



Fatima Al-Sayed /// The Observer

All taped up and nowhere to go

Students and staff at Westwood Middle School on Carlaw Avenue found a unique way to mark Wednesday's "International Day of Pink" to raise awareness for diversity and against bullying. They bought strips of duct tape to adhere principal Mark Sprack to the gym wall. Proceeds from the sale of the tape went to a local women's shelter.

Stop feeding coyotes, experts say

Woman whose dog, cat were killed by coyotes worries about children

By JORDAN BARRERA
The Observer

Even though Donna Wightman's cat and dog were victims of a coyote attack, she says that "the coyotes have not done anything wrong."

On Monday night, the East York Civic Centre was the venue for a public information session to advise residents on how to reduce the harm done by coyotes.

Representatives from Coyote Watch Canada, the province's natural resources ministry and the city were on hand to answer questions.

Wightman's cat and dog were both attacked and killed by coyotes on

separate occasions. But Wightman said she doesn't blame the wild animals; she blames the people who attract them into residential neighbourhoods.

Wightman said there is someone in her neighbourhood who is feeding coyotes and attracting them to the area.

She said the city needs to do a better job of enforcing regulations against that. She said she's worried about the young children on her street.

Mary Lou Leiher, program manager for Toronto Animal Services, agreed that there is an issue.

"There are people as far as we know feeding them," she said, "and so this has caused a problem."

The main emphasis at Monday night's meeting was on co-existence strategies and ways that people can

discourage coyotes without causing them harm.

The panel agreed that most incidents can be traced back to people feeding coyotes and having family dogs off-leash. They said that by feeding the animals, people are unwittingly changing their behaviour.

In particular, the coyotes' natural fear of humans is diminished.

Coyote Watch Canada's Lesley Sampson shared tools to scare coyotes away without hurting them.

One strategy, known as "hazing," includes shaking a bottle with coins, squeezing an empty water bottle and — as a last resort — throwing items in the direction of (but not at) the animals.

Leiher said she plans to continue education efforts for Toronto residents in the form of signs and more information sessions.

TRANSIT

Subway relief line will have 'huge impact'

By MARJAN ASADULLAH
The Observer

The process of building a consensus around building a new subway line that would serve East York continued last week with a public meeting at Morse Street Junior Public School on Carlaw Avenue.

It was just two days after Toronto Mayor John Tory held a subway platform news conference calling on the provincial government to match Ottawa's pledge of transit funding. That, in turn, was just a week after the federal budget said the Trudeau Liberals will spend billions of dollars on Ontario transit.

The "downtown relief line" is one of the main features of Toronto's transit plan. It would link the Pape subway station with the Queen Street station downtown via a new route running south along Pape, then west along Eastern Avenue.

Mayor Tory and the city's transit planners say the relief line is needed to ease growing congestion on the subway downtown. They're hoping that the design can be finalized soon and construc-

tion can begin — to have the new line opened by 2031.

The April 5 meeting at Morse school was about alleviating concerns around the proposal, and getting backing from members of the public living in the area that will be most affected — both by construction and by the enhanced transit that would result from new subway stations in the area.

Paula Fletcher, the city councillor for Ward 30, where the meeting was held, was clear about her support for the relief line.

"Moving forward with mass transit is key," she said, "and this project will have a huge impact."

Some of the issues aired included the noise and vibration of the subway in the neighbourhoods above it, other public health and environmental issues and the real estate value of houses in the area.

The Pape Avenue-Eastern Avenue route hasn't been finalized yet, but it's the preference of the planners.

Another topic at the meeting was paying for the line. So far, there is zero funding specifically earmarked for the project. It is estimated that it will require a minimum of \$3.2 billion to build.



Marjan Asadullah /// The Observer

Local residents attended a meeting on Carlaw Avenue last week to discuss plans for a new subway line that would run between downtown and Pape station on Danforth Avenue.

We've 'stopped the presses' (for now)

Although this paper — produced by the journalism students of Centennial College — is going on hiatus as the semester winds down, we'll still post fresh East York content in the coming days on our companion website, torontoobserver.ca. In addition, our radio edition, Neighbourly News, will continue to air through April and May on Wednesday mornings at 8:30 and Friday afternoons at 4 on CJRU/1280 AM. We'll re-open our newsroom by mid-September and ramp up all of our media around the end of the month. In the meantime... enjoy the warm weather!

POLICE & FIRE

Donations sought for fire victims

Support is coming from across the East York region after a family of five lost most of their belongings in a March 31 fire at their home, located near Coxwell and Danforth avenues.

Tiffany and Michael Rogers and their three children lived next door to a vacant multi-unit house that caught fire that afternoon.

The roof of their home and all of the contents of their bedrooms were destroyed by fire, smoke and firefighters' water. No one was harmed in the two-alarm blaze.

The Rogers are currently staying with relatives. They do not have contents insurance. But there's a donation dropoff on the porch of the home at 321 Kingswood Rd. And a relative, Kris Rogers, has started a crowd-funding campaign to help the family.

For more information or to make a donation, visit www.gofundme.com/coxwell-ave-fire-destroys-home. Anyone wanting to help the family in another way can email Jane Somers at somersjane48@gmail.com

~ Connor Atkinson

Corrections

A photo caption on page 8 of the March 17 Observer misidentified a young cellist at the East York Music Festival, held at Westminster Presbyterian Church. The musician's correct name is Ewan Bailey. In addition, the byline of the March 17 page 4 feature about Black History Month observances at the East York campus of Centennial College misidentified the writer of the piece. Kajan Thiruthanikalam wrote the story.

What now? Shamas tells all

Creator of new show 'The Big What Now?' tackles the M word

By RHIANNE CAMPBELL
The Observer

Comedic writer Sandra Shamas's journey through menopause was a lonely and isolating experience.

In vintage Shamas style, though, she's made it a little less lonely and isolating for the rest of us — and a heck of a lot funnier — with her latest show, *The Big What Now*, which ended a successful run in Toronto earlier this year and is now ready to hit the road.

The show looks at menopause through the Shamas lens, a blend of wicked wit and poignant insights into what it means to be a woman over 50.

"I'm writing a show I need to see, because I didn't see a reflection of my experience anywhere in my culture — because we're not going to talk to women who are in their 50s," she said during a visit to Centennial College's East York campus last week. "We're not going to talk about their bodies. We're not going to because that doesn't sell magazines. That doesn't sell product."

