conflict.

Rathanasiri said he did not think the arsonists had any problems with the monks at

the temple. "The purpose is to hurt Sinhalese Buddhists."

Even before the latest attack the monks had been hoping to increase security.

"Within two weeks we are going to install the cameras," Rathanasiri said. "After that I don't know exactly what date we can start the fence work. First we have to collect money."

The temple was hoping for funding from the government to build the fence but so far none has come.

"Our consulate general had told us that the government had implemented a pilot project to use some money for the security purposes of charitable organizations," Rathanasiri said. "We submitted all the documents to the government. So far we didn't get any money. We have to collect some money from the congregation and build that fence."

According to Drummond, since the last incident, police have increased patrols in the area. The temple property was once a favoured speed trap spot of 43 Division police until some members complained.



TRISTAN CARTER/The Observer

Ahangama Rathanasiri, a monk at the Maha Vihara Buddhist Meditation Centre, surveys the damage.

NEWS



AMANDA LY/The Observer

Members of Black Pearls encouraged Scarborough high school students at a recent presentation to continue their education. From left are Pearls Renee Rawlins, Kim Tull and Shellene Drakes-Tull.

Black Pearl inspired by this area

AMANDA LY
The Observer

Kim Tull of the Black Pearls grew up in east Scarborough and credits the multicultural neighbourhood for helping instil a positive sense of self-esteem.

Black Pearls Community Services, a non-profit group, was co-founded in 2003 by Tull and Renee Rawlins who saw a lack of career-driven, educated role models for girls in the black, West Indian and African community.

After moving to Pickering at the beginning of high school, Tull, now 33, experienced some adversity.

"There was a lot of racial tension in my high school because the year I came in,

it was like everyone from all various races was going to high school at the same time," she said. "It was a great experience, but trying in terms of folks learning about each other."

One of the programs the group offers is BP Uncensored in which young men and women can have open and honest discussions about racism, gender roles, media representation and other issues that affect them.

In the past, they've worked with Sir Wilfrid Laurier Collegiate where the lessons learned in this program are applied to everyday life in Laurier's girls' group.

"A lot of the issues that young black women face affect young black men, or

they're involved in some level," Tull said.

"The issues are not isolated, so the dialogue needs to happen between they guys and the girls."

The group hopes its work with schools and community organizations will encourage students to pursue their passions in life, whether that is college, apprenticeship, university or something that falls outside those borders.

"Find something you're passionate about and be an advocate for it and create programs and services to fulfil that need. That message translates across all genders."

Tull was a star athlete and student in high school, but was only encouraged to pursue track by one particular

teacher, she said.

However, she had support from other teachers and her parents never let her think that university wasn't in her future.

The importance of positive reinforcement and high expectations is important for students, Tull said.

"When we talk to young girls and they feel empowered that they can accomplish anything they want, that to me is what it's all about. That's where the pride comes in."

So far, Black Pearls have given \$10,000 in scholarships and \$3,000 to community groups.

For more information, go to black-pearls.org.

Heaps to get his legal fees back

Council ignores legal advice, votes to pay councillor \$36K

GESILAYEFA AZORBO
The Observer

Going against its own legal advice, Toronto city council voted overwhelmingly to reimburse Ward 35 councillor Adrian Heaps for legal fees stemming from a three-year-old lawsuit.

Ward 30 councillor Paula Fletcher moved on Dec. 5 that council pay the outstanding \$36,000 balance of Heaps' fees, incurred as a result of a defamation suit brought against him in 2007 by Michelle Berardinetti, the candidate whom Heaps had narrowly defeated in the 2006 municipal election.

City solicitor Anna Kinasowski had advised against reimbursement in a Nov. 30 memo to council.

She warned the courts have found "municipal council has no authority" to reimburse a councillor for legal expenses incurred in relation to his activities as a candidate prior to becoming councillor.

Council nonetheless voted 21-4 to adopt the motion.

The suit came after a compliance audit complaint was brought by John Lyras, a senior member of Berardinetti's campaign, against Heaps regarding improper campaign spending.

The complaint was investigated and dismissed as merit-

less, according to the summary given in Fletcher's motion.

Ward 37 councillor Michael Thompson, who seconded the motion for reimbursement, said he did not think it fair for Heaps to have to go through financial difficulty simply because of being elected.

"He was taken through a legal process where he was found not guilty of any wrongdoing," Thompson said in a phone interview.

"I think the councillor was put in a very difficult position as a result of being elected councillor. It's only fair that he be helped."

The defamation claim was linked to Heaps' inclusion of a *Globe and Mail* article endorsing his candidacy in a media kit circulated during the campaign.

Berardinetti also sued the newspaper for libel, alleging the article denigrated her political experience and affected her chances of winning.

The lawsuit ended in a settlement after two years of legal proceedings according to the motion summary, leaving Heaps with a \$53,000 legal debt.

While some of this has been reduced, the recommendation was that city council reimburse Heaps for the remaining \$36,000 for the cost of legal fees.



HEAPS

Morningside licks its chops for new eatery

IRINA LYTCHAK
The Observer

Lick's Homeburgers opened its doors at Morningside Crossing on Nov. 5 — by popular demand, says restaurant owner Eddie Hu.

