

The East York

OBSERVER

CENTENNIAL COLLEGE

TIME-OUT FOR TECH

■ Kids love gadgets, but experts urge caution **Page 8**



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Observer moving to all-digital platform

As journalism and audience expectations continue to evolve, the award-winning Observer is moving entirely online. Here is a short history of this local institution

By ELLEN SAMEK
The Observer

It was the summer of 1972, and four keen journalism students were about to create a local legacy.

With their eyes wide with idealism, the fire of ambition and creativity in their blood and a federal grant in their back pockets, Don Atanasoff, Bill Berry, Robert Patrick Feeney and Christine Smith set to work to create a community newspaper.

Located in the Warden Woods campus of Centennial College, more of an industrial complex than a school, what would become The Observer was born.

And while the print version of that publication is coming to an end with this issue, the same dedication to local news will continue on a digital-only platform.

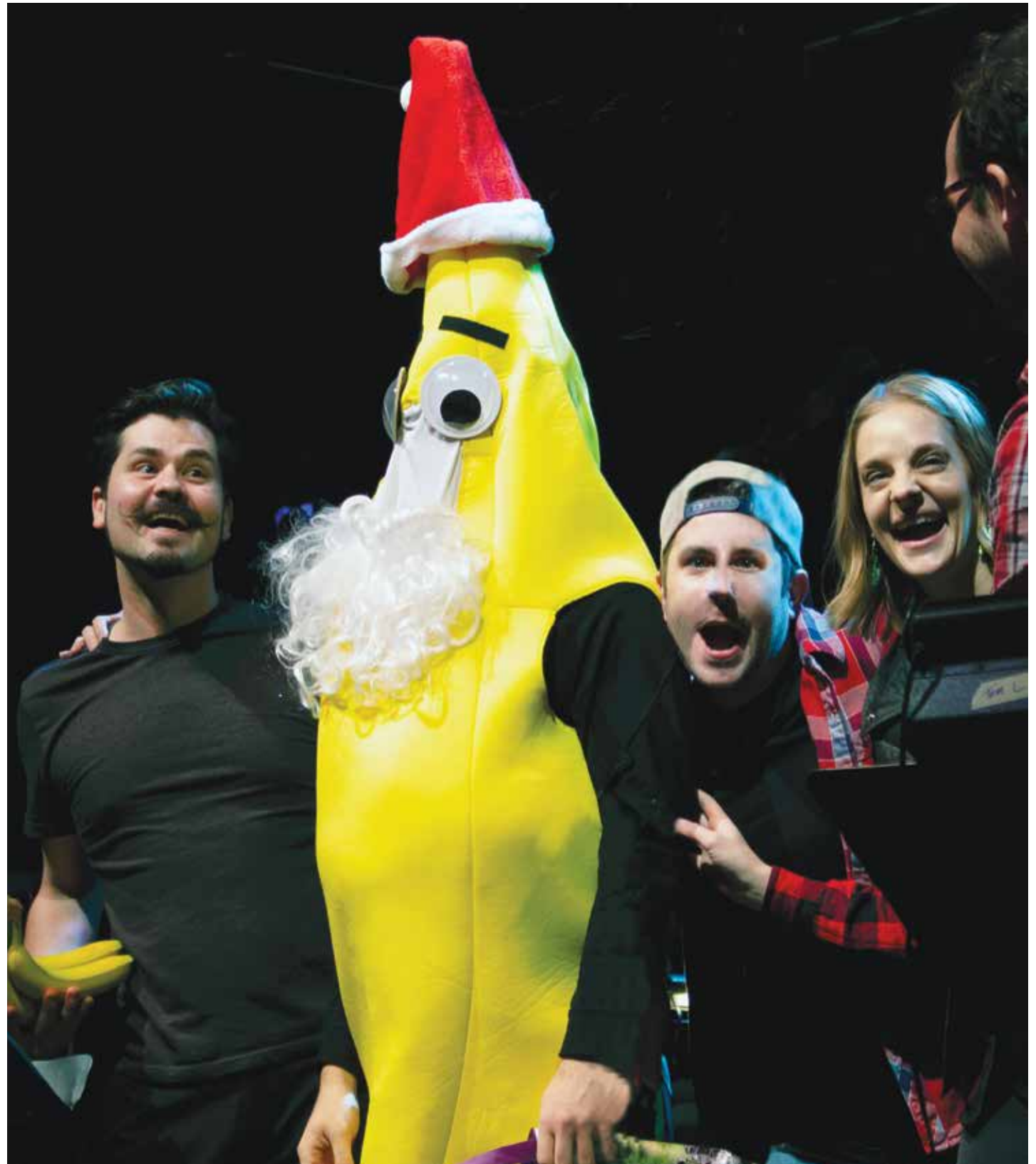
Tim Doyle, co-ordinator of Centennial's journalism programs, says this isn't the end of the Observer brand.

"This is a renewed emphasis on the story — the creating, publishing, distributing and sharing of multimedia stories on digital platforms," Doyle said. "We are turning the attention of students and faculty from producing a print product to a sharper focus on the contemporary and future platforms in our newsroom learning lab."

And the passion that powered the early days

■ See LOCAL, page 3

COMMUNITY



Louise Allyn Palma/The Observer

Going bananas for Riverdale Share

Members of the Bain & Bernard Comedy Company do a final run-through of their hilarious "Christmas banana" bit at last Sunday's Riverdale Share concert. Clearly enjoying themselves are (L-R) Matt Bernard, Mike Iliadis (as the Christmas banana), Rylan O'Reilly, Katie Ryerson and Warren Bain. For a story on the concert and more photos, turn to page 5.

Former mayor reminisces about Toronto's 'Garden of Eden'



■ ALAN REDWAY

Alan Redway has written an extensive history of E.Y., 'a small town within a big city'

By ERIK TWIGHT
The Observer

As children at a Saturday matinee in an East York theatre decades ago, the two boys could not have imagined that they would both become mayors.

Between movies at the Bayview theatre, former East York mayor Alan Redway recalled, the venue

would try to sell stuff — often a yo-yo — to the kids in attendance.