Shamas, a Lebanese-Canadian producer, writer and actor originally from Sudbury, Ont., has been performing her unique one-woman shows for over 30 years now. Her latest, *The Big What Now*, earned critical acclaim during its Toronto run and continued a week beyond the original closing date due to popular demand.

Early in her career, Shamas performed with *Second City* and *Fraggle Rock*. She said it was her dislike of the world of television production that motivated her to create her own work. On stage, she could speak her own language and live in transparency.

She entered her first show, *My Boyfriend's Back and There's Gonna Be Laundry*, in the Edmonton Fringe Festival, which turned out to be the first in a trilogy of shows. The final of them was called *Wedding Bell Hell*.



Rhianne Campbell /// The Observer

Sandra Shamas talked politics, menopause and how to handle badly behaved goats during a recent stopover in East York.

She later produced *Wit's End I, II and III* about her retreat to rural Ontario and farm life.

As a figure-head of Canadian comedy, Shamas said she has noticed a shift in the media in terms of who is being represented. "Symbolic annihilation," the description she uses in her show, is an academic term for when any aspect of any culture is no longer represented in the media. In this case, it refers to women over 50.

During the show, she explains this phenomenon to the predominantly female crowd.

"Did you hear the audience go 'ohhh'?" Like you hear the whole room go 'f*** no, are you kidding?' It's harsh and it's happening and we're still here so, it doesn't make any sense," said Shamas, who was born in 1957.

She described climbing menopause mountain as one of the most awakening experiences she's gone through, which led to it becoming a major focus of her show.

"It's not like anything you've experienced as a woman," she said, adding that

writing about menopause, at a time when no one else was, was a way of making the process less isolating and more accessible.

While women of a certain age are not represented as much as Shamas feels they should be by the media, she said she's noticed a shift towards female-driven comedy. To her, that's a very good sign.

"We've all had to overcome much in order to just be women on this planet. And then be women doing what we do (comedy) for a living," she said.

Although Shamas will not likely be on Canadian television any time soon, she did say she's working on a cross-Canada tour of *The Big What Now*.

For now, though, she'll continue to live day by day on her farm, feeding herself and sharing what she can't eat herself with her community.

As for the 'R' word, retirement is not part of her lexicon. Shamas said she is going to continue working until she dies, which means we can look forward to seeing her on stage for the next 40-odd years.

Society celebrates 35 years of history

Organization helps East York residents remember the past

By ANNA BOYES
The Observer

The East York Historical Society's venerable status was on display last week when members and friends attended the EYHS's 35th anniversary dinner at the York Masonic Temple's banquet hall on Millwood Road.

For members, the April 6 festivities were more than just a milestone.

"It means a great deal to me, because I was born here in East York many, many years ago — so naturally, anything that's East York, I support it,"

said long-time society member Joyce Crook.

"Certainly I've enjoyed my experience with the society and tonight I hope we can get some more members."

The EYHS was formed in 1980 and became an affiliate of the Ontario Historical Society in 1981. The organization is aimed at providing residents with the resources they need to research and retain information about East York.

Someone who was not in attendance but did send his regards was Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. A letter by the PM to the group noted the importance of its work and contribution to the community.

"I just love it," said a choked-up Pancheta "Pat" Barnett, the current EYHS president, as



■ MICHAEL PRUE

she wiped away tears.

"Our kids are saying this is our community and this is a community I am proud of," Ward 31/Beaches-East York councillor Janet Davis said to the guests.

The headline speaker was Michael Prue, the last mayor of East York, a former East York councillor on Toron-

to council and a former East York MPP. The night marked 24 years since Prue's election as East York's sixth mayor.

He addressed a point that's popular among boosters of East York: the reversal of the forced integration of East York into the "mega-city" of Toronto by then-Premier Mike Harris in 1998.

Prue joked that if East York ever secedes, he'll stand in front of Harris and say: "As I was saying, before I was so rudely interrupted...."

It may not be realistic, but the audience liked it.

"It's my very hard wish that this would come true," said Crook. "After hearing Michael Prue's speech tonight, it really makes you enthusiastic."

WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

High school art on display

The visual arts department at Danforth Collegiate and Technical Institute is holding an exhibition of works by students and staff of DCTI at the Todmorden Mills Papermill Gallery on Pottery Road starting this coming Wednesday, April 19, and running until April 30. The opening reception will be Wednesday evening from 5-8 p.m. with remarks at 6 p.m. and music provided by the DCTI Ensemble.

Treasurer wanted

The East York Learning Experience is a longstanding community-based learning program that helps local adults improve their math, reading, writing and computer skills. The charitable organization is looking for a volunteer treasurer with a CA, CPA, CGA or CMA designation who can sit on its board of directors. For more information, contact the EYLE at 416-425-2666.

Story swap

Calling contract workers and freelancers: the Urban Work Project has teamed up with Centennial College's 951 Carlaw Avenue campus to host a community-building event on April 29. The night will involve 150 independent workers coming together to share stories about their practices and network with each other. Participants will listen to talks on workplace issues and resources for a better career experience.

~ Anna Boyes

'My whole body jumped up in the air'

Man hit by car in local parkette worries about traffic flow in the area

By AMIL DELIC
The Observer

The Alexander the Great Parkette at Danforth and Logan avenues has been a part of the East York-area landscape for almost a quarter-century. Named for an ancient Greek king, it's a point of pride for the ethnic community that has given that stretch of the Danforth its other name: Greektown.

But Paul Radicanin has a very different view of the parkette.

"It doesn't make sense to have it there," he said in an interview. "There are always little kids playing in the park area. Half the people don't know how to drive who are making that turn on the one-way street near the TD Bank."

Radicanin isn't a traffic engineer, but he is uniquely qualified to comment on the parkette. On Sept. 28, Radicanin, 45, was badly hurt when a beige 2002 Chevy Malibu reversed out of a small parking lot behind TD Canada Trust across Logan Avenue and struck Radicanin and two other people who were just sitting on benches at the corner of the parkette.

Two of the victims, including Radicanin, had to be hospitalized.