"This community is so welcoming and so happy we opened here," said Hu. "Everybody in this neighbourhood has been telling us they couldn't wait until we opened."

For over a month, the

eatery has received positive feedback from locals who voiced it was long overdue, according to Hu.

Morningside Mall has been revamped over the past year and Lick's was proud to be part of this project.

"We saw that this was a great opportunity to work together to make this community newer and more updated," Hu said.

Lick's head of operations Mavis McLain said the chain was vigilant in booking a spot for Lick's during the reconstruction of the mall because it is hard to get into certain areas in the city once they are developed.

"It's hard to know what to expect when you open a store.

"You always hope that you do get a good location and that it's going to be busy but again, you just never know," McLain said.

"This one has turned out to be highly successful and has done even better than our expectations."

Lick's Homeburgers has 30 locations in the GTA and plans to open more locations across the city, including downtown Toronto.



IRINA LYTCHAK/The Observer

Employee Noshin greets diners at the new Morningside Lick's restaurant.

Law change brings torch relay to town

GESILAYEFA AZORBO
The Observer

Scarborough residents will be getting into the spirit of the Winter Games this December, when the iconic Olympic torch touches down at the Scarborough Civic Centre later in the month.

The Olympic Flame is scheduled to arrive in Albert Campbell Square at 3 p.m. on Dec. 17, en route to Nathan Phillips Square, where the cauldron will be lit.

However, according to the

prohibited activities section of the square's permit guidelines, having an open flame within the square— even if it is the Olympic flame— is technically illegal.

This is why Ward 35 councillor Adrian Heaps made a special request to temporarily suspend that bylaw. The recommendation went before city council Nov. 30. On Dec. 1, exemptions were granted allowing for the Olympic torch in the square, as well as the use of "special effects pyrotechnics", because

fireworks, too, are not allowed in the square.

"We're working very closely with the Vancouver Olympic Committee, we have our whole special event team working on how the torch will end up at Nathan Phillips Square, and that will be the final celebration on the evening of Dec. 17."

The Olympic flame has been making its way across Canada since its arrival in on Oct. 30 in Victoria, B.C. from Athens.

It will have passed through

hundreds of communities including St. John's and Ottawa by the time it gets to Toronto.

Councillor Heaps estimated about 20,000 to 30,000 people along the Toronto route of the torch's journey, as well as at the final Toronto stop at Nathan Phillips Square.

A large turnout is expected at the Scarborough Civic Centre event.

See torontoobserver.ca for more details.

New priest fit for the job

Former martial arts instructor Father Magyar is parish's fitness expert

KATRINA ROZAL
The Observer

It was a nice summer day. Seventy people filled the field of St. Barnabas Catholic School for a lesson in Brazilian martial arts.

The parishioners have their new parish priest to thank for the exciting session on self-defence. The instructor leading the session was his martial arts teacher.

Father Paul Magyar is St. Barnabas Catholic Church's newest priest. Since his arrival in early July he has become the parish community's resident fitness expert. He works out every week and still practices martial arts with his former school downtown.

"Fitness has always been an important part of my life," he said. "I've been training in martial arts since I was 12 years old."

St. Barnabas is Magyar's first parish as a priest. In 2004 he graduated from studying western and eastern philosophy at University of Toronto Mississauga. This year he completed his masters of divinity and sacred theology



KATRINA ROZAL/The Observer

From bodyguard to spiritual guard, Paul Magyar is finally pursuing the career of his dreams at St. Barnabas church.

bachelor.

While Magyar has considered other professions such as family physician, chiropractor and personal trainer, he has aspired to the priesthood since he was six.

"I think I'm the youngest priest in the archdiocese," he said.

Before joining the seminary and after graduating high school in 2000, Magyar worked for a security service team providing security assistance to celebrity travel bodyguards.

Duties included taking care

of front and back stage security access and crowd control

The team would provide security at Air Canada Centre, Massey Hall, and other Ontario venues.

"I did it to pay my tuition at UTM," Magyar said. "It was fun, it was lively. There was never a dull moment."

His most memorable experience of working with the team was meeting Sylvester

Stallone during his first month on the job.

Magyar was doing security for cart races during what was then called Molson Indy. Stallone was filming the movie *Driven* at the same venue. Magyar introduced himself to Stallone and shook his hand.

"When I met him I didn't see him, I would see Rocky," he said. "It's kind of like meeting Rocky. That's the

thing, when you look at an actor or actress you don't actually see them, you see the character that you like that they played."

The company he worked for also had a contract with WWE wrestling.

"Being ringside for Wrestlemania 18 and seeing Hulk Hogan and the Rock right there is pretty spectacular," Magyar said.

During his four years at the job, he provided security assistance to celebs like the Rolling Stones, Janet Jackson and Britney Spears.

I think I am the youngest priest in the archdiocese.
- Father Paul Magyar

Shelter dispels community stereotypes

MAXX SMITH
The Observer

The Second Base Youth Shelter in Scarborough is celebrating its 16th anniversary this month.

As part of the celebration, the shelter opened its doors to the community to share points of pride.

"One of the things that separate this place is our access to education. We have a huge emphasis for education," executive director Paul Taylor said.

Staff were excited about the night's festivities, which were to include performances, a silent auction, and the sale of products created by the youth.

Perhaps Second Base's best known initiative, though, is its catering service.

