

SPIKE IN VIOLENCE

■ Week of crime

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Photo courtesy of Vince Berns/East Side Players

Curtain closing

There's still time — but not much — to see the East Side Players' latest production, *Speaking in Tongues*. The Observer's Chris DeMelo praises the acting in his review, on page 8. The cast includes (l-r) Kizzy Kaye, Ted Powers, Steve Switzman and Lydia Kiselyk. *Speaking in Tongues* plays again tonight but concludes its run tomorrow, March 7, in the Papermill Theatre at Todmorden Mills Heritage Site on Pottery Road.

■ CHILDBIRTH

Embracing pregnancy with a doula

Doulas provide clinical support and the 'personal touch of family'

By STEPHANIE BACKUS
The Observer

All Erin McKane could hear were babies. Their first cries filled the air as she rested, dazed, on her corner bed in one of Toronto East General Hospital's birthing rooms with her husband, Anton Swanson, on one side and her doula, April Kowaleski, on the other. She was waiting for her baby to be cleaned up, and one of her midwives was aggressively massaging her uterus. She decided to joke away her discomfort.

"This is unlike any massage I've ever had," she said. "Massages are supposed to be relaxing. I would never pay for this."

McKane, 34, had just given birth to her first child, David Dean Swanson. It was an intimate experience the East York woman shared with her husband, her midwives — and her doula.

"A couple of my friends had doulas in their pregnancies, so I asked them a bunch of questions about their experiences," she said. "I knew pretty soon that's what I wanted to do. I wanted to have that."

According to Doulas of North America (DONA) International, a doula is a "trained and experienced professional who provides physical and emotional support to a mother before, during and after birth," much like Kowaleski did with McKane. Kowaleski, who trained with DONA International in Toronto, has attended an estimated 65 births in the five years since becoming a birth and post-partum doula. She is currently the doula co-ordinator at Toronto Yoga Mamas



Photo courtesy of Erin McKane

Doula co-ordinator April Kowaleski has been providing families with support for five years.

on Queen Street East.

When a doula is selected, Kowaleski explained, the mother-to-be purchases a package of hours. That package, if it's through Yoga Mamas, comes with prenatal classes that take place between weeks 32-36 of pregnancy.

McKane found her doula through her sister, who happens to be Kowaleski's neighbour. She had already decided to go with a midwife instead of a doctor, but when she told her friends about it, they sug-

gested using a doula as well.

"They said their doulas had been very supportive during their labour process," McKane said, and after doing some research, that's the route she decided to take.

According to the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada, obstetricians are concerned with everything from contraception to maternal fetal medicine to delivering babies. Midwives take it a step further, offering breastfeeding advice and support.

And doulas, McKane said, "provide the in-between — the clinical stuff that a midwife would do and the personal touch of family."

Ironically, while McKane chose the midwife and doula for their traditional, natural methods, she ended up having a delivery that wasn't quite what she'd expected.

"I tore inside and hemorrhaged and lost more blood than the average vaginal birth," she said, "but less than someone having a caesarean."

She had to be induced and have her water broken. There were also problems finding the right balance of medication for her. All of this really unsettled McKane's husband, but Kowaleski helped to relax him.

"I think it was her experience, really, just knowing that she had these tricks up her sleeve to help me deal with the pain," McKane said. "That in itself helped him to calm down and he was less frantic, less worried."

Kowaleski let Swanson know when it was OK to step out for a moment for a nap or to grab some food. "You go ahead — I've got this," McKane remembers her saying.

The role of the doula is more holistic than medical,

■ See DOULA'S, page 7

E.Y.'s former mayor heads 'south'

By MATT GREEN
The Observer

He may have lost the June provincial election by a percentage point, but former MPP Michael Prue was feeling the love from East Yorkers on Feb. 26.

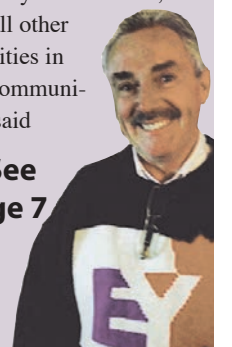
Prue, whose political career in East York lasted more than a quarter-century, was the man of the hour at the "Michael Prue Appreciation Night," which took place at the Palace restaurant on Pape Avenue.