In an interview, Radicanin said he was sitting on one of the benches waiting for his girlfriend to get off work when the Malibu crashed into him:

"I grabbed a coffee and was waiting for her on the bench. Next minute there is a car coming from behind me and it ran over both of my feet. My whole body jumped up in the air and twisted. (The) car came so fast. I was face down in the dirt. The fire department and paramedics put me in a backboard neck brace, put me in an ambulance and away we went."

Sitting on the next bench over was Thomas Tzovanas, 70, who has been living in the neighbourhood for years. Tzovanas didn't notice the oncoming vehicle, because his back was turned to Logan Avenue. He sustained major bruising and multiple fractures to his left leg.

"I was in shock when I got hit. The car reversed all the way to the statue," Tzovanas said through his nephew, Frank, who acted as his translator. Tzovanas currently walks with the assistance of a cane. Though his right leg was deemed fine, he has progressively been experiencing more pain the past few months. He is currently receiving active and passive physiotherapy two to three times per week.

Since the accident, Radicanin said he's had trouble sleeping and eating as



Amil Delic // The Observer

The Alexander the Great Parkette at Danforth and Logan avenues is a community fixture. But a man who was run over in the parkette worries about traffic flow around it.

a result of the physical pain.

"I get up every morning at 4 a.m. because I can't sleep. I am always stressed out. I carry a lot of pain in my lower back and my right knee," he said. "They gave me orthopedic shoes and a customized knee brace, but my balance is still off." An all-season landscaper by trade, Radicanin has used up his health insurance's \$3,500 physiotherapy allowance.

As for Tzovanas, he's in therapy for constant leg pain, but finances are

running low for that as well. Both men are pursuing legal action in hopes of forcing the insurance companies for the man who hit them to pay for their continuing medical treatment.

The driver of the Malibu was an 84-year-old man whose wife was sitting in the passenger seat during the accident. Charges were not laid, but "appropriate action has been taken," said Const. Clint Stibbe, of the Toronto Police Service.

Drivers over the age of 65 who have

an accident or get a traffic ticket face an exam, and drivers over 80 have to pass a test every two years. But statistically speaking, older drivers are still fairly safe drivers. The number of senior drivers killed and/or injured on Ontario roads increased by 12 per cent between 1994 and 2013, but that increase is well outpaced by growth in the rate of Ontarians over 65 in the first place. Those over 65 are involved in just under a fifth of all accidents.



Olivia Blackmore // The Observer

Team Chicago was this year's winner of the Little Stanley Cup. The team beat team Boston in overtime 3-2.

Little players, big league dreams

By OLIVIA BLACKMORE
The Observer

His favourite team is the Toronto Maple Leafs, but on this particular day, he got to play for Boston.

Cam Smith, 12, played for Bean Town during the final game of the Little Stanley Cup tournament.

"I think there's a sense of pride, given the history of East York and the hockey with the (Little) Stanley Cup," said Cam's mother, Nicole Methuen.

On April 1, the house league teams of the East York Hockey Association played for the Little Stanley Cup, the only official replica of the Stanley Cup, which was sanctioned by Clarence Campbell, president of the NHL, in 1955.

"Today's a really emotional day," said Connie Mitchell, president of the executive committee of the EYHA.

"You see a lot of kids laughing, you see a lot of kids crying. Sometimes they cry because they won and they're so happy."

The peewee division, which is made up of kids aged 11 and 12, had been training since October for the big Little Stanley Cup Day tournament, held at the East York Memorial Arena on Cosburn Avenue.

This year, team Chicago beat team Boston in overtime, 3-2.

Jeff Seccull, the coach for Chicago, no longer has kids of his own on the team, but said he thinks of all of his players as his kids.

"It's exciting. I'm living a little

vicariously through them," Seccull said. "This is a great time for them, and I'm so lucky to be part of it."

Local politicians, including Beaches-East York MPP Arthur Potts, Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth councillor Mary Fragedakis and Ward 31/Beaches-East York councillor Janet Davis, also attended the tournament.

Parents, organizers and volunteers seem to agree: the Little Stanley Cup Day tournament is about the kids having a great time and working as a team.

"Being able to have a real house league program, where they can come out and actually feel for just a moment like a real NHL star, is something that's really heartwarming to see," Mitchell said.

Child porn charges laid

By LEA SHEFFIELD
The Observer

A Canadian Armed Forces reservist is facing charges related to child pornography.

The police child exploitation unit searched a residence near Donlands and Danforth avenues on March 10. They also searched portions of Canadian Forces Base Borden in Simcoe County.

That same day, police arrested a Canadian Forces reservist training at Base Borden.

"The member is a reservist with 25 Field Ambulance out of Toronto," said Daniel Le Bouthillier, a spokesperson for the Department of National Defence. Canadian Forces Military Police are

collaborating with the Toronto police in this case, Le Bouthillier said.

He asked that further questions about the investigation be directed to the Toronto police. "As the Toronto Police Service have the investigative lead on the matter, it would be inappropriate for us to comment further."

This is an ongoing investigation for police, confirmed Toronto Const. Jenifferjit Sidhu.

"The Toronto Police Service always works in co-operation or conjunction with all our community partners and agencies," she said.

Robert Kohlsmith, 30, of Toronto is charged with accessing and possessing child pornography. He appeared in court at Old City Hall on March 11.



Anna Boyes // The Observer

Dog day afternoon

Kathy Stoyan (left) and Adrienne Rabin walk Ivy and Ozzy around the Evergreen Brick Works one recent sunny day.

Tenants say legal loopholes spike E.Y. rent

By JORDAN BARRERA
The Observer

Tenants joined Toronto-Danforth MPP Peter Tabuns at a recent public forum to deliver passionate remarks on how current housing conditions and government policies have failed them.

On March 27, Tabuns held a meeting at Bethany Baptist Church at the corner of Pape and Cosburn avenues. He invited the public to discuss the details of a bill he had been pushing that would re-introduce rent control.

Alongside Tabuns was a panel of four representatives, each with specific knowledge of rental policy — including representatives from Flemingdon Community Legal Services, the Federation of Metro Tenants' Association, the national and municipal activist organization known as ACORN, and Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth city councillor Mary Fragedakis.

Tabuns said that his bill, which he introduced in the Ontario legislature at Queen's Park on March 16, would have eliminated loopholes in current legislation and provide tenants across Ontario with clearly defined rent stability.