"We've catered for the mayor and the minister of education," said Taylor. "Since then, it's been an absolute



MAXX SMITH/The Observer

Staff at the Second Base Youth Shelter runs a successful catering service. The shelter uses the profits to further programs at the centre.

whirlwind,"

Unlike many nonprofit initiatives, the catering actually makes money, which is used to further programs. That success has inspired other shelters to replicate their initiative.

Education manager Fernelle Edmund reflected on her first time coming to the

shelter.

"I got here and I was blown away. At first I was uncomfortable and nervous. All of the stereotypes started rushing to my mind, like, 'Oh my gosh, am I going to get shot, am I going to get stabbed?'"

It was after meeting with Taylor that her perspective changed.

"[Taylor] challenged me to reevaluate my assumptions on what a shelter was," Edmund said. "Why am I treating this like it's a shelter building when this is their home? It's a home."

The shelter has since dedicated itself to changing similar assumptions within the Scarborough community.

"There are so many reasons why people end up in shelters. It can be sexual abuse, substance abuse, physical abuse, domestic abuse," said Edmund.

"I'm not here to save them, they don't need to be saved — they just need someone that respects them and will listen to them and care about them and allow them the opportunity to speak and express themselves in a positive, productive way."

Some of the youth that drop in are homeless, and some are just looking for support.

"We're the only shelter that services the east end of the city from Victoria Park to Durham," said Edmund.

Second Base is also launching a new program based on cooking apprenticeship in partnership with George Brown College and funded by the Ontario Government.

Rouge Valley Hospital winner

The Rouge Valley Health System has won the 2009 Award for Innovations in Human Health Resources. The system consists of Scarborough Centenary and Ajax-Pickering hospitals.

The award was given to Rouge Valley by health minister Deb Matthews at a conference on behalf of the Ontario government and Ontario Hospital Association.

The award includes a \$10,000 grant from the provincial government. It was given to the neonatal and pediatric orientation program for new nursing graduates.

The program allows recent graduates to gain experience caring for newborns and interacting with families. It was designed by Rose Owen and Minette MacNeil.

News Briefs

BMO comes to Guildwood

A new full-service Bank of Montreal branch opened in Guildwood Village at Livingston Road and Guildwood Parkway on Dec. 5. The branch used to be located across the street. The old location was a financial centre with no tellers and two bank machines.

Vandalism on camera

A wind turbine sign vandal was caught on camera on Nov. 25. Save the Toronto Bluffs supporter Barry Matthews filmed a person spraying black paint on his sign, which was against putting wind turbines along the bluffs. Matthews gave the footage to police.

Church joins Affirm United

West Hill Church joined Affirm United on Dec. 6. Affirm United is an organization that welcomes gays, lesbians, queer, transgendered and bisexual people. West Hill is the 50th church to join the organization in Canada.

EAST SCARBOROUGH'S BEST

SCARBOROUGH'S UNSUNG HEROES

THE OBSERVER HONOURS RESIDENTS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

West Hill pharmacist gives locals more than just her medicinal expertise

IRINA LYTCHAK
The Observer

One Jamal clearly values the community she lives in. It's evident in all the projects she has undertaken to help Scarborough residents through the years.

"Service in the community has always been a big part as I was growing up," says Jamal, lead associate-owner and pharmacist of the Ravine Park Plaza Shoppers Drug Mart. "As a young child I was involved in many areas within our community to help the need."

Jamal moved to Scarborough from Tanzania in 1980 and graduated from the University of Toronto with a degree in pharmacy. She has been participating in various fundraisers, educational programs, and working with health-care professionals.

Jamal says her sense of responsibility to the community comes from her father who instilled it in her from a very young age.



IRINA LYTCHAK/The Observer

One Jamal's contributions to the Scarborough community surpass what many can't achieve in a lifetime.

"He has constantly coached us to give back to the community in whichever ways that are possible."

Jamal has been involved in helping seniors through projects like the "Alzheimer Coffee Break" where she invited patients dealing with Alzheimer's and their families

for one-on-one information sessions. The event included a fundraiser that helped raise money to find a cure for Alzheimer's. Jamal also organized The Heart of a Woman, a community presentation at West Rouge Valley Community Centre that was open to all senior citizens in the area.

"The presentation focused on basic lifestyle training thereby helping to improve their health," Jamal says.

Jamal also volunteered at The Home Instead Senior Care by providing seniors with non-medical assistance to help them cope with daily activities.

One of Jamal's biggest contributions to the community has been her involvement with mothers-to-be at the Rouge Valley Health System. She got a chance to visit the newly built Birthing and Newborn Centre at the hospital. She says the facilities and the caregivers inspired her.

"I thought 'How can we make a difference in the lives of new mothers-to-be?' As a community, we have certain obligations towards a new life ... we have to be able to provide support and education to child-bearing mothers."

Jamal helped propose a plan to help mothers during their pregnancies. She planned to raise funds so that new parents could get proper support and RVHS staff could conduct proper pre-natal classes.

The long list of Jamal's projects includes supporting diabetes organizations, working with new immigrants and providing support for the mentally or physically challenged.

"Scarborough is a beautiful city. We have a great community where people care for each other, work well together in many public sectors and businesses," she says. "I can't find a better place that gives me the warmth and sense of belonging than the community of Scarborough."