About 120 people gathered to celebrate Prue's years of public service within the former Borough of East York, the "megacity" of Toronto, and Queen's Park. It was a last hurrah in more ways than one... because Prue and his wife Shirley are preparing to move 400 km away — from their home on Parkview Hill Crescent in the heart of East York to Amherstburg, in southwestern Ontario.

Perhaps most significantly, Prue was the last mayor of East York, leading borough council until its 1998 dissolution under then-premier Mike Harris's forced merger of Toronto municipalities into the amalgamated City of Toronto.

"When Michael was mayor, he was very helpful and assisting not only in East York, but all other activities in the community," said

■ See page 7



POLICE BRIEFS

Pair shot dead

A Saturday morning fight between male customers at the McDonald's restaurant on Danforth Avenue near Coxwell left two of the men dead and the third injured.

Police say a legally armed security guard who happened to be in the restaurant buying food became involved in an altercation with two men. The guard fired several shots and the two were killed. One of the dead men has been identified as 25-year-old Donny Ouimette. The other, reportedly 40 years old, hadn't been identified at press time. Neither has the guard, who police say was injured, is cooperating with them, and has not been charged.

Man shot in face

On Feb. 12 at around 9 a.m., a man was shot in the face near the corner of Victoria Park and Danforth avenues. He was hospitalized with non-life-threatening injuries. Charged with attempted murder and 14 other counts is Jeffrey Murphy, 29.

Man stabbed accidentally

Police say an unidentified Leaside man in his 60s died accidentally, perhaps from falling on a knife, while taking out recycling on Thomas Elgie Drive on Feb. 26.

Convenience store robbery

Police recovered a weapon and arrested an unidentified suspect after a convenience store robbery at Dawes Road and Halsey Avenue at around 7 p.m. on Feb. 18.

—Observer staff

The Agnes spirit lives

By MARCUS MEDFORD
The Observer

For Eden Bridge-Cook, winning at public speaking was only a part of the objective.

"I'm very passionate about animals," she said, "so I was happy to share (my views) with everybody."

Eden, a Grade 6 student at Westwood Middle School in East York, won the 18th annual Agnes Macphail public speaking award with a speech on factory farming.

Agnes Macphail was a suffragist, humanitarian and animal-welfare advocate. She was also the first woman to be elected to the House of Commons, and one of the first two women elected to the Ontario Legislature.

The annual awards program in her name separately recognizes both civic activism among adult East Yorkers and public speaking among East York students in grades 6, 7 or 8.

This year, the student speeches dealt with stigma surrounding mental illness, sexual assault and societal pressures.

Bob Lister, who co-received the Agnes Macphail award for volunteerism with his wife Lis in 1998, served as the MC

during the evening.

"We call it a competition, but really it's a celebration," Lister said. The Listers have been co-ordinating the contest for years, and agree that the purpose of the event is to celebrate the principles by which Agnes Macphail lived.

"She was a rebel. She was somebody who stood up for her passions and that's what we want (the students) to do," Lis Lister said.

She also pointed out that the contest offers a great learning experience; it fosters their "growth and development" and it gives them confidence.

For Meghan Mackye, of G.A. Brown Middle School, a speaking contest is not something she would normally join. Meghan is a soccer player in Grade 7 and gave a speech on the value of competitive sports. Meghan described herself as shy and said that public speaking was a "first-time thing." Despite the novelty, Meghan said she enjoyed the experience.

"It was nice for me to do because it was really open," she said. For this year's winner, Eden Bridge-Cook, the event was all about content and dealing with stress.

"It was really nerve-wracking, but I was having a good time," she said.



Marcus Medford/// The Observer

Eden Bridge-Cook, winner of the 18th annual Agnes Macphail public speaking award. She advanced through a preliminary round of speeches at her neighbourhood school, Westwood on Carlaw Avenue, and prevailed in the finals of the competition — held at the East York Civic Centre on Feb. 18. The public speaking contest for young people is one half of the annual Macphail awards program; the other half is the award for civic activism among adult volunteers.