"The young man who got up on the stage and did yo-yo tricks was named Mel Lastman."

While this anecdote is not included in *East York 1924-1997: Toronto's Garden of Eden*, Redway's new book provides an extensive history of the borough. The work was presented at the East York Historical Society's 39th annual general meeting, held Nov. 27 at the S. Walter Stewart Library.

The 528-page book chronicles East York from its 1924 incorporation until its dissolution by Mike Harris's Progressive Conservative government on the last day of 1997.

Describing East York as "a small town within a big city," Redway credited the late East York commissioner of Parks and Recreation, Stan Wadlow, with coining the phrase "Toronto's Garden of Eden" to describe the borough.

Redway talked about East York's beginnings, from the Township of York, incorporated in 1840, through decades of independent townships and villages dotting present-day metro Toronto, splitting and merging, leading to its incorporation as an independent municipality, whose borders extended to its neighbours' perimeters.

■ See REDWAY, page 2

Bambrick brings jazz to church

Singer leads jazz vespers at Northlea

By AILEEN ZARA
The Observer

Filling the long corridors and high, stained-glass ceilings, the voices rang as sweet as a bell. It was a celebration of creation, connection, community and children.

The main voice belonged to Juno-nominated singer, voice actor and broadcaster Heather Bambrick. She and her band created an evening of mellow jazz at Northlea United Church on Nov. 18 that connected churchgoers to the spirit and the world.

Bambrick has performed with some of world's finest musicians, including Fred Hirsch, Guido Basso, Gene DiNovi, Lea DeLaria, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and many others.

The jazz service consisted of several East York church representatives and many friendly faces from the local community.

"Love Jazz vesper services at Northlea United encourage connection, community, and sharing," said Northlea event host Lucy Platt.

Several years ago, she attended her first Jazz vespers at Northlea after seeing a small ad in a local publication.

"Enjoying jazz and readings that afternoon in the context of the beauty and peace of the sanctuary was memorable," Platt said.

That experience influenced her to attend a Sunday service. She's now a member of the lay worship team at Northlea.

"Since I am a jazz fan, I contribute to organizing and hosting Love Jazz vespers," she said.

This particular Sunday's theme was celebrating children and the gift of play. Six-month-old Sebastian was unexpectedly a part of the vocals.

"I was happy to hear that the event was child-themed," said his mother, Laura Coombs. "So a little baby noise would be tolerated and even appreciated."

Meanwhile, Bambrick and her band crafted an evening of mellow jazz for the appreciative audience.

Pianist David Restivo and bassist Pat Collins were perfectly in tune with one another, while saxophone player Colleen Allen had the crowd mesmerized.

Singing songs about true love and living a life without regrets, Bambrick said, "Expect the unexpected, be in the moment and just be."



Erik Twight/The Observer

(L-R) Author and former East York mayor Alan Redway chats with Ward 25 councillor Jaye Robinson and Pancheta Barnett, president of the East York Historical Society, at his recent book talk.

Redway determined to tell E.Y.'s story

Cont'd. from page 1

One odd result of this situation was the Don River, on both sides, going to East York, since the old city of Toronto's eastern border stopped short of the river.

Schools, legions, labour and development history are all covered in *East York 1924-1997*. As we watch General Motors preparing to pull out of Oshawa after a century, Redway reminded the meeting that Ford came (and left) Toronto before GM opened in Oshawa. The Ford assembly plant was on the Danforth, at Victoria Park, where Shoppers World now stands.

The post-war development boom was especially pronounced in East York, where more building permits were issued than anywhere else in Canada. The "apartment wars" had a clear victor, but politically and demographically, East York was changing. After becoming a borough in 1967, its first mayor was the previous reeve of East York, True Davidson.

Redway became mayor in 1977 and had his own dealings with Davidson. "She saw me as a challenger to her heir apparent, which was Willis Blair," he told The East York Observer. Blair's departure from East York for Queen's Park "left the

door open for me to run as mayor. That was a hotly contested campaign."

With respect to writing about his fellow local politicians in this "small town within a big city," Redway said he spoke with his political contemporaries while writing the book.

Redway also spoke about the difficulties of publishing in 2018. Such is his determination that East York's story be told — "If we don't write down the East York story, it's going to be lost entirely," he said — that Redway purchased 200 copies of his own book from his publisher so that he could sell them, at a loss.

Most local stores going romaine-free

Restaurants also affected by recent E. coli outbreak

By RYAN MACKENZIE
The Observer

The recent E. coli outbreak connected to romaine lettuce has forced some East York restaurants and grocery stores to modify their orders and recipes.

Romaine is used in a vast number of food products, from wraps and salads to hamburgers. The change can be a challenge for restaurants. Some are using iceberg lettuce as a substitute, while others are staying away from lettuce completely.

Although some businesses have had to make quick changes due to the outbreak, others are well-prepared.

"We stopped using romaine three years ago," said Ash Gehani, owner of East of York Gourmet Food Co. at 1904 Danforth Ave. "Hydroponic greenhouse romaine is safe because it isn't surrounded by animal feces, but the rest you can't trust."

Gehani found the correlation between E. coli and romaine a long time ago and has made sure to keep it out of his food in anticipation of another outbreak.

Major grocery companies such as Loblaws and Sobeys have pulled romaine from their stores nationwide. Metro,



Photo by Fotolia

which operates in Ontario and Quebec, has done the same.

Longos has begun to import romaine from Arizona, as it has been deemed safe.

"Aligned with the recent FDA investigation regarding food-safety concerns with romaine lettuce, all affected romaine was removed from the shelves," Longos director of produce and floral, Mimmo Franzone, said in a recent email sent to customers.

The recent illnesses are genetically related to illnesses reported during the pre-

vious outbreak from December 2017 that affected consumers in both the U.S. and Canada, so it's safe to assume a connection between romaine and E. Coli. The United States Food and Drug organization has reason to believe the romaine came from California's Central Coast region. In Canada, at least 22 people have been sickened.

"I make sure I know where all my veggies come from at all times," Gehani said. "We're ethics and food first, everything else second."

WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

Are you a teen who wants to volunteer? This one's for you

The Youth Advisory Group is providing volunteer opportunities for teens at the Leaside Library, located at 165 McRae Dr. The group meets on the first and third Wednesday of the month in the library's community room from 4:30 to 6 p.m. to design teen programs and much more. Applications are available in the library. For more information about the opportunity, call 416-396-3835.

Lace up those skates for a spin around the rink

Bring your friends and family this Saturday to the Evergreen Brick Works for festive treats from food trucks and local vendors. The Winter Village is held at 550 Bayview Ave. and will be open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Skating will also be available at Evergreen's winter wonderland-themed outdoor rink. For more information, contact info@evergreen.ca or call 416-596-1495.

Time for some dancing, crafts at the library

Welcome in the new year with two hours of dancing, crafts and a caricature artist on Tuesday, Dec. 31. The festivities will be held at the S. Walter Stewart Library, located at 170 Memorial Park Ave., and run from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. No registration is required, but tickets are limited at the event.

~ Jonathan Pereira

Local news? The Observer is on it

Cont'd. from page 1

of The Observer continues to fuel student pride in their journalism.

Smith, who was 22 in the summer of '72, remembers the first issue well.

"There was something thrilling about seeing your byline in print, being able to hold what you wrote in your hands," said Smith, who would go on to a career in journalism and public relations before coming back to Centennial as an instructor.

"The idea that I enlightened someone, made them smile or made them stop and think about something, now that was really something."

The four of them did it all. They ran their own newsroom, brainstormed stories and ran across town, pencils, paper and cameras in hand, to report on everything from local council meetings to community issues and crime. From there they sat around the table and edited each other's work.

Smith remembers their faculty advisor, Bill Hanley, also a working journalist, left them to their own devices.

They really were the ones that ran the show. They put the pages together, too, before sending them off to the printers. This was before the digital age, back when stories were written on typewriters and pages were laid out manually on glossy paper, typos and mistakes covered up with strips of paper.

"We even delivered the darn thing ourselves," said Smith, thinking about loading up the freshly printed pages in the back of Atanasoff's car and driving through Scarborough in the summer heat with the windows down.

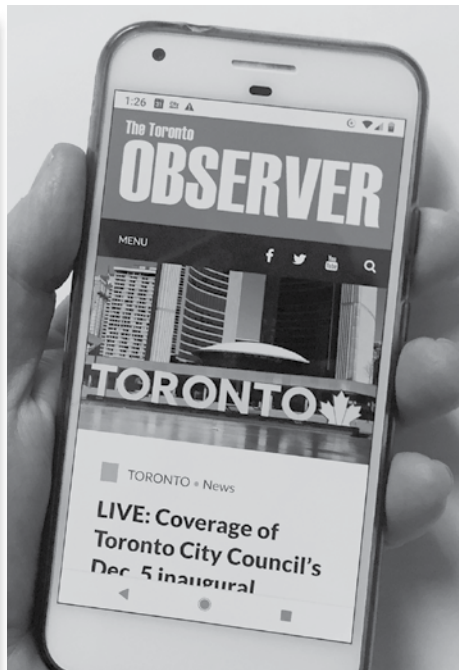
Of all the stories she wrote that summer, Smith remembers one in particular that was ahead of its time.

"There was a student on our campus that was transgender," she said. "I was also intrigued about how she lived in the world. I remember it as a very interesting interview. You can imagine someone struggling with that in the '70s."

That fall, The Observer officially became part of the college's journalism program, and shortly



The Observer has covered everything in East York, including a visit by Princess Di in 1991 (above left). That local coverage will continue on torontoobserver.ca and be available on mobile and other digital platforms.



afterwards, John Lott became the faculty advisor.

Lott, who was the editor of The Aurora Banner at the time, said one of the best parts of teaching was seeing his students blossom into real reporters. He watched the English students he interviewed who told him they liked writing become storytellers and interviewers.

"To see the ones that caught on and had the inherent curiosity and to see them get good at it, that was really something," said Lott, now the senior baseball writer for The Athletic Toronto. "I think some of the best memories were working with students. I worked with students the same way I would work with colleagues."

There was one student he was particularly impressed with.

"There was a story that a student did about an old man who was beaten very badly, and it was an unsolved case at the time. The student somehow was able to get into the guy's hospital room

to get an interview. No one else got that interview at the time."

That student was Enzo DiMatteo. Today, DiMatteo is the editorial director of NOW Magazine, but back in the 1980s he was just one of Lott's students, scurrying around East York searching for stories.

"It was one of those stories that I thought the public would be interested in," DiMatteo said. "He ended up having this really amazing immigrant story, too. But the one thing I remember about that interview was the man asked the nurse in the hospital for a beer and she just brought him one. It magically appeared."

The Observer's journey to digital is far from new. Steve Cogan, a former instructor, editor and program co-ordinator, remembers when The Observer was the first student newspaper to go digital, in 1992.

"Believe me, that was a very crude initial

product. It was strictly text," he said. He still recalls the very first Mac computers his students started using after they ditched the typewriters.

"Over the next 28 years, that digital publishing process became more and more streamlined. Our page design got slicker; the photography transitioned from analogue to digital. We were able to retouch our photos right on the screen."

Today's students are benefiting from the Observer's forward-thinking outlook. One of them, Bobby Hristova, loves that the Observer prepared him for both print and digital.

"My first story for the Toronto Observer was about a serial killer case. It turned into a big investigation. Words weren't enough to describe the scene and share that rush I felt every time we covered that story," he said.

"That's why we used more than just words. We had video, sound, graphics, maps and we designed the story in a way you just can't on a sheet of paper. We grabbed the reader by the hand and showed them our story."

Before Hristova started the journalism program, he'd only ever thought in terms of the morning newspaper. He laughs about that now.

"Working with Toronto Observer, we've gone off the page. We really make each story an experience for readers by making them interactive or by using videos and sound," he said. "We're able to really bring someone to the scene and make it as authentic as can be. What our newest journalists are learning is blowing me away. Toronto Observer is going to see virtual reality. You won't need to imagine what a story was like anymore. You'll actually be there."