— Irina Lytchak

'I'm hungry, where can I go to eat?'



The Best... Food around town

Sometimes people wonder where to go to experience an institutional Scarborough eatery. In an informal survey of community residents, these names kept coming up, so here are the best places to sit down and grab a bite:

■ Best Traditional Pub: The Fossil and Haggis (790 Military Tr.) This is just a little close to a University and College crowd, but serves fabulous food and a terrific atmosphere.

■ Best Diner: Ted's Restaurant (404 Old Kingston Rd.) A neighbourhood favourite, Ted's serves an old-fashioned, cheap and

delicious breakfast.

■ Best Pizzeria: Fratelli Village Pizzeria (384 Old Kingston Rd.) A little-known restaurant, only open for a few select hours during the week, they fire up the pizza on a traditional wood-burning oven and deliver an authentic Italian experience.

■ Best Fast Food: Guildwood Pizza and Burger (73 Livingston Rd.) Located right beside Sir Wilfred Laurier Collegiate, avoid the kids and grab some of the city's best fast food, served with a little old-school wit and charm.

PHIL SMALLEY/The Observer

Maureen Henry serves up a dose of humanity

MATTHEW ALLEYNE
The Observer

Scarborough resident Maureen Henry has worked for the Red Cross for 12 years and during her time at the Scarborough Drop-In Centre, she has worked tirelessly to help those in the community she loves.

"I am not a counsellor but I am passionate about helping people," Henry said.

Since she emigrated to Canada 15 years ago from Trinidad and Tobago, Henry has called Scarborough

home. She says being able to give back to her community that she lives in has been a rewarding experience.

"The people in Scarborough are warm and we look out for each other."

The Red Cross Drop-In Centre is located in the basement of the Church of the Epiphany, 700 Kennedy Rd., and services the less fortunate from across Scarborough.

"Homelessness is not just a downtown issue," program coordinator Terry Harris said. "There is homelessness in Scarborough too. It is just not as visible." Many can be con-

sidered the working homeless, sometimes only having enough pay for the rent.

At age 61, Henry holds her own, keeping up with the three workers and six volunteers who make up the staff operating the centre Monday to Friday, from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The centre serves a variety of people of all ages seeking a meal, clothing or a place to stay, but mainly looking for someone who cares, Henry said.

"She is like a mom to many of the people who come in here," Harris said. "Especially when working

with the youth.

"We are all like a big family,"

After getting back on their feet, many people move having found a job or an affordable place to stay. Some even move out of the community, but "they always come back and let us know how they are doing," Henry says.

"I have always been a people person, even back in Trinidad. This is like my calling, and being able to work with my community and seeing them being able to get the help they need gives me a great sense of satisfaction."



MATTHEW ALLEYNE/The Observer

Maureen Henry says she loves helping the Trinidadian community of Scarborough.



MATTHEW ALLEYNE/The Observer

Executive Director Ron Rock has been an inspiration for the community.

Fighting for the youth in our community

Ron Rock is the executive director of the East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club (ESBGC). He has worked for many years as a community development organizer, social worker, family counsellor and a young offender court placement worker.

"The youth in this community has a lot of potential and we try to provide them with a place to nurture that potential," said Rock.

The ESBGC, located at 100 Galloway Rd. provides

services for young people from birth to the age of 24 with access to affordable recreational and educational services. The goal is to help them become responsible, compassionate and capable individuals in the community.

"The work that Ron and the rest of his team is doing here is invaluable to providing a bright future for the youth of Scarborough," said Toronto Mayor David Miller at a press conference announcing the expansion of the facility to 8,500 square

feet. Rock worked with the local government for 13 years as coordinator community and race relations for the City of Scarborough as well as an access and equity consultant at Toronto city hall. He is a longtime volunteer with the United Way of Greater Toronto and Malvern Family Resource Centre.

Rock also is credited for the building of a youth centre at Scarborough Town Centre.

Phillip, a childhood friend of Rock, says he has always been active in his community

and enjoyed working with youth.

"Even as young man in Montreal, you could find Ron at almost every community event helping out in one way or another," said Phillip.

Rock has received numerous community awards, including: Award of Excellence for Community Building, Youth Impact Award, Harry Jerome Award and the Canadian Black Achievers Awards just to name a few.

— Matthew Alleyne



KATRINA ROZAL/The Observer

The Best... Light display

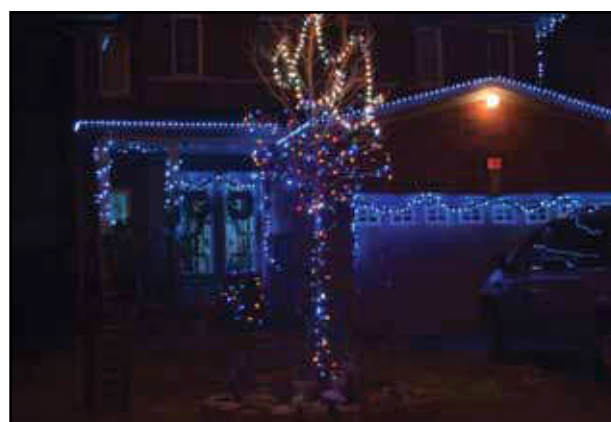
The Observer team has scouted the area for some of East Scarborough's best holiday light displays. At left, we really like this home on Sheppard Avenue and Kingston Road. Below are some of the other ones we thought let shine through the holiday spirit.