But on April 6, the Liberals and Conservatives in the provincial legislature blocked a vote called by NDP leader Andrea Horwath that would



Jordan Barrera /// The Observer

Don Collymore shares his rent policy ideas with Toronto-Danforth MPP Peter Tabuns (left), his panel and the crowd at a tenant meeting on March 27 at Bethany Baptist Church.

have advanced Tabuns' bill. There is controversy around whether rent control will discourage the construction of rental units, and the Wynne government says it plans its own measures on behalf of tenants.

Currently, rent control regulations do not apply to any unit built after 1991. As well, land-

lords can charge any amount of rent for empty units. This means that unscrupulous landlords can effectively try to push people out of their homes when they feel there is more to gain financially by signing a new tenant. This is exactly what has been happening in East York, according to Tabuns. By not dealing with basic

housekeeping, such as maintenance and pest control, he says that some landlords can discourage people from continuing their lease.

"Getting rid of vacancy decontrol ends that whole incentive for landlords to clear people out of their buildings," Tabuns said.

The panel agreed that normal rent should account for 25 to 35 per cent of a tenant's income. But residents at the meeting shared stories of unaffordable rent caused by current policy. They said that some tenants have to allocate as much as 70 per cent of income to their rent.

Jane Janigan has been a tenant in her current East York apartment for five years. She said since she moved in, many of the building amenities have been stripped despite steadily increasing rent.

"They keep taking away and taking away and not doing the maintenance and we keep paying the rent increases," Janigan said, speculating that a new tenant would have to pay even more than she does if she were to move out. While she is satisfied overall in her current unit, she said she feels "stuck" because of Toronto rental market conditions.

"The rents are very high," agreed Fragedakis, the city councillor for Ward 29, and "they're getting higher."



Sarah Bhola/// The Observer

Candace Meeks, co-creator of "Riverdale," a satire based on the Netflix hit, waves to the crowd after a March 22 performance at The Social Capital on Danforth Avenue.

Archie and pals come to town

By SARAH BHOLA
The Observer

The Social Capital on Danforth Avenue near Broadview was packed on opening night. The small bar above The Black Swan Tavern is also a DIY venue frequently used as a performing arts space, and it's known for locally produced comedy.

On that Wednesday night, March 22, people were there for the premiere of "Riverdale-Improvised," hosted by comedians Candace Meeks and Korri Birch. Now they and their cast and crew are preparing for an encore performance on April 26.

The improv show is based on the CW television network's teen drama "Riverdale," which was adapted as a Netflix exclusive in Canada and based on the popular Archie comic books.

When Birch contacted Meeks with the idea, she was feeling it.

"I was like, 'Hell, yeah — let's do it,' not thinking it would be anything at all," Meeks said.

But the sold-out opening night proved her wrong.

The crowd was mostly artsy 20-somethings and other comedians,

many of them friends of Meeks and Birch who were out to show their support. Seated near the bar was a neatly dressed woman, waiting for her boyfriend to return with drinks.

"I grew up reading the Archie comics, so this is kind of like bringing it to life, really," said Stephanie Burrows, 29.

As a fan of both Archie and the Riverdale TV show, Burrows had brought her Archie-indifferent boyfriend to Riverdale-Improvised after seeing a post on BlogTO.

Riverdale, the CW series, is a campy drama that's been compared to the early 2000's hit The O.C. and the surreal '90s drama, Twin Peaks. The improv show pokes fun at the ongoing drama of Riverdale, exaggerating the show's earnest characters.

Once the show started, the crowd became a vibrating hum of energy, laughing for the majority of the performance. A joke about Archie keeping his guitar pick in the dent between his eyebrows got a surprised burst of laughter from the crowd, and even a few claps. The joke was a reference to Riverdale actor and

Archie-portrayer KJ Apa's forehead scar. It was a bit of an inside joke for viewers of Riverdale, who are particularly aware of the scar because they are treated to frequent closeups of Archie's face on the TV show, usually frozen in a puzzled expression.

Justine Cargo, the bartender at the Social Capital, has even been inspired to create a drink based on Pop's Chock'lit Shoppe, the main meeting point for the characters in both the comics and TV show.

The drink looks like a tiny milkshake, which is an icon of the comic books. Archie is often depicted sharing a milkshake with best friends and romantic rivals Betty and Veronica.

Despite the low body fat count among the characters on Riverdale, the town's residents are often seen sucking down these high-calorie drinks.

The rival concoction, "Pop's shot," is a creamy pink concoction of Baileys, raspberry Sour Puss and Disaronno; it will also be available at the next performance.

The next instalment of Riverdale-Improvised will be on April 26 at 9:30 p.m. Tickets are \$5 each.

Taxpayers fighting new water charge

By NICOLE ROYLE
The Observer

Some East York taxpayers want to see more incentives in the Toronto water department's newest proposal aimed at repairing the city's overwhelmed drainage system.

"People are not going to accept this proposal without incentive," one resident said to Toronto Water managers during a public information meeting on March 20 at the East York Civic Centre.

That resident and others want financial credit from the city for replacing roofs and driveways with permeable materials to reduce runoff.

"What you're hearing is that people want something that recognizes those who have done more to create permeability at the bottom level," said Janet Davis, the councillor for Ward 31/Beaches-East York. Davis pressed for further consideration of amendments to the current flat-rate charges for runoff.

Paul Dowsett, a sustainable architect, agreed.

"The reason that I came here is on behalf of both myself and our clients who take steps towards reducing their stormwater impact," he said. "The question I am here to ask is will there be any consideration taken for those people."

Lou Di Gironimo, the general manager of Toronto Water, had come to explain that Toronto Water is proposing to work with city council in order to separate the existing stormwater cost from water usage, leaving a fixed-rate stormwater tax.

Stormwater is snow and rain. With an increase in intense storms

and the amount of hard surfaces in Toronto, not enough stormwater is being absorbed into the ground.

Water then runs off into the drainage system. Toronto's drainage system was built many years ago for much less stormwater runoff. So the system is being overwhelmed, hurting water quality and causing basement flooding.

The East York residents at the meeting said the current proposal is not sufficiently directed at creating incentive for residents to decrease their stormwater runoff.

Currently, the stormwater charge is 20 per cent of a property's water bill. The proposed system will take this 20 per cent off of the water bill and add it as a separate flat rate. So the lowest 10 per cent of water users in residential homes could see their water bill rise between \$41 and \$391 per year.