As The Observer moves into the future, it dovetails with the creation of a new post-grad program — Contemporary Journalism — preparing students for the needs of a modern industry.

"We are not backing away from reporting on East York. We will continue telling the stories of the community and those that matter to the community," Doyle writes in today's Observer.

"But, we are also a learning lab and our responsibility is to prepare students for the challenging and evolving world of media."

Artist who doesn't follow the rules brings paintings to life

By JONATHAN PEREIRA
The Observer

It was Julia Chmilnitzky, an established artist, who made the push to feature Philip Sherman's art at the Leaside Library.

"He is so creative," she said. "Philip doesn't follow the rules and that is what actually leads to his creativity, whereas I'm more conscious of the rules."

She should know. Philip is her son. The 44-year-old, who has Down syndrome, is showcasing his art at the library, which is commemorating the UN's International Day of Persons with Disabilities by displaying eight paintings and seven architectural designs by Sherman. The exhibit is called Ability With Disability.

About 10 years ago, Sherman enrolled in a TDSB continuing education class at Mt. Pleasant and Eglinton. Toronto artist Jay Dampf took Sherman under his wing and pushed him to share his art with others.

His main focus is his paintings, where he enjoys drawing imaginary faces that are replicated throughout his work.

Sherman also creates architectural designs. He uses a metal ruler to meticulously draw them.

One of Sherman's pieces resembles the Toronto Harbourfront and the surrounding docks.

Some of his paintings are done in a day, others take weeks. His architectural designs start off as straight lines, but as time progresses they form an intricate landscape.

Sherman is not always content with his work. His mother says she often finds herself fishing his art out of the trash.

Sherman also expressed his excitement about painting. He derives some of his creativity from the horror films he watches. When his art is displayed, he feels



Jonathan Pereira/ The Observer

Sherman painted these masks in acrylic and then added gold flecks.

"very happy and proud."

Chmilnitzky advocates for Sherman's art pieces and helps him buy materials. From there, Sherman brings the canvas to life.

Some of Sherman's paintings have sold for \$150, and his pieces will be available for purchase at the library event. While he isn't focused on profit, "It would be nice for him to sell a couple paintings to retrieve the costs (of the paintings)," Chmilnitzky said.

His work has been exhibited at Sunnybrook Hospital, Hamilton's Ben Navae Gallery and the Artusiasm Gallery. It has also travelled around the province, having been showcased in Espanola, Blind River and Elliot Lake.

Sherman's exhibit will be at the Leaside Library through Dec. 31. He will be holding a meet and greet on Dec. 11 from 1 to 3 p.m.



Jonathan Pereira/ The Observer

This painting reminds Sherman of a homeless man in downtown Toronto.

As anti-Semitism rises, rabbi keeps the faith

By ELLEN SAMEK
The Observer

When Rabbi Miriam Margles heard of the attack on four Orthodox Jewish boys, she was equally heartbroken and angry.

“Any time there’s violence, it’s heartbreaking, especially when it’s motivated by hate and even more so when it’s young people involved,” she said.

Margles is the rabbi of Danforth Jewish Circle, an unaffiliated synagogue in East York. The congregation started in the upstairs of a Greek restaurant in the late 1990s and now shares worship space with Eastminster United Church on the Danforth. Even with anti-Semitism on the rise, Margles still has hope that what her synagogue does can be a part of the solution.

Social justice, education and creating multi-faith relationships in the local community are key parts of what Danforth Jewish Circle does. Helping allies understand what anti-Semitism does to the Jewish community is key for Margles.

“It’s so valuable for allies to understand that, for example, when Jews seem to act with defensiveness and seem closed off, it’s because we’re afraid of being betrayed, like so many times in history,” she said. “Shutting down stereotypes, no matter how insignificant, is crucial.”

Karen Robbins, a congregant of the Jewish Circle, says she’s felt the opposite of anti-Semitism living in East York and has seen firsthand how knowing each other can create understanding and friendship across religious lines.

Robbins has been doing multi-faith work on the Danforth for 10 years. It started with a peace walk in 2008 where Jews and Muslims from the neighbourhood got together with the intention of learning more about each other.

That walk has led to a strong connection between the Jewish and Muslim communities in East York. All of Robbins’ sons had their bar mitzvah celebrations at Madinah Masjid near Donlands Avenue, and after the shooting in Pittsburgh, the Muslim community created a circle around Eastminster United while Margles’ and Robbins’ congregation prayed.

“If we know each other and experience each other’s traditions, it’s less likely for there to be prejudice or bias to develop or for our children to develop it,” Robbins said.

The alleged anti-Semitic assault that took place last month involved minors. Toronto Police say four 17-year-old boys wearing traditional Jewish clothing were physically assaulted by a group of other young men while uttering anti-Semitic slurs.



Ellen Samek/The Observer

Rabbi Miriam Margles has been the spiritual leader of Danforth Jewish Circle for 10 years. She says one of the best ways to stop anti-Semitism is learning to be a better ally.

A 17-year-old suspect was arrested and charged with assault and robbery. Nine others are still wanted. Witnesses described the suspects as being in their early teens.

For Dr. Barbara Perry, a professor and hate crimes expert at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, it’s social media that’s enticing young people to join far-right movements. The consequences can be dire.

“Through my research of these movements, law enforcement and former members of these groups have told me about the powerful intensity of the hatred and how exhausting it becomes,” Perry said. “At first, people who join might feel a sense of belonging, but a lot of the time their hatred towards others becomes self-hatred. It’s often insecurity and low self-esteem that led them down the path in the first place.”

These attitudes are rooted in history, going back to when Jews lived in Europe during the Middle Ages.

“In history, Jews were deliberately positioned

as middle agents,” Margles said. “There has been a long history of Jews forced into high positions that involved them being tax-collectors and moneylenders when they weren’t allowed to own property or learn trades. They served a function on behalf of the ruling elite in that way. That’s where the stereotype of usury and Jews being connected with money comes from.”

These beliefs are still prevalent in modern conspiracy theories equating Jews with villainously and covertly ruling the global economy.