KATRINA ROZAL/The Observer



ANTHONY GEREMIA/The Observer



ANTHONY GEREMIA/The Observer

Hockey on life support

Parents of players in the Scarborough Hockey Association are fighting for the survival of a league that has a dwindling number of new players.

If things do not turn around soon, young men and women may be forced to join a league with games farther away from home.

Canada may be a nation of people who eat, sleep and breathe hockey, but that unwavering love for the game does not exist in Scarborough.

Hockey is a serious investment. It costs both time and money for families who wish to have one child play, let alone two or more. The majority of new families in Scarborough are immigrants who have not been exposed to hockey in countries such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan, or even China in the same way those born in Canada have been. For these families, hockey is just one luxury they cannot afford.

The SHA is going to have to find a new way of marketing the sport of hockey to a community and demographic that would rather kick around a soccer ball than strap on a pair of skates. What they have is a PR problem. And the city's lack of recreational funding isn't helping. Neither are the Leafs, whose record makes you want to cheer for the Generals at a Globe-trotter game.

Where are the outdoor rinks? Where are the backyard rinks? Where are the programs in the schools to support interest in what is considered to be Canada's sport? If a child does not have a place to learn how to skate, it is obvious they will show no interest in a sport that requires them to do so. Walking and running are skills we come by naturally, but skating is a talent that must be learned.

Kevin Weekes is the last player from Scarborough to have played in the NHL, although most people don't know it. Since he has retired, there is no one else Scarborough kids can identify with.

If the sport were affordable and relatable, then the interest would be there. You cannot blame a community for its lack of interest in hockey if no one on the rink resembles them. Plus, the Leafs tend to be winners when it comes to losing. You can't blame new immigrants for not buying expensive tickets to watch the Leafs skate into a lucky win.

—Matthew Alleyne

Crackdown on holiday scams

The holiday season puts us in a generous mood. Conscious of this heightened sensitivity, foundations and charities, such as the Salvation Army and SickKids Hospital, set up more donation stands — especially in shopping centres, aiming to take advantage of the holiday spirit of those buying gifts.

When we drop our change into these donation boxes, we have faith the bell-ringing Santa Claus will not pocket it. Realistically, there is no evidence to prove otherwise. But when we heard about the case of the fraudulent SickKids canisters, we recognized it to be a big setback for charitable organizations and the people they represent. They rely on holiday donations and the timing just couldn't be worse.

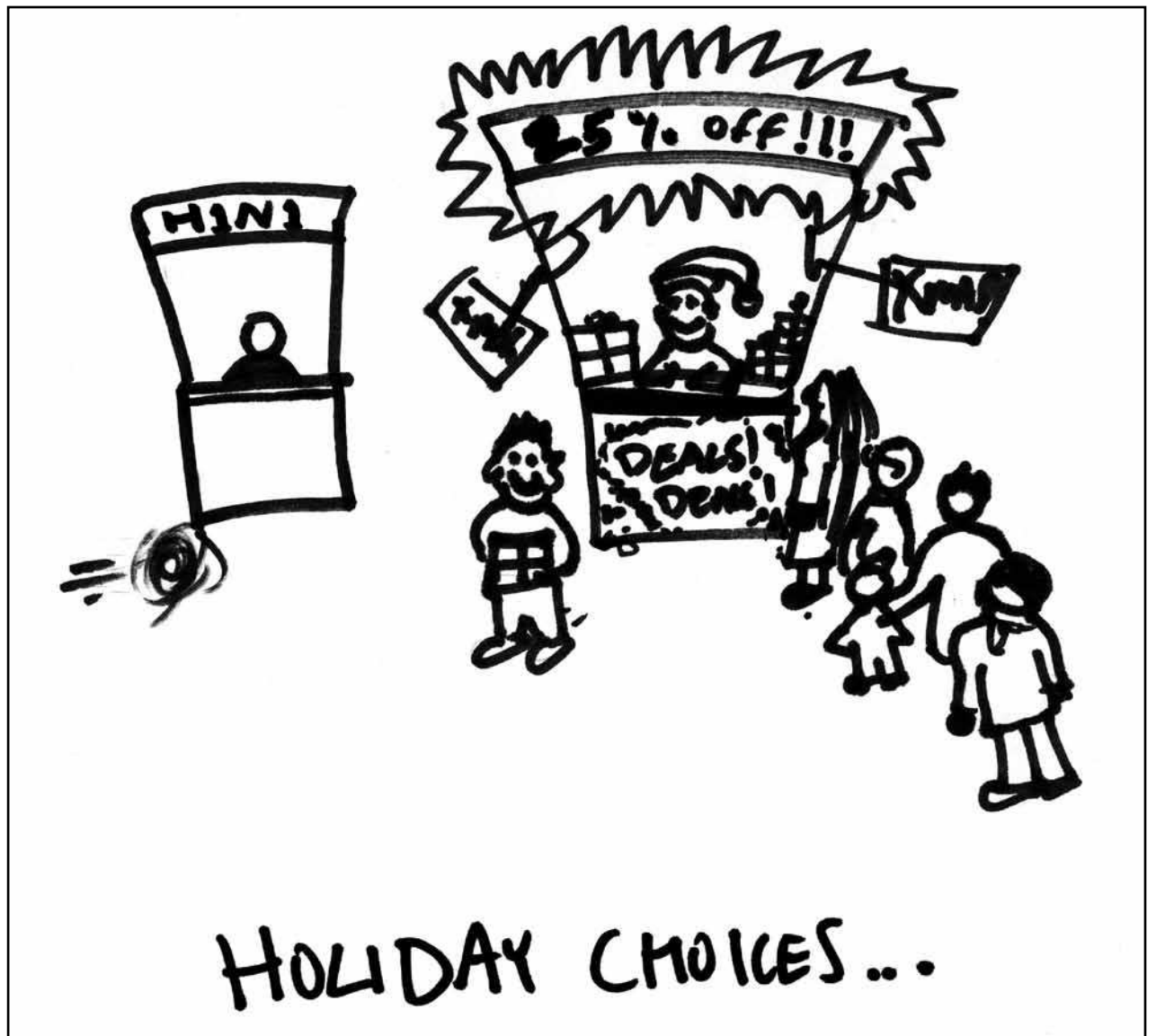
Unfortunately, like many disappointments, it forces us to ask how much trust we should have in people, and leads to the question: How easily can we be scammed?