The residents voicing their concerns at the meeting were generally in that lowest 10 per cent of water users. Some voiced their disappointment in what they said was the shortsightedness of the early stages of this proposal. Another resident spoke on behalf of East York homeowners, asking that the city "leave (them) out of it."

Di Gironimo assured the room that amendments regarding these incentives and rewards will be looked at once the initial plan is implemented in 2019.

"Once you've got a program up and running, and running well, then you look at broadening the program," Di Gironimo said.

The incentives and rewards that some East Yorkers want will cost the city extra money, in terms of added administrative costs.



Alexa Battler // The Observer

Don Valley West public school trustee Gerri Gershon (left), Beaches-East York MPP Arthur Potts and spokesperson for the Anglican Church of Canada Ryan Weston (right) spoke at St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church during the church's first-ever environmental fair.

East York church gets jump on Earth Day

By ALEXA BATTLE
The Observer

St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church got a jump on the observance of Earth Day next Saturday, April 22, with an ambitious expansion of Earth Hour on March 26. That Saturday, the church held its first-ever environment fair, dubbed Creation Care 2017, as part of its ongoing efforts to champion environmental issues.

"This church has been in the community longer than this place has been a town. (We are doing this) to be relevant to our neighbourhood, to be helpful," said Lorna Krawchuk, a former East York politician and longtime local activist.

St. Cuthbert's is one of many churches to commit to environmental awareness and action as part of the Anglican Church of Canada's Creation Matters program.

The fair began with a morning sermon led by the church's acting reverend, Ian LaFleur, who also gave the event its name.

"All of creation is a gift," he said. "Life flour-

ishes when we take care of it."

The congregation also heard an address from Ryan Weston, a spokesperson for the Anglican Church of Canada.

"We know that increased ecological challenges are coming. We know that there will be struggles and challenges ahead," he said. "But we also know that we are called to face these."

Around 20 vendors ran information booths at the Bayview Avenue church on environmentally friendly products and services, including electric cars, local and fair-trade foods, solar power and even eco-funerals.

Later in the day, Beaches-East York MPP Arthur Potts, Ward 22 councillor Josh Matlow and Ward 13/Don Valley West public school trustee Gerri Gershon made speeches and answered questions about environmentalism in government.

"(I am here) to remind people of the good initiatives that we're taking to protect the environment, but also how much more we have to do together," Matlow said. "If we don't discuss

our priorities, then people don't know what they can do as individuals to contribute."

St. Cuthbert's has undergone an energy audit to tighten up its power usage. The church keeps the heat low and the lights off whenever possible. Its stained-glass windows were reinforced with another sheet of glass to keep heat from escaping, and their lights are gradually being replaced by LED alternatives.

Rain bins, green bins and careful recycling (including clothing drives twice per year) keep garbage minimal. Participants grow over 13 types of vegetables and 10 types of herbs in their gardens, which are then served in the church.

Last year, in response to global declines in bee populations, the church added a pollinator garden, with four different types of flowers native to East York.

"For a long time, we've really struggled with (the question) what does that mean to love your neighbour? Now we are entering into this idea that neighbour should include endangered species," LaFleur said.

To end the day, the massive white oak tree outside of the church was officially recognized as an Ontario Heritage Tree. Forest Ontario has been recognizing trees that have unique features, historical relevance, or artistic significance since 2009. For Canada's 150th anniversary, Forest Ontario will be recognizing 150 notable trees.

St. Cuthbert's tree was the first.

Steve Housell, president of Forests Ontario, said the tree is a "landmark of St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church and the Leaside community, one that has resided over generations of community and church events."

Ontario Premier and Don Valley West MPP Kathleen Wynne was among the special guests at the ceremony.

"It's individual families and individuals who are the stewards of the environment when it comes down to it. We can pass policies at the government level but people have to take action," she said. "It's at that level that we really have environmental activism."

Political underdog talks about the long road to victory

By FARHEEN SIKANDER
The Observer



Evangelo Sipsas // The Observer

Julie Dabrusin (centre) poses with her supporters in Toronto-Danforth after winning her House of Commons seat on election night, Oct. 19, 2015.

Imagine being a woman in the so-called man's world of politics, being relatively unknown, and still running as a candidate for one of the highest offices in the land: member of Parliament.

Imagine being the clear underdog, opposing an incumbent who represents a party in a riding that's considered one of the party's strongholds.

Imagine campaigning for more than a year, going door-to-door to tell people why they should vote for you, and hearing the same thing over and over from people who say they're sympathetic, but realistic: "I really don't know why you're doing this. You have no chance."

That's what Julie Dabrusin said she heard at least 10 times a day when she was campaigning as a Liberal to represent Toronto-Danforth in the House of Commons in the 2015 election.

"My nomination was a year long," said Dabrusin during her speech at a recent '100 Women Who Care-East York' meeting. The group meets regularly to learn about organizations doing good works; then they vote on one to contribute their

money to. As the votes are counted, a guest speaker addresses the women. On this occasion, it was Dabrusin.

Throughout the campaign, she said, "people kept on telling me (that) I wouldn't win. The whole time, I wasn't favoured."

Her opponent was incumbent New Democrat Craig Scott. Scott was heavily favoured to win in the fall of 2015, in part because Toronto-Danforth was considered a fortress for the NDP. Its previous representative in the House was the late leader of the party, Jack Layton.

"The first thing for me was I had to develop confidence in myself," Dabrusin said of going up against Scott and the NDP machine, "and I can't say I had tons of it when I started... but kind of built it up."

But the crimson tide behind Justin Trudeau also carried Dabrusin to a two-point win over Scott that election night, Monday, Oct. 19, 2015. It was one of the biggest upsets anywhere in the country.

Dabrusin told her audience that the United Nations has set a goal of 30 per cent women in governments worldwide. And even a progressive country like Canada isn't there yet; only about a quarter of

MPs are female despite dramatic gestures like Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's half-female cabinet.

Dabrusin also told her audience about the drastic change that occurred in her life once she joined the government.

"Right before I was elected, I was home with my children — which meant that I was in a very 'female' kind of community, day-to-day, in all of volunteer organizations I was working in. Suddenly, now, a lot of times, I'm the only woman at the table."

And Dabrusin added that she also finds herself having to leave her children (aged 11 and 13) more often now. Her parliamentary schedule involves an early-morning flight to Ottawa on Mondays, living in a hotel room in the capital during the week and flying back to Toronto by week's end.