“Those who are critical of globalization and multiculturalism or of immigration patterns blame all of that on a great Jewish conspiracy to weaken the West, and Euro-Christian culture in particular,” Perry said.

“They have this vision of Jewish people as the rich, liberal elite controlling global politics from behind the scenes.”

The consequences are also dire for the victims of the crimes and their communities, especially when those communities are already quite insular.

“Those very same emotions are experienced by people who were not the immediate targets, but they’re aware of that victimization,” Perry said. “They too become fearful and paranoid, anxious and depressed. They cope by trying to change their behaviour or becoming even more isolated from broader society because they’re afraid.”

According to a new Statistics Canada report on police-reported hate crimes, crimes against Jewish people have increased by 41 per cent across the country. Ontario had the highest increase in hate crimes overall.

The report also says there has been an increase in non-violent hate crimes, like occurrences of mischief. One such crime took place in the east end in January when someone spray-painted swastikas on a Leuty Lifeguard Station.

The federal government also recently refused to have Canada Post deliver a community publication called Your Ward News. The government claims the publication contains anti-Semitic statements, as well as other disparaging comments about other minority groups. It is for this reason they say Canada Post will no longer deliver the paper.

What Perry finds most disturbing is the improved organization of far-right groups and how social media is giving them a way to join forces.

“When you see these far-right rallies these days, it’s not just one skinhead group. It’s quite a few of them protesting together.”

But it’s not just the far-right that can be anti-Semitic. Both Margles and Perry agree that the far-left can be just as guilty of hatred towards Jewish people.

“I think a lot of anti-Semitism on the far-left is rooted in anti-Zionism and hatred towards Israel,” Perry said.

Despite the outrage when hate crimes take place, Perry says anti-Semitism has always been there, lurking in the shadows, and it’s probably going to get worse.

Perry and her colleagues at the Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism at UOIT will be embarking on a two-year study of anti-Semitism in Canada, focusing on both the historical and the contemporary.

Ultimately, Margles finds this hatred to be rooted in people not knowing each other well enough, even in the most multicultural city in the world.

“You only attack someone else if you see them as other than you,” she said. “When you build relationships across the lines of difference, beautiful things can happen.”

Carolling makes a comeback, thanks to local church

By KASY PERTAB
The Observer

Beverly Vanstone remembers neighbourhood carolling as a perk of her childhood. With Christmas around the corner, she’s reliving those memories in Leaside.

For the second year in a row, Northlea United Church has brought back its Christmas carolling event. Vanstone is one of its organizers.

“It makes me think of my childhood and when people would be carolling in the street,” she said. “As long as people keep coming, the carolling will carry on.”

This year, the group met at the church on Friday, Nov. 30, around 6:30 p.m., when music sheets were handed out and band members warmed up before heading out. The route started at Killdeer Crescent and ended at Aerodome Crescent in the Leaside area.

The event used to be held years ago, said Marnie Phoenix, another of the organizers, but interest died out. Now, with fresh faces in the neighbourhood, they decided to start it up again.

“Like all churches, we don’t have that many people sitting in the pew Sunday morning, but we do encourage it,” Phoenix said. “We love when people come to

special events as well, and know that the church does do more than that.”

Out on the street, the carollers sang the classics, from “Jingle Bells” to “Joy to the World” to “Away in a Manger.”

Once people in the neighbourhood heard the melodies, it didn’t take long before they came out of their houses and joined in.

Kids in their pyjamas, some with their pet dogs, watched from their front porches, while parents took photos.

Paul Carew, the bandmaster for the evening, said his group regularly attends events like this during the holiday season.

The band also plays at Sunnybrook Hospital on Sundays for children and other patients. They are located at the local Salvation Army community church. This is the band’s second year of carolling at Northlea United.

“It’s an opportunity to share our love for music, share our love for the season, and share our love for Christ with everyone,” Carew said.

“People are usually pretty open to hearing Christmas music, so it’s a great opportunity to do that.”



Kasy Pertab/The Observer

Event organizer Marnie Phoenix (right) sings with fellow carollers from Northlea United Church.



Louise Palma/The Observer

The Withrow Junior Choir harmonizes beautifully at the Riverdale Share concert, held last Sunday at the Danforth Music Hall. The local choir has also performed for patients at Bridgepoint Hospital and raised money for the Regent Park School of Music.

Riverdale Share kicks off the season in style

By LOUISE PALMA
The Observer

The annual Riverdale Share concert differs from other gigs featuring Canadian artists in one crucial way: They know their audience personally. That's because many of the event's performers live in the same community as their audience.

Months of preparation and communication between the Riverdale Share board and sponsors were crucial to the event's success. Everyone except the executive director — including stage crew and administrative staff — is a volunteer. All filled critical roles to make the highly anticipated Dec. 2 concert happen.

Money raised from the event goes to non-profit charities within the community, which can apply to receive grants from the Riverdale Share Association. The money raised from ticket sales and raffle tickets all goes towards these grants. Last year, over \$50,000 was raised.

"It's really well-organized, and it feels really good to be supporting my community," said communications volunteer Susan Flynn. While the organizational aspect of the concert is important, so is booking performers for an audience to watch.

Riverdale Share did not disappoint. Among this year's stellar line-up were Jim Cuddy, Whitehorse, Blair Packham, Kathryn Rose and Julian Taylor.

"I'm always really nervous, but I think that's on par

with the human condition," said Taylor, who was playing the event for the third time. "With that sort of nervousness brings a wonderful inspirational excitement within us.

"Because my family is here, my daughters are growing up here, and I've been here for a long time, I see a lot of faces in the audience that I actually know," he said. "And we've sat and broken bread together. And that's a real wonderful thing about being human is that when you do that, you automatically become soulmates. So, I feel like when I perform here, I'm performing for my soulmates and they're giving back that energy to me."

It was Kathryn Rose's first time performing at the Riverdale Share concert and, like Taylor, she was both nervous and excited.

With a capacity of 1,500 at the Danforth Music Hall, "goodness knows how many of my neighbours might be in the audience, right?" she said.