Apparently anyone can just set up shop by a grocery store claiming to be a fundraiser.

Nevertheless, we need to acknowledge ruthlessness exists no matter what. It most certainly does not mean we should be discouraged from doing a good thing. Rather, we need to go straight to the source in emphasizing the flaws in the system, taking steps like making it a requirement to display proof of authenticity or a crackdown on possessing permits to set up collection stations.

Both organizations and property owners need to take responsibility for who runs the show, panhandlers or do-gooders?

—Kareen Awadalla



PHIL SMALLEY/The Observer

Harper's deal with rights violators in China shows he's consistent

In China, Stephen Harper was criticized for neglecting to repair the Canada-China relationship sooner. In Canada, he's received mixed reactions, with human rights activists upset and others pleased with Harper's reconciliation efforts with the \$53-billion trade partner.

His visit to China on Dec. 2 was his first since the Conservatives took government in 2006. In that same year, the Dalai Lama was given honorary Canadian status and Harper famously said Canadians wouldn't want him to sell out "to the almighty dollar."

Up until 2008, Harper criticized China for systematic human rights violations, but it looks as though he could no longer resist the lure of the world's greatest economic power. But at least no one can call the prime minister inconsistent.

Case of Khadr

The Canadian government's hand is covered in blood in other cases too. Omar Khadr is a Canadian who's accused of throwing a grenade and killing a U.S. soldier in a firefight in Afghanistan in 2002. Khadr was only 15 years old at the time of the alleged crime.

In 2008, *The Toronto Star* published classified photos claiming it was



Amanda LY

impossible for Khadr to throw the grenade. Despite other findings that suggest Khadr's innocence and the documentation of abuse in Guantanamo where he's been for the last eight years, the government has failed to repatriate Khadr to Canada, ignoring rulings from the Canadian federal court that ask the government to stop interfering in Khadr's return to Canada.

The government has also been found to have violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and international human rights laws that include the Convention Against Torture and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

China is notorious for using child

labour, often using children like slaves in unsafe working conditions that lead to unnecessary injuries, lifelong pain and death.

But there is no country innocent of violating human rights. Other than Khadr, we just have to look at what the government has done to aboriginals where native reserves have been described as third-world countries. The government is unable to even take care of its own, much less criticize another country for their atrocities. Canada needs China more than they need us.

The government is unable to even take care of its own, much less criticize another country for their atrocities

Who doesn't love to shop at the dollar store? What product have you bought lately that doesn't say "made in China"? If it says made in Bangladesh or Vietnam, that's not any better.

The indirect action of shopping or being ignorant has everything to do with China's lack of reprisals for its human rights violations.

As a prime minister, Harper's visit to China is exactly what he's supposed to do as a leader — that is ensuring the economic prosperity of Canada.

The East Toronto OBSERVER

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SPORTS

Making a date with Mickey

Orlando hoops tournament has PJP II girls dreaming of Disney

STEPHANIE LEUNG
The Observer

Pope John Paul II's junior and senior girls basketball teams may well be about to have the trip of a lifetime.

Both teams were in good spirits as they proudly sported their basketball jerseys at Boston Pizza on Morning-side Dec. 1.

They waited tables and interacted with guests to raise money to go to Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Fla. to participate in the KSA Events Girls' Basketball Classic

Tournament held Dec. 16 to 20.

In the last week of October, senior girls coach Tavia Ferreira received a phone call from KSA Events asking the junior and senior girls

So far, they've raised around \$10,000 and are halfway there.

- Steve Gazmin

teams to participate in the tournament.

"The girls are so excited," Ferreira said. "They've never been to Disney and they get to play with U.S. teams."

"I feel really honoured to play because we get to represent Canada and show what our country



Courtesy of Pope John Paul II C.S.S.

Steve Gazmin (far left), PJP II's junior girls assistant coach, and Tavia Ferreira (far right), senior girls coach, and the junior and senior girls basketball teams went undefeated in their regular seasons.

has to offer," junior captain Samantha Niccao said.