"I'm here on weekends and that's usually three weeks out of every month. That's a bit more of the negative side."

Ending her speech on an advisory note, Dabrusin gave the women two tips: To always surround themselves with a great team — and to be resilient, especially when it comes to facing setbacks.

EDITORIALS

Hazy messages

Trudeau's delay in legalizing marijuana has left dispensaries and patrons in limbo

Toronto police are spending time and money to raid and shut down marijuana dispensaries when they should be focusing on more serious crimes. But police, like the dispensaries, the customers who frequent them and the East Yorkers who merely pass by the pot shops along the Danforth, can be excused for their confusion.

Just yesterday, April 13, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government finally unveiled the bill that will eventually legalize marijuana — a year and a half after taking the reins of government. Had Trudeau kept his legalization promise in a more timely fashion, we wouldn't have this ongoing grey area where dispensaries believe they can sell pot, customers believe they can buy it, and the police believe they should shut the shops down.

Pot is increasingly seen as relatively benign and marijuana smokers are no longer the stereotypical potheads of past media depictions. While recreational pot use is still controversial, it seems that even recreational opponents agree with using it for medicinal reasons. Marijuana can be used to treat serious health conditions and lessen the symptoms in cases of glaucoma, epilepsy, anxiety and cancer. Studies have found that the chemicals in marijuana, mainly THC, can slow the progression of some diseases, lower blood pressure in the body and relax the brain. But with dispensaries under pressure around the city, patients who rely on the drug for relief will suffer.

And let's also acknowledge that dispensaries are beginning to take marijuana out of the hands of drug dealers and rehearsing for regulated sale. Taking the business approach makes it safer for users to consume marijuana. Ultimately, one study showed, this could be a taxable \$23 billion a year industry for Canada.

Prime Minister Trudeau's Liberals hope legalization will take effect by Canada Day of 2018. But until then, dispensaries along the Danforth and elsewhere must be mindful of the fact that the substance they deal in is still against the law. Continuing to operate shops may well lead to continued raids. Law enforcement can't just turn a blind eye to these things because then the enforcers aren't doing their jobs. Marijuana is still a controlled substance and some officers feel the need to keep it out of what they consider to be the wrong hands.

It's unfortunate that the prime minister and his government have taken so long to act on this issue. Let's just hope that the ponderous wheels of Parliament now begin to turn efficiently. Not only will the users benefit, but so will the government if it takes advantage of the business opportunity that the industry presents.

~ Tiara Chutkhan

Risky business

Accommodation is a matter of human rights

Haily Butler-Henderson, 24, says that she was denied access to the restroom at the Pentagon Bar and Grill on Danforth Avenue in August. According to Butler-Henderson, the staff denied her access because they were afraid she might fall down the stairs — and that might lead to legal action.

So now they're facing another form of action. Butler-Henderson, who has spina bifida and needs the assistance of forearm crutches, has filed a human rights complaint against the bar.

She argues that she has the right to decide for herself whether to take the risk of using the stairs.

The establishment has made no public statement. But most assume that they were afraid for Butler-Henderson's safety. And something else. It should be noted that they were sued in 2007, after a man fell down the restaurant stairs and became paralyzed.

It stands to reason that they may have been afraid of a repetition.

But it should also be noted that Butler-Henderson says she wasn't offered assistance in descending the stairs. And now we get to the crux of the matter.

This is a matter of human rights.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act promises accessible facilities by 2025. The Act, however, does not promise this for older establishments, such as some of those on the Danforth. The Act is only fully applicable to new establishments.

However, Section 15(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees equal protection under the law — and notably, in this case, that includes those who have a physical disability. Furthermore, Section 2(1) of the Ontario Human Rights Code guarantees the right of accommodation. Accommodation that Butler-Henderson says she was denied. In a society where laws are put in place for the protection of the vulnerable, this may be another example of how much further we have yet to go.

~ Tina Adamopoulos

COLUMNS

He was always there

The truth was staring at me from my recycling bin.

"Dad, is your 'homemade' cake from a box?"

The man had me fooled for years. But knowing how he makes cookies, this shouldn't have surprised me.

Every batch was an experiment, and I was the guinea pig. I once came home only to find freshly baked cookies sitting on the kitchen counter.

I was so happy I nearly ate a whole cookie in one bite. I immediately regretted that decision. It tasted as if a pound of salt was in the batter.

I confronted my dad the next morning. I asked, "What was up with the cookies?" He casually said that the cap on the box of salt broke and

that almost half of it went into the batter. When I asked why he baked them, despite the pound of salt, he laughed.

But don't be fooled. The man can bake. In Grade 8, my class was trying to raise money for a trip to Québec. We would have weekly bake sales, and without fail, my dad would make a strawberry pie or chocolate cake that would always sell out.

Lunches were a whole other thing, though. He made mine every day, but let's just say no one ever wanted to trade with me.

My parents divorced when I was nine, and they decided it was

best that I lived with my mom. But in high

school, my relationship with my mother deteriorated, so I moved in with my dad.

Every day, he would wake up at what seemed like the crack of dawn to get ready for work. He owned a music school, which was his dream for a long time, and the place where he would spend most of his day. But he never forgot to pack me a lunch. And always came home in time to make dinner.

My relationship with my mother has been complicated for many years, and I resented her when I was younger. (My friends' mothers made their lunches and dinners; why couldn't mine?)

For years, I was angry with her because of this idea that I had of what a mother should be. But what I wanted from my mother for all of these years was always there.

And to this day, whenever I tell my dad I'm having a bad day, he answers: "Do you want me to bake you some cookies, sweetie?"

"Sure dad, but hold the salt."



Olivia Blackmore

Defending journalism

When I tell people I'm a journalist, I'm often met with a skeptical gaze and a raised eyebrow.

"Aren't journalists supposed to tell the truth?" I was asked last week by a friend. "Mainstream media. All those guys. They lie. It's propaganda."

What I can say is that I believe that journalism is an essential pillar of society. Journalism is a needed watchdog on government, big business and the other institutions that directly or indirectly govern our lives.

Everyone is talking about an incident on Sunday, in which a passenger on a United Airlines flight was dragged down the aisle and out of the overbooked aircraft. Much of the firsthand information came through Twitter and other social media.