As a single mother with two children and bills to pay, Rose understands the difficulties her community members face, or could face, and appreciates this concert as a way to give back to the community.

"I just think about all the families that have less than what I have, and I feel lucky all the time, so I'm just really very happy, especially at this time of year, to participate in this great concert," said Rose, who sang Mariah Carey's classic "All I Want for Christmas is You."

"I feel happy to be part of something that's doing such amount of good, for so many people for such a long time."



Louise Palma/The Observer

Kathryn Rose belts out to Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas is You."



Louise Palma/The Observer

Volunteer Susan Flynn (left) says one of the best parts of the Riverdale Share concert is having a predominantly local line-up playing for the community.

■ EDITORIALS

A new chapter

Welcome to the newest chapter in the history of the *Observer*, the multi-platform publication of the Centennial College journalism programs.

After this edition, the *East York Observer* will be a digital-only operation.

You will continue to find the impressive journalism of Centennial College journalism students at torontoobserver.ca but the print publication is ending its 46-year run.

Digital publishing is not new to the industry, of course, and nor is it to our students.

The *Observer* moved online in 1992, broadening its reach but, more importantly, strengthening the skills of our students.

The decision to stop printing on paper is aligned with our introduction of a more contemporary journalism curriculum, one expressly designed with the input of industry advisers, to better prepare our students for the storytelling jobs of today and tomorrow.

We are not backing away from reporting on East York. We will continue telling the stories of the community and those that matter to the community.

But we are also a learning lab and our responsibility is to prepare students for the challenging and evolving world of media.

This decision marks a renewed emphasis on the story - the creating, publishing, distributing and sharing of credible and verified multimedia stories — on digital platforms.

In particular, it's a stronger emphasis on mobile and social storytelling that can reach audiences wherever they are.

The Story Arts Centre, the home of our multiplatform newsroom at Carlaw and Mortimer avenues, is a proud partner of the community of East York and our students and faculty are active in the community, researching and reporting your stories.

That's not going to stop.

The proud history of the *Observer* will continue through the efforts of the new wave of Centennial College's contemporary journalists.

We invite you to experience their work at torontoobserver.ca.

~ Tim Doyle, program co-ordinator

Brake the skates

As winter approaches, certain methods of transportation are being stored away for the season. However, that doesn't seem to have affected the large group of people who are still skateboarding around East York in the rain and even the snow.

Skateboarding, or longboarding, is a method of transportation that is sometimes associated with delinquent behaviour. Some East York parks have installed metal studs along their park benches to try to combat skateboarders applying wax to "grind" on the surface.

Riding down the Danforth, however, is another situation entirely.

With specific parts of the Danforth rising and falling in elevation, it becomes both a problem and a benefit. The additional incline allows for less pushing and more speed, but it also increases the risk.

Since skateboarders and longboarders do not have any way to brake — other than with your own foot or by jumping off — they can make it dangerous for pedestrians along the Danforth. So why don't they just ride on the road?

According to the City of Toronto's bylaws, "The Highway Traffic Act prohibits the use of skateboard/roller skates/in-line skates on roadways. City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 950, Traffic and Parking, prohibits the use of skateboards, roller skates, in-line skates and similar devices on the roadway on streets where there are sidewalks, except for the purpose of crossing the road."

For riders, this creates an added problem, since they must ride on the sidewalk when one's available. For East Yorkers, that is dangerous.

The world speed records for skateboards and longboards exceed 130 km/h. Even in an urban environment, speeds can average 40km/h.

Those numbers may seem high, but they are achievable with the right hill and, of course, no brakes. The collision impact is strong enough to knock people off their feet and injure both rider and pedestrian.

The bylaws state that Toronto Police are responsible for the enforcement of skateboarding behaviour. While they no doubt have more pressing problems to attend to, here's hoping they don't turn a blind eye to this one.

~ Jonathan Pereira

■ COLUMN



The current staff of the *East York Observer* is preparing to move on to internships or, for those in our joint program with UTSC, return to university for further studies. During their time with the print and online publications, our reporters covered everything from the Bruce McArthur case to the municipal election to the revised sex-ed curriculum to Secord Elementary School's first-ever championship win in its 103-year history. They shot photos and video, wrote stories, designed pages and took turns running the editorial board, putting in a lot of late nights in the process. Now they're ready to take the multiplatform skills they learned in our newsroom to such places as the *National Post*, *CBC*, *680 News*, the *Toronto Star*, *CTV* and *Canadian Living* magazine.

Goodbye, and thanks, E.Y.

Aspiring journalist is what I called myself.

That was on the first day of classes, three semesters ago at Centennial College's Story Arts Centre.

But according to Tim Doyle, the journalism program co-ordinator and, of course, a journalist, I was wrong.

I wasn't aspiring. I already was a journalist. This was just my training to become a better one.

See, here at Centennial, my fellow classmates and I thought our transition from university to college would be the same. We thought we'd spend our days in lectures and our nights poring over research papers. We were wrong.

Instead, we spent our days chasing breaking news stories alongside reporters from other reputable news outlets, such as *CBC* and *CityNews*. And at night, we learned the difference between writing academic papers and news articles. (I'll give you a hint: a good lede, all of the facts, and none of the fluff.)

Some of us were more timid and worried that perhaps we weren't the best storytellers and wouldn't give a piece the justice it deserved. Others had that journalistic instinct from the beginning, running toward the fires most of us would run from and getting up close and personal with the people who study serial killers.

But no matter where you started as a student at the Story Arts Centre, the instructors believed in every one of us and worked tirelessly to ensure that, when this day came, we would all be well-rounded, employable journalists.

And for that I want to say thank you. Thank you for being patient and guiding us as we navigated the borders of East York, chasing crime stories and finding feel-good

moments.

Thank you for giving us a space to hone our storytelling and fact-checking skills. Thank you for seeing our potential and believing that each batch of students was just as capable as the last of producing a stellar paper and its sister website.

But it wouldn't be so stellar without our readers. So thank you for opening your events and homes and businesses to us. Thank you for allowing us to tell your stories and for sharing our work with your families week after week.