KSA is a tournament held each year at Disney Resort.

The top 61 high school teams across the U.S. are invited.

Only a select few Canadian teams are able to participate. A team from Ottawa will also be present.

The PJP girls' teams need to raise at least \$1,000 per player, according to Steve Gazmin, assistant coach for

the junior team.

So far, they've raised around \$10,000 and are halfway there.

Analyzing all options

A few of the girls have personal sponsors like dentists and doctors.

Ferreira says when it comes down to it, parents may have to contribute money. But they've been very supportive so far.

"I've had parents calling me saying, 'thank you for taking my child to Disney'," Ferreira said.

"Because of the area we're in and the demographics, a trip to Disney would be in the cards.

So parents are thankful that their child can get the experience of Disney as well as exposure to basketball."

During the KSA tournament, high schools will be competing against each

other and basketball scouts and media will be present as PJP II gets to experience playing and using the top notch facilities and hardwood courts.

The girls will even get a chance to watch the Toronto Raptors play against the Orlando Magic.

"I bet we will be the only ones cheering for the Raptors," Niccao said.

To help the girls make it to Orlando, call 416-393-5531.

Major changes underway for SHA

STEPHANIE LEUNG
The Observer

Almost all hands went up when supporters at a recent Scarborough Hockey Association meeting were asked if they'd be willing to volunteer to help keep hockey alive in Scarborough.

Over 150 supporters, including coaches, parents and kids, attended the SHA meeting on Dec. 3. Some of the kids were part of the hockey teams in the SHA and proudly sported their jerseys and jackets.

The meeting consisted mostly of the public asking SHA president John Kelloway and the board of directors questions about the association's marketing plans and whether or not there will be hockey in Scarborough.

"We want to help," a woman in the crowd said. "That's why we're here. Let's keep the SHA alive."

Several accused Kelloway of "sabotaging the league," "not taking his job seriously," and not trying to market the SHA.

"If you're not happy, step down and find a new replacement," another woman in the crowd said to Kelloway.

Near the end of the meeting, two options were presented to the public.

Option A is to have the SHA continue as a non-profit community hockey league. More action to reach parents and kids in Toronto would be undertaken.

Option B proposes the SHA join the Greater Toronto Hockey League. Some hockey teams in the SHA would disappear and some would have to play according to the GTHL's schedule and travel to cities in the GTA.

The league's board of directors is currently debating the options and a deadline on the decision is still unknown.



TEVY PILC/The Observer

Julie Henderson and Veronica Lee take a breather during practice at RH King Academy.

Locals to swim for top U.S. university

TEVY PILC
The Observer

It will be quite the thrill for Scarborough swimmers Veronica Lee and Julie Harrison, both 17, when they take the plunge to the university level at Pittsburgh University, where they'll join the school's team and begin classes in January.

The girls train out of the Scarborough Swim Club, where they swim an average of two hours about 10 times a week.

"They swim their girls' heinies off," said swim club president Chris Pendergast, who praises the girls for their strong work ethic.

"It would have to take a catastrophic car crash for them to miss a practice. And when they come, it's all business."

The girls are also no strangers to representing Canada in competition. Lee is considered one of the top breaststrokers in Canada, placing as a finalist at the 2008 Canadian Olympic trials and in the 2009 Canadian World Championship trials. Harrison, who specializes in freestyle, currently has the sixth fastest 1,500-metre free finish in Canada at 17:04.74.

Heading to Pittsburgh will be a huge upgrade from a swimming perspective as the school's pool was the

recipient of a \$700,000 renovation. It's a far cry from their normal facilities in Scarborough, which are long overdue for an overhaul.

"It's hard when you see other clubs training in 50-metre pools and have no air quality problems," said Harrison when discussing previous meets with the club.

Help will come by 2015 when the new aquatics centre at University of Toronto Scarborough is built and will become the club's new home.

But Lee and Harrison hope to feel right at home in Pittsburgh, where besides facility differences, the school's atmosphere is familiar to Scarborough.

"It's not just a swim team, it's a family," said Harrison of the feeling she got of the Pittsburgh team when deciding where to apply.

The girls also noted that swimming doesn't give them much time to do anything else and Pittsburgh offered a ton of needed academic support.

"They're both very calm before competition," said Sylvain Pineau, who's been coaching the girls for about five years at the club.

"They know how to prepare for the competition and be in the right state of mind."

For a video about the girls and the club, visit torontoobserver.ca



STEPHANIE LEUNG/The Observer

A big crowd turned out to discuss the SHA's future.

ARTS

Korean art meets Western culture

Cedar Ridge Gallery showcases an array of paintings and sculptures of 12 artists for the season

MONICA VALENCIA

The Observer

In case you're looking for a way to spend the 12 Days of Christmas, 12 Korean artists have opened their exhibit at Cedar Ridge Gallery for the holidays.

The display showcases a variety of art including traditional crafts, oil paintings and mixed media.

On Dec. 6, about 40 people attended the opening reception. Visitors mingled with artists, eating Korean snacks and talking about the exhibit.

"I find it very interesting, especially the colourful combinations," local resident Irmgard Hondyk said. "There's a lot of variety and, though I'm not a painter or artist, I enjoy it very much."

Hondyk, a regular visitor, said she liked the watercolour paintings the best.