And yet it was journalists who brought the story to a wide audience. Journalists interviewed others on the airplane, reached out to United Airlines for comment, and discovered the ejected passenger's troubled past.

Critics may argue that because of the rise of social

media, we don't need journalists because we are able to get firsthand information instantly. But the two complement each other. I don't think social media hinders journalists, but rather, it helps journalists do their job. We can focus on talking to sources and verifying information while being supported by social media.

Journalism is far from dead or fake. This week, the winners of the Pulitzer Prizes were announced. Eric Eyre of the Charleston Gazette in West Virginia won for investigative reporting. He reported on downtrodden counties in West Virginia with the highest rates of opioid overdose in the U.S.

Meanwhile, staff at the East Bay Times in Oakland, California won a Pulitzer Prize for breaking news. They reported on the "Ghost Ship"

fire, where 36 people died in a warehouse party. Journalists exposed how the city failed to take action that could have prevented the fire.

These stories required the dedication of journalists who found the facts and brought problems to light. Some outlets may be more or less exceptional, but amid all the talk of fake news, plenty of good journalism exists.



Michael Chachura

Leaside lights up with press of a button



Courtesy of the City of Toronto Archives

The Observer continues its look back on East York history through photographs from the City of Toronto Archives. These two photos recall a momentous day in East York history — when Ontario Premier Howard Ferguson officially opened the “Leaside Hydro Station.” The date was Oct. 1, 1928, and the premier was inaugurating the hookup between Toronto’s electrical grid and a generating station 370 km away, on the Ottawa River at Gatineau, QC. At left, Premier Ferguson presses the ceremonial button to make the electrical connection. At right is a portion of the station’s control paneling (complete with what appears to be some early neon signage). Some of the original equipment at the hydro station reportedly remained in operation until 1998, and to this day, its successor, the “Leaside Transformer Station” operates off Millwood Road.

Adventurer shares tales of death-defying expeditions

Chasing tornadoes, diving with sharks all in a day’s work for TV series producer

By SAMMY ABDO
The Observer

Explorer. Adventurer. Storm-chaser. That’s how East York resident George Kourounis was introduced to the East York Historical Society at its regular monthly meeting.

The 46-year-old spoke to the group on March 28 at the S. Walter Stewart library branch. Kourounis, who lives in the area of Victoria Park and Holland avenues, had the room quiet and engaged as he talked about some death-defying experiences.

“I chase tornadoes, drive into the eye of hurricanes, rappel into active volcanoes, dive with sharks — basically anything in the natural world that wants to kill you,” he said.

Kourounis is the producer of *Angry Planet*, a TV series on the specialty cable network OLN, which documents extreme natural phenomena across the world. He brought photos and videos of his expeditions, which elicited excited and even some shocked responses from the audience. One video showed him inside Hurricane Katrina, when the “strong side” of the storm hit Mississippi.

“We were getting wind gusts up to 200 miles an hour. So imagine driving

at double the highway speed in the rain with your face out of the window for six or seven hours,” Kourounis said. “Every raindrop felt like a needle, every piece of gravel felt like a bullet.”

The most unique and dangerous experience Kourounis had was looking for alien life here on Earth. He pitched the idea to



■ KOUROUNIS

National Geographic, and believed that the “Doorway to Hell,” a natural-gas burning crater in Turkmenistan that had conditions similar to other extrasolar planets, could harbour life.

“We stretched fire-resistant rope across the entire span of the crater, and then I went out in my heat suit... rappelled down and set foot at the bottom,” Kourounis said. “Twelve people had been on the surface of the moon; one at the bottom of this crater.”

That expedition yielded bacteria not found in any database, a potentially important scientific discovery for clues to life on other planets.

But no other experience was as close to his heart as when he got married on the edge of a volcano in Vanuatu, a nation in the South Pacific.

“It was a pretty crazy marriage proposal,” Kourounis said to the laughter of the crowd. “She actually said yes to the volcano part faster than the ‘Will you marry me?’ part.”

Self-checkout trend expands to Todmorden library branch

By CELLIE AGUNBIADE
The Observer

While she’s had a library card since she was a child, Marina Phillips-Anderson says she’s never used the Todmorden library mini-branch in the East York Community Centre on Pape Avenue near Torrens. However, with a proposal to keep the so-called “Todmorden Room” open additional hours coming this fall, that could change.

A pilot project for the Todmorden Room will see its open hours extended as late as the community centre itself. Todmorden and another small branch of the Toronto Public Library system in Bloor-West Village are the two branches that have the lowest number of hours open to patrons.

But while there will be extra hours of operation, librarians will not be present during those extended hours.

“I think it is a great idea,” Phillips-Anderson said. “Libraries are safe havens for people.”

She added that she believes libraries provide an escape for people, and the extended hours will accommodate patrons’ work hours and leisure time.

The change means that after-hours, the two libraries will offer a self-checkout machine and video surveillance to monitor and protect patrons. The Toronto Public Library Board said the extended hours are a cost-effective way of serving the public’s needs.

But Maureen O’Reilly, president of Toronto Public Library Workers’ Union, believes that the staff-free proposal poses a number of potential problems, including vandalism and the safety of patrons.

“What if somebody had a heart attack?” she said. “There wouldn’t be anyone to attend to



Cellie Agunbiade /// The Observer

Marina Phillips-Anderson and her son, Joseph Clement, visited the Todmorden library mini-branch.

them. It would just have to be caught on-camera.”

O’Reilly said her union would prefer the libraries to hire new librarians willing to work those extended hours, not employ surveillance cameras instead.

“The library staff are an important part of the service because they are there to assist patrons,” she said. “They are there to be the eyes and ears of the library for health and safety concerns.”

But Ana-Maria Critchley, a Toronto Public Library spokesperson, has confidence in the surveillance system.

“The Todmorden library is a small room... located in (a) community (centre),” Critchley said. “If anyone needs assistance, they will be able to access somebody at a nearby branch.”

Library visitor Phillips-Anderson believes that safety of patrons shouldn’t be a big issue.

“I do hope that people respect the rules,” she said, “and will help check other people if anything does happen.”

Understanding the victory at Vimy



Ben Freeman Collins /// The Observer

Jack Granatstein, professor emeritus at York University, speaks about the importance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge to Canadian history.