Recognizing a local hero

By NOVEMBER CHERNICK
The Observer

Somebody was always there for him. That's why Muhammad Masood Alam has chosen to be there for his East York community.

"I was very inspired by my dad's community work," Alam said, about his life growing up in Pakistan. "He was always there for people, even in the middle of the night."

In 2011 and 2012, Alam responded to a sense of fear for citizen safety in Thorncliffe Park. He initiated a partnership with Toronto Police Services' 53 Division and the neighbourhood youth centre, to help families create a safer environment.

His program is one of a long list of initiatives that has now earned Alam the 2015 Agnes Macphail award for civic activism — named after East York's illustrious politician and social activist of the early 20th century. The award is given each year to an East York resident who has made outstanding contributions in volunteer work to the community.

Born in Pakistan, Alam decided, after living abroad for many years, to move his

family from Dubai to Canada in 2004. He wanted to give his three children the opportunity to be active community members.

"Canada is the best place to live," Alam said.

Alam is an information technology expert and since 2009 has worked as a program administrator for the Thorncliffe



■ ALAM

Neighbourhood Office. But he has also contributed to his community by raising awareness about gang violence, street and high-rise safety and Internet bullying, among many issues.

"I'm not doing anything (to win) any award," he said. "It's my job."

His nominator, Nadine Hare, gathered letters of support and endorsement.

"Masood is dedicated and continues to work shoul-

der-to-shoulder with our policing services," she said.

In 2012, Alam's Thorncliffe Park safety initiative, called "rabita," an Arabic word for "bond," also earned him the Mayor of Toronto's Community Safety Award.

Alam strongly believes that improving a community as a whole starts from home.

"I involve my kids to do volunteer work with me. My whole family was involved with the rabita program," he said. "(My wife Syeda Saima) never stopped me where I was going, even if it was the middle of the night."

Alam has also remained connected to his South-Asian community. He's an active member of the Canadian Association of Pakistani Origin (CAPO) and has led fundraising to assist victims of tsunami, earthquake and flood disasters in South Asia. But it's his adopted home that receives his greatest attention, despite occasional skepticism.

"I was told by many community members, 'Alam, this is not your job. Why would anyone listen to you?'"

Alam will officially receive his Macphail award in a ceremony on March 24 at 7 p.m. at the East York Civic Centre.

WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

Bring your game face

The S. Walter Stewart library will be hosting a lunchtime gaming session this Monday, March 9, and on April 13 from 11:45 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. Players will have the chance to challenge their friends to Xbox, Wii or board games. The event is geared for people between the ages of 11 to 18. Pre-registration is not required.

Awesome images

East Yorkers and Watercolour Society members Alan Breeze, Gail Gregory, Nola McConnan and Jenny Reid will be exhibiting artwork this month inspired by "the air around, the water and earth beneath our feet" at the S. Walter Stewart library. The artists' reception will take place in the auditorium this Sunday, March 8, from 2 to 4 p.m. — when guests will have the opportunity to meet and mingle with the artists.

Literature for Life

Students from Centennial College's East York campus are hosting the first-ever #CelebrateImagination fundraiser in support of Literature for Life's Women with Words Reading Circles program. Members of the public are welcome to join a night of trivia, book readings, mingling and raffle prizes. The event will be held this Tuesday, March 10, at 7 p.m. at the Fox and Fiddle, 535 Danforth Ave.

A breath of spring

Arborist David Bostock is presenting "Pruning" at the Leaside Garden Society's meeting this Thursday, March 12. Bostock will cover the basics of tree and shrub pruning, tips and tricks and much more. The presentation begins at 7:30 p.m., with refreshments at 7:15. It will be held at Leaside library, 165 McRae Dr.