You've played a vital role in giving us the confidence to call ourselves journalists — just as you did for the *Observer* journalists who have come before us and will do for those who are following.

Now it's time to say a bittersweet goodbye.

We're grateful, as many of us are moving on to internships and jobs where we get to continue doing what we love.

But we're also tearful, because there's a whole generation of students who will never experience the joy of designing pages, having their story make the front page, or watching the papers get picked up for delivery to our readers.

The *Observer* will live on, of course, as a digital publication.

You will still be able to get your East York news produced by Centennial College journalists at torontoobserver.ca and on a variety of social platforms.

~ Tijuana Turner

The East York

OBSERVER

CENTENNIAL COLLEGE

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On the Broadview tracks 95 years later



Toronto Public Archives



Tijuana Turner/The Observer

Above left, workers lay down wooden ties for streetcar tracks on Broadview Avenue, just north of Danforth Avenue, on June 9, 1923. Today (above right), more than 95 years later, a streetcar rides more recently laid rails into the subway station at about the same location on a very changed Broadview.

Walking while distracted can be dangerous

Crossing guard says younger kids are usually more careful than teens, adults

By **JUAN ROMERO-USME**
The Observer

It's a common sight these days: people walking across a street, staring down at their smartphone or listening intently to their headphones, completely unaware of their surroundings.

For Alex Avery, it's a trend he sees every day. A crossing guard at the intersection of Danforth and Chester avenues, he said nearly half of the people he sees are distracted by something.

"Some people don't even notice me when they pass by," Avery joked.

"It is a little worrying to see, because you never know what could happen, you know? I mean, there is a light in this intersection, but there are others that rely just on a crossing guard, and if maybe one of us isn't there one day, it could be really dangerous."

When it comes to distracted walking, people might assume that younger pedestrians are the ones who are always on their phones. Not so, Avery said.

"I see older people doing it, too, all the time. It's a bit odd, but I would even say that younger kids are usually more careful than teens and adults when it comes to paying attention while crossing the street."

Sgt. Brett Moore of the Toronto Police's traffic services said he is unaware of any records being kept of distracted walking. Drivers, he said, are the ones responsible for being attentive to anything on the road.

"Road safety is a shared responsibility, and all road users are encouraged to show courtesy and communicate with others, but as a driver it is their responsibility to be aware and anticipate things coming at them," Moore said.

Part of the reason there are no records on distracted walking is because there are no laws against it. Distracted driving is a bigger problem than walking, as it poses more of risk to other people, Moore said.

"Only one (the distracted driver) has laws that prohibit this action, and for good reason," he said. "Distracted driving is a leading cause of collisions and injuries."

A 'huge loss' for the community

June Heidricks, who owned Katies Cakes, dies at age 65

By **BRANDON WONG**
The Observer

Despite being diagnosed with stage 3C colon cancer in April 2016, June Heidrick, who owned Katies Cakes, kept going to work even while undergoing chemotherapy.

She finally stepped away from the business in August this year. Heidrick died on Nov. 12. She was 65.

"I've never seen anyone with that amount of strength before, and I doubt I'll see it again," said Heidrick's youngest daughter, Michelle Dufoe. "It was unbelievable." (Heidrick's eldest daughter is Marjorie.)

Heidrick was born at Toronto East General Hospital (now Michael Garron Hospital) in June 1953, before moving to Brownsdale, N.L., with her parents, Albert and Veda Austin, who have since died.

While she was growing up there, Heidrick's father worked in Toronto. Her mother stayed home to hunt, cook, clean, and collect water from the well. The family moved back to East York on Monarch Park Avenue when Heidrick was 12.

"My mother and grandparents came from nothing," Dufoe said. "It was her upbringing that motivated her to work harder."

In 1976, Heidrick purchased Katies Cakes (also known as "The Store"), located on O'Connor Drive and Amsterdam Avenue, from a woman named Katherine, which is where the store's name came from. She also convinced her mother to quit her job at Hallmark and help run the business.

Initially, "The Store" made chocolates. It was her mother who suggested they make cakes as well. That is when their business began to gain more exposure. They now sell cakes for weddings, corporations, Christmas, birthdays and even erotica.

Katies Cakes was a family affair. Heidrick's father, a tow motor operator, and her husband, Warren, who worked in water and sewer maintenance, also pitched in at the store after finishing their respective shifts.



Photo Courtesy of Michelle Dufoe

Michelle Dufoe's mother, June Heidrick (left), and grandmother, Veda Austin (right), outside Katies Cakes in 1991. The store is located on O'Connor Dr. and Amsterdam Ave.

"They were always around, so I never had a babysitter," Michelle Dufoe said. "Some of my favourite memories are when my entire family was together."

"The Store" also made a decision to create a nut-free environment in 2002 after Dufoe's son, born in 2000, was diagnosed with multiple allergies, including nuts. The decision allowed their cakes to be offered to members in the community with dietary restrictions.

Erin Marie, a customer and former East York resident, has a nut allergy and discovered Katies Cakes through her sister, whose daughter suffered from the same allergy.

"It allowed my family and I to enjoy birthday cakes and my wedding cake, which is a first for me," Marie said. "My family is eternally grateful, and her (June's) passing is a huge loss for her family and the community."

Simone Vieira St. Aimée, another former East York resident, has been a customer at Katies Cakes for more than 10 years and has fond memories of June Heidrick.

"She knew me by name and made a cake for every milestone in my life, including my husband's and children's lives as well," Vieira St. Aimée said. "I will truly miss her."

Katies Cakes became better known through TV spots and from being featured in the Toronto Star. Despite the attention, Heidrick preferred to stay out of the spotlight.

"She always wanted to be the person behind the scenes," Dufoe said. "I know nothing made her happier than seeing a child's reaction to their cakes. That was so special to her."

Heidrick was also heavily involved in the community, whether it was participating in local charity drives and collecting donations from customers, or putting aside donation money when local charities came by — or contacting them if they didn't stop by.

"She was a very giving person and loved helping those who didn't have much," Dufoe said. "It was also easier for her to make these efforts because of her status in the community, and I couldn't be more proud of her."