By **BEN FREEMAN COLLINS**
The Observer

The Battle of Vimy Ridge is remembered as one of the pivotal points in Canadian history. It is often said that it was the moment Canada came of age.

But what's the truth behind that statement? And why do we remember Vimy, but not the Hundred Days, or Kapyong, or Kandahar?

That is the question historian Jack Granatstein posed to his audience on April 3 at the S. Walter Stewart library.

Granatstein is a York University professor emeritus and the author of more than 60 books on Canadian military, political and diplomatic history. During his hour-long presentation, he talked about the importance of Vimy Ridge.

But to do that, he had to first correct the myths that surround Vimy — the legendary First World War battle that was fought in France exactly a century ago, on April 9, 1917.

First, most of the soldiers who fought at Vimy Ridge weren't born in Canada. Over half were newly arrived immigrants from Britain. They would have spoken with a British accent and thought of themselves as subjects of the British empire. As Granatstein said, "Vimy is a Canadian victory, but it's not quite a Canadian-born victory."

They also weren't commanded by a

Canadian. Instead, they were being led by British Lt.-Gen. Sir Julian Byng. And the planning for the battle and the artillery assault, which was key to the victory, was done by his officers.

Vimy also led to one of the most divisive policies in Canadian history: conscription. Prime Minister Robert Borden, who was in England at the time of Vimy, was under immense pressure to supply more men.

But doing so threatened to divide the nation. As Granatstein said, it was a plan that pitted English against French, rural farmers against urban dwellers and labour against capitalists.

"So it's not really a nation-builder in the sense of bringing people together," Granatstein said. "Vimy leads to conscription which leads to ripping the national fabric apart."

So why is Vimy so important?

As Granatstein pointed out, when the Canadian Expeditionary Force entered the war, they were an untrained, ill-disciplined and ill-led force.

"But they had learned on the job," he said. And despite heavy casualties at Ypres in 1915 and the Somme in 1916, "they were beginning to develop a good reputation."

Also, Canadian officers began to distinguish themselves — officers like Maj.-Gen. Arthur Currie and Lt.-Col. Andrew McNaughton. It was Currie's analysis of the French army and his recommenda-

tions that led to an overhaul in the way the Canadian core was organized and trained.

And it was these changes that would play a vital part in Vimy's success.

Finally, to appreciate Vimy, one should understand that the Western Front in 1917 was plagued by stalemate.

"Russia at this point was on the verge of leaving the war.... The Italians were stumbling from defeat to defeat. The French troops had been bled white, and there were mutinies," Granatstein said. And the British "had no tradition of victory in the Great War on the Western Front."

But when the Canadians took Vimy, they "established that tradition for themselves, of victory, of being able to beat what was arguably the best army in the world, the German army in World War One."

Not only that — "they had succeeded where the British and the French failed," Granatstein said. It was "a tribute to the way the raw recruits of 1914 had become superb soldiers by Easter 1917."

Throughout the Allied nations, the Canadians were praised for their victory, he added, and "it gives the Canadian core a sense of greatness, a sense of pride.... Vimy was a Canadian victory. A battle won by soldiers who had begun to think of themselves as Canadians."

As one veteran of Vimy Ridge aptly put it, "We went up the ridge as Albertans and Nova Scotians, we came down as Canadians."

Finding the truth when faced with 'alternative facts'

By **JOSEPH BURRELL**
The Observer

Two schools of thought, usually friendly rivals in the industry of media dissemination, came together at Centennial College's East York campus on March 22 for a discussion on what to do about "fake news" in this "post-truth" era.

The "Facing The Alternative Facts" panel was sponsored by eneri PR and hosted by the public relations and journalism departments at Centennial on Carlaw Avenue. Experts from both professions weighed in on what constitutes fake news, and how it should be addressed.

Jane Lytvynenko of BuzzFeed News, Tom Blackwell of The National Post, Ashley Therriault of Veritas PR and Mark Nusca of eneri PR were headliners at the event, while Centennial journalism professor Tim Doyle moderated their panel.

Therriault was the first to point out that fake news, ironically, isn't all that new. What has changed is the fact that audiences are now believing it, and its focus has shifted from the celebrity rumour mill to the manipulation of political commentary.

"It's received branding now. It's always been a thing. We used to call it 'tabloids,'" she said. "Now a man has made it his moniker."

Lytvynenko had a more stringent definition

of the term. In her opinion, fake news isn't just a story that has spin. She defined it as a news publisher that has made up wholly untrue and unfounded stories, intending to generate hits with clickbait to increase ad revenue. Her expertise is in tracking down online sources to determine who owns a website, and from where they've been posting stories. She's less concerned with larger outlets like Fox News that twist a story; her focus is on publishers, usually from obscure locations, that churn out outrageous headlines just to get views.

"I wouldn't call (Breitbart or The Rebel) fake news... they usually don't create entirely fake stories," Lytvynenko said. "It's often some teenager in Macedonia wanting money; that's my most famous example."

Blackwell also had his own distinction to make. "When it isn't totally accurate, that's not fake news, that's just a mistake."

He not only defended the journalist's right to make an error, but also took a step back and commented on the use of the "fake news" label by those outside of the industry. As Therriault mentioned, politicians like President Trump have made the term their own, and its meaning to the public is being shaped by his usage of the phrase.

"It's being used as a catch-all against the media when you don't like what they report, or when you think they've made a mistake," Blackwell said.



Joseph Burrell /// The Observer

Tom Blackwell, Ashley Therriault and Mark Nusca (l-r) discuss how to handle fake news in the current "post-truth" era of journalism.

Nusca brought up the issue of credibility and mentioned that PR firms used to be held accountable, and were expected to vet the clients they represented. The influence of people like Trump advisor Kellyanne Conway proves that this is no longer the case. Trump can make any manner of uninformed claim, and when it is "confirmed" by Conway, so too is it confirmed to his supporters. Credibility is no longer a concern, as Trump's supporters believe his team to be more trustworthy than anyone who might call them into question. As far as fighting

back against fake news goes, none of the guest speakers had a concrete plan of attack. Therriault did, however, come to a bleak conclusion that may ironically point some sort of countermeasure. She believes that Trump has been very effective in appealing to the emotions of the masses, and that the only way to counter his influence is to beat him at his own game.

"We can't fight their fake facts with our real facts," she said. "Is the next step in our communications behavioural psychology? We have to fight fake facts with emotion."



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