Real harmony

This Thursday, March 12, at 8 p.m., Ashkenaz and the Aga Khan Museum on Wynford Drive present the Canadian premiere performance of Diwan Saz, an interfaith ensemble made up of Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Bedouin musicians who perform ancient music from Central Asia, Turkey, Persia, and the Holy Land promoting peace and harmony through their music. Details and tickets: agakhanmuseum.org

March break relief

The Todmorden Mills Heritage Site invites East Yorkers to drop in during March break for some "fun and games in the valley." On March 14 and 15 or March 17-22, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., play with historic toys and discover popular games from past generations. Participants also have the opportunity to create a unique take-home craft. The cost is adults \$5.31, seniors \$3, and children \$2 (plus tax).

Customize your phone

The S. Walter Stewart library is hosting a workshop that will teach participants between ages 11 and 18 how to create and decorate a phone case out of felt. All supplies will be provided at the event, taking place on March 20 from 3:30 to 5 p.m. Pre-registration is required. Call 416-3396-3975 to register.

Eluetheromania?

The Toronto Centre for the Arts presents Eluetheromania, an exhibit featuring the work of 30 Centennial College students from the Fine Arts Studio program at the college's East York campus. The artwork presented is diverse, showcasing the artists' personal quest for freedom. The group exhibition will take place on March 26 at 5040 Yonge St.

—Aziza Ibrahim

■ COMMUNITY

Local barber cuts his ties with former shop

Increase in rent forces East York barber to relocate

By ERIC PEMBER
The Observer

Lui Levacchia has been a barber in the Leaside community since 1968.

But he almost had to leave the community recently, after notice of an impending steep hike in rent at the building housing his shop.

Levacchia said the rationale for the rent hike was the Eglinton subway construction. This, despite the fact that the subway won't be open until at

least 2020.

"I told them that they can put my rent up," he said, but the hike was far beyond what he felt he could pay. So he said he was left with no alternative but to move out.

Levacchia added that he's had to swallow other rent increases over the years. But he said that he's swallowed them time and again for the sake of his family — in particular, for the sake of getting his children through school. Now, though, his son is a lawyer and his daughter is a teacher.

"I've got to work, but I cannot afford to pay that kind of rent, and I don't need the store," Levacchia said.

"So that's why I closed it

down."

But fortunately for him, the Mister Barber Lounge just down the street offered to give him a job that would allow him to remain in the community.

He said he was pleased with the offer, because he didn't want the personal connections he had made with his customers over the years to go to waste.

"I did my best for everything for my customers," he said, "because my customers, they were... the people to feed my kids, to give me a job — and I will pay back to them a lifetime for what they did for me."

And his faith in his custom-

ers seems to have been well-placed, because many of them have returned to get their hair cut by Levacchia in his new location, on Eglinton near Laird.

John Spears has been patronizing Levacchia since 1983.

"He's always telling funny stories about his family — some of which may be true," Spears quipped.

Spears considers Levacchia to be a treasured part of the community, and he's glad that he'll be around for the foreseeable future.

"He is a great barber, and it's always a friendly place to come, because you feel comfortable here," Spears said.



Eric Pember // The Observer

John Spears gets his 'ears lowered' by Lui Levacchia in Levacchia's new barber shop.

Pregnant in Thorncliffe?

Clinic will help you navigate through your pregnancy

By SIDRA SHEIKH
The Observer

Thorncliffe Park is benefiting from a new addition to the neighbourhood — one that makes it easier for those in the community to bring new additions into the world.

The Thorncliffe Park Pregnancy Clinic has just opened, in response to a healthcare "gap analysis" of the area.

Thorncliffe Park often becomes home to many newcomers to Canada. Eventually these newcomers look to expand their family and need services nearby to help them do so, but according to the gap analysis, there is a shortage of services available.

"This is a small community, in the sense it's a small area, and within that area, you have a large population and primary healthcare access is very limited — so the vision is to have primary care," said the co-ordinator of the pregnancy clinic, Madhu Choudhary.

According to a news release, the pregnancy clinic plans to provide 150 mothers and babies with care throughout the pregnancy, up to six weeks after birth.

Four physicians are currently on rotation at the clinic, including Dr. Emmanuelle Britton. Britton originates from the South East Toronto Family Health Team, which is one of the partners of the pregnancy clinic.