But the exhibit offers something for all tastes. The gallery is adorned with each artist's characteristic work, presenting abstracts, still lifes and portraits.

"I chose these 12 artists because each person has a different character and a different style," exhibit organizer Bok Yun Kim said.

"Our art is a combination of oriental and Western art," Kim said. "You can see it in the mix of colour and shape."

Artist C. C. Yun explained



MONICA VALENCIA/The Observer

Korean artist Bok Yun Kim displays his collection of ceramics. Kim prefers working with clay because he can physically connect to his art.

she can't avoid the influence of her Korean background but it's human relations that truly inspire her.

I chose these 12 artists because each person has a different character and a different style.

- Bok Yun Kim

"People's interaction is very interesting and art allows me to interpret it," Yun said.

"Through my oil paintings I can simplify many complex concepts."

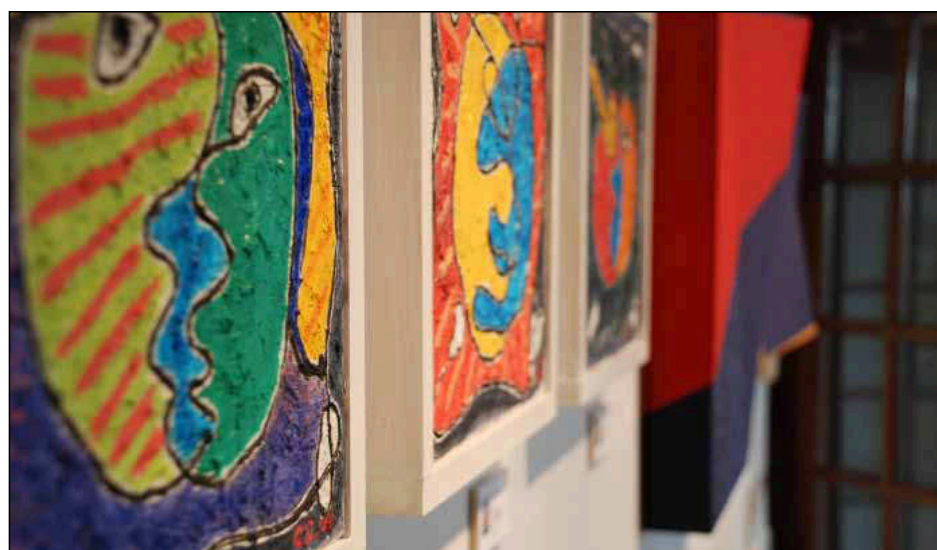
According to Kim, the goal

of the artistic partnership is to let artists communicate feeling and captivate viewers visually. He also chose this time of year because it's festive and he wanted to celebrate Toronto's Korean artists.

The display ends on Dec. 18. Admission is free.

"Every two weeks the gallery has a new exhibit and residents should take advantage of that," Hondyk said. "It's always good to have a cultural and art hub in your community."

For a photo gallery, visit torontoobserver.ca



MONICA VALENCIA/The Observer

Oil paintings by C.C. Yun show the essence of human relations. She's one of the 12 artists participating in the exhibit at Cedar Ridge.

Get ready to bust some moves for Christmas



AMANDA LY/The Observer

Paul Thurton offers break dancing and R&B workshops.

Breaking violence with dance

AMANDA LY

The Observer

Most businesses take months to break even. Paul Thurton's dance studio Simply Swagg did it in three weeks.

His secret to success and happy students is ensuring his prices are low so that all kids have the opportunity to enjoy dance, Thurton says.

He teaches hip-hop, R&B, breakdancing and house. On Dec. 21, 22, and 23, Thurton is holding dance workshops at his studio at 705 Progress Ave.

"I've always danced my entire life. My dad's a jazz musician and I'd fall asleep listening to music while tapping my foot."

Thurton's father is also an engineer and his mom is a teacher. He credits his parents for instilling discipline in him, which helped him pursue his dance dreams.

Despite traveling the world and performing with artists like Nas, Wu-Tang Clan, Christina Milian and many more, what fulfills him most is the ability to reach out to the community through teaching dance.

"Teaching is my passion," he says. He works with the Art Starts organization, going into troubled communities to do workshops.

"These kids have very little money, they're from all

different races, there's trouble all around them and we start dance teams in their communities. Some of these kids are sheltered and shy, but at the end they're the complete opposite. They've got these big smiles on their faces and they're so confident."

Thurton opened his studio after he kept on getting inquiries about teaching.

Though most dance studios are downtown, the 23-year-old saw a lack of artistic outlets for Scarborough kids and wanted to give back to his community.

"Violence is happening because there's nothing to do," Thurton said. "There's barely any government funding here. Breakdancing started as an alternative to gang violence. Instead of fighting,

a crew would battle another crew on the dance floor."

Thurton hopes his studio will continue in the hip-hop tradition of breaking the cycle of violence.

The name Simply Swagg represents individuality. Everyone has their own "swagg," he says.

As an instructor, Thurton's goal is to have his students grow naturally and not be afraid to show off their inner attitude, in other words, their swagg.

Aside from the workshops, Thurton teaches four days a week and choreographs for schools and artists. Coming projects include working with Flo Rida and Massari.

To sign up for workshops or regular classes call 647-296-7776 or visit simplyswagg.com.