Dufoe, a lead associate for a telecommunication business, worked at "The Store" until 2010. Since 2016, Katies Cakes has been under the ownership of her cousin, Cherie Heidrick.

"One thing that I'll miss most about my mother is her tenacity," Dufoe said. "She's my hero."



Varsha Ramdihol/The Observer

Leaside residents Avery Heyd, 2, and Billie the cat stare at a children's show playing on a tablet screen. Avery's mom, Sarah, limits her daughter's screen time to an occasional episode of Elmo or Wheels on the Bus songs.

Ho-ho-hold the electronics

Instead of gadgets, consider gifts that spark your child's imagination, experts say

By VARSHA RAMDIHOL
The Observer

While electronic devices may feature prominently on your child's Christmas wish list, an old-fashioned gift like a construction set or art supplies might actually be a better choice, says an East York therapist.

"Toys that allow for free imaginative play are always a good idea," said Bonnie Miller, a social worker and psychotherapist at Leaside Therapy Centre. "That's why LEGO was so popular."

With all of the new technologies available, it's tempting to hand a young child an iPad, laptop or cellphone, she said.

However, parents need to be aware of the dangers of too much screen time,

including exposure to pornography, manipulation of parental blockades or even cyberbullying.

"Parents should be curious about what kids do online; how they're engaging with their friends socially or not," Miller said.

They should think about "what is it about a game the child finds fascinating; what the child is trying to achieve," she added.

Parents should also ensure the skills required to play various games are transferable to the real world, she said. This ensures those skills are not isolated to the device alone and can be applied to life outside of it.

Doone Estey is an educator and partner with the Parenting Network, a local organization that offers parenting courses and workshops. She believes children below the ages of six or seven should not be given iPads.

"Using a screen can be addictive, so the problem becomes getting them off of it,"

Estey said.

"The younger they start, the more the child is used to it and the harder it'll be to manage how much time the child spends on the screen."

Sometimes children can be creative when using a screen, she said, but they miss out on developing skills associated with using their hands.

"There's so much research shown that if kids are engaging with the screen it is interactive," Estey said.

"But they're not using their hands or manipulating things with their hands," the way they would when painting a picture, for example.

Sometimes parents use an iPad or other device as a substitute for active parenting or as a way of babysitting children, she said.

However, the "best way to help kids develop," according to Estey, "is to talk to them and spend time with them and send them outdoors to play."

■ ARTHRITIS

'I was scared to think this would be my life forever'

Woman, 25, has learned to live with diagnosis that initially terrified her

By DENA SHAH HOSSEINI
The Observer

Victoria Phan can still remember the smell of the leather chair she was sitting on. Alone in a dimly lit office, she was patiently waiting for her results. All she could hear was the sound of a clicking pen.

The person holding that pen was the third specialist she had seen about her chronic pain in just six months. That person would also be the one to finally diagnose her. She would have to deal with arthritis in her neck for the rest of her life.

"I was shocked but also relieved, all at the same time," said Phan, 25, of East York. "All I remember doing is picking up the phone in a panic, trying to call my mother right away. I felt like breaking down crying. I mean, I always knew that my pain was not normal. I would wake up every morning enduring tightness and stiffness in my spine area. Some days it became unbearable. But arthritis? I didn't think somebody my age could even have it this early."

The Arthritis Foundation estimates that 54 million people in the world suffer from doctor-diagnosed arthritis. That number, it estimates, will rise to 78 million by 2040.

Around half of those currently diagnosed are over 65. It is not common for someone as young as Phan to have it, but it is also not unheard of.

There are many ways to manage the pain, Phan's doctor told her, but there is no cure for arthritis.

"When I heard him say that, I didn't know what to think," Phan said. "I was just scared to think that this would be my life forever."

Chiropractor Dr. Andrew Stillo, who runs the Andrew Stillo Chiropractic Clinic, has not had many young patients with arthritis, but said that it could be easier for someone younger to follow the steps to reduce the pain.

"The best way to try to reduce arthritis is to exercise, and obviously someone who is older is more susceptible to arthritis because of wear and tear," Stillo said.

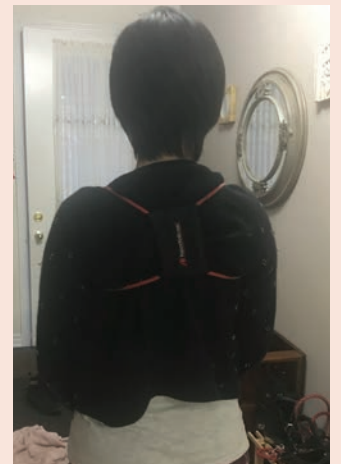
"The body gets weaker and it's easier to injure yourself."

Stillo prides himself on recommending a more natural route to the cases he does see in the early stages of arthritis. The key, he believes, is finding a consistent routine, which will help relieve not only the body but also the mind.

"I usually encourage exercising," he said. "I just believe you're helping to cure not only the joint inflammation throughout the body, but also the most important organ in the entire body. The mind is often forgotten about and can help relieve the pain in other areas."

Since her diagnosis about a year ago, Phan has learned to accept the news that once terrified her. She is following exercises that were recommended by her doctors, and she is going to chiropractic appointments at least once a month.

"The pain is still there, but I have a more positive outlook on it now," Phan said. "I am just thankful it is something I can manage with exercise and massages, and my back stretcher helps a lot."



Dena Shah Hosseini/The Observer

Victoria Phan wears a back stretcher to help with her arthritis.

■ YOUR SAY

Tech for kids: yea or nay?



Alex REYES

'It's good to give kids iPads for school use but there's a limit to how you use it.'



Abebech NIGATU

'I'm not sure about it. If you give them iPads they are always going to be on it and not read or study. They will just play on it.'



Evy MILONAS

'It's not that bad of an idea to give kids iPads because there are things from school that are educational for them.'



Shiraz Musawwir

'Kids that are older should be able to have them but not younger. At an older age they know right from wrong and are more sensible.'



Bushra SHAIMAN

'I don't think it's a good idea because as much as we can limit the screen time, I think it's a big no-no.'