Others partners include Toronto East General Hospital, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre and the Midwives Clinic of East York — which is located next door.

"I think the more services we can give to women the better," Lynn Fairweather said.

"That doesn't mean that they take over us or we take over them, but we work together to provide everybody service and that's what's great."

The pregnancy clinic will be working collaboratively with its neighbour, the midwives clinic.

"Midwives are trained for normal child-bearing, so if there's something that's a

little high-risk and needs a medical intervention, we can refer to this clinic now, which is wonderful," Fairweather said.

The goal of all the partners involved is not to overlap one another, but do the best they can to make sure everyone has access to primary health care.

"This is just the first step. The broad view is to look not just at pregnancy, but women's health," Choudhary said.

The clinic is located at 1 Leaside Park Dr. and is currently open on Monday afternoons from 1 to 4 p.m., but as the demand increases, more days and times will be offered.

An appointment can be made by calling 416-421-6369, but in the near future the clinic hopes to have a more web-savvy presence. This will allow patients to register and book appointments online.



File photo from Fotolia

Target missed the mark in Canada, shoppers say



By BRIA JOHN
The Observer

Some shoppers say they're feeling disappointed at Target's liquidation sales.

As the retailer winds down Canadian operations, the shelves are emptying, the price points are still too high and the selection is nothing new,

according to some of the customers at the Overlea Boulevard location.

Occasional Target shopper Elizabeth Matthews reflected on the reasons for the store's disappointing showing since its opening two years ago.

"I was impressed with the toys, but how do you differentiate between Target, Wal-Mart and Canadian Tire?

Same stuff really. So I didn't really have a use for Target," she said.

"If I hadn't gone there, I would have gotten a similar deal elsewhere," she went on to say.

But a young couple said that they're sad that they're losing a store near their home.

"We're students and we stay close by," Sophia Sesham said. "It's walk-

able."

First-time Target shopper Sofia Novilla, who had a full cart, came looking for the sales but didn't notice much difference in price.

The thing they're most sad about? The employees losing their jobs.

"It very, very hard to find a job so it's sad a lot of people are losing theirs," Novilla said.

Turning veggie to yummy

Danforth market teaches cooks that healthy recipes can still taste delicious

By **ASHLEEN GRANGE**
The Observer

Whether you are a connoisseur of cuisine, or a novice at the cutting board, wintertime blues can sometimes translate to a serious lack of inspiration in the kitchen.

But the Big Carrot Natural Food Market has a solution to get you out of your seasonal slump.

The market, located on Danforth Avenue, invites aspiring chefs to their weekly cooking classes to learn simple, delicious recipes that incorporate organic, whole food ingredients to fit a healthy lifestyle.

A February class, for instance, was themed “Feel Good Comfort Foods,” and drew an enthusiastic group for the preparation of vegetarian-style versions of classic, home-style favourites.

Led by certified holistic nutritionist Aileen Brabazon, participants were able to choose from a variety of dishes, including squash spaghetti with veggie ragu, oven-baked cheesy kale



Ashleen Grange // Observer

Bob Lesser pours dressing for a final touch into his “beautiful” concoction — as he attends one of the cooking classes at The Big Carrot.

chips, cauliflower mash and “beautiful black rice salad.”

The veggie-friendly menus featured in the weekly classes favour a selection of lighter alternatives to heavier, greasier meals.

So cravings are satisfied — without the post-feast drag. Brabazon’s recipes emphasized using natural, whole

ingredients, including millet seeds, arame seaweed and nutritional yeast.

Bob Lesser, a Beaches resident who has previously attended other cooking classes, explained why he decided to sign up.

“I’ve been in a rut, just making the same old thing. I have two boys, and they like the same thing over and over

again. So this is mainly for the parents, just to get something out of the box. And it’s good fun.”

The two-hour classes at The Big Carrot are held on Monday evenings beginning at 7 p.m. If you are interested in honing your cooking talents using delicious whole foods, call 416-466-2129 to register.

This dog is barkin’

By **BEN RAPPAPORT**
The Observer

There’s a new kid on the block in East York. Or, more aptly, a new dog.

The Max the Mutt College of Animation, Art and Design has opened on the Danforth, with an open house in February.

“I think the facilities are definitely an improvement,” said Maxine Schacker, president and director of Max the Mutt. “The students love it.... It really does meet our needs very well.”

Schacker spoke about the programs and the hands-on teaching style of the college. She discussed the core principles that all people at the school strive for in three words: Passion, potential and professionalism.

“The whole raison d’être of this school, really, is small classes, mentoring, people knowing each other, it being a community, and professionalism.”

Schacker says she hopes to see more people signing up for the school’s workshops in the future.

“Anyone can sign up for a workshop. We can have one-day workshops for people who just want to try something out,” she said.

The college moved to the Danforth after the building they previously operated out of was set to be demolished.

“The building we were in, which was on Queen Street West, will be demolished,” Schacker said.

“It’s a big departure for us because we started at 96 Spadina and then we were on Queen Street West, so this is our first experience coming into the east end.”

Schacker believes the move is good for both students and faculty.

“The lucky part for us, really, is that we ended up here,” she said.

“We have been welcomed warmly into this neighbourhood and its turning out to be a very good thing for everybody.”

■ YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Grooming young business tycoons

By **ASHLEEN GRANGE**
The Observer

Centennial College has added a hothouse of sorts to its East York campus — and to its other campuses across Toronto’s east end.

But they’re not growing tomatoes in the “Story Arts Centre Accelerator” on the second floor of the building at Carlaw and Mortimer avenues. It’s a space to help young entrepreneurs grow their business ideas into successful commercial enterprises.

The Accelerator for Centennial Community Entrepreneurs and Leaders (ACCEL) at Centennial College hopes to empower youth across the GTA with the skills to start and grow their own business.

The program, launched last November, is aimed toward young entrepreneurs, including Centennial College students, ages 18-29. Funded by the Government of Ontario through the Ontario Centres of Excellence, ACCEL works with participants over a three-month period to “enhance their personal skills, while accelerating their businesses to achieve their milestones.”

“The goal is to incubate and accelerate the business. If a young person comes to us and says, ‘I have a business and I’m struggling. I didn’t get business training, or my business plan is weak,’ we take that on and try to accelerate them so they can get to a stage where they can do it themselves,” program manager Donovan Dill said.

“We also provide mentorship and free consultation, so they’re able to go for those loans and infrastructural tools that they need to be successful.”

For Ahmed Bawah, founder of Mama’s Life Products, a Toronto-based, natural beauty company, the program is a great way for up-and-coming entrepreneurs to interact with knowledgeable business owners.

“I would say to anyone wanting to become an



Photo courtesy of Fotolia

and seek mentorship, and find someone who is doing what you would like to do, or who is at where you would like to get to. Instead of trying to climb the ladder, why not think about creating your own ladder, or even owning the ladder?”

Bawah was introduced to ACCEL while doing research for the variety of shea butters, black soap cleansers, lip balms and shampoos his company produces.

“We were working out of the Applied Research and Innovation department [at Centennial], and ACCEL is also being housed out of that same department,” Bawah said.

“So far, (in the program) we have had a guest speaker that is a successful business owner, who came in and gave us advice and some of his story of where he is, and how he got to where he is. So that was very valuable to connect with that individual, just to hear about some of the resources that he was able to share with us.”

Before starting Mama’s Life in 2007, Bawah aspired to one day create his own business.

“I have always had an entrepreneurial mind. I’ve always sought out ways in which to make money; as a kid, I was delivering newspapers on the local paper route. Out of school I had the understanding that there weren’t many jobs out there waiting for us. So, while I was in school, I was growing my business. As a student, I was looking for opportunities to use some of the skills that I was learning and apply them to my business.”

The first ACCEL cohort began in February, and Dill encourages prospective entrepreneurs to come out and see what the program has to offer.

“We see that it is working already. It’s just a matter of getting the word out, and letting people know that they need to get online and register. To let us know how we can help them, and by allowing us to connect them to people who can help them right away,” Dill said. “We still have space available, and we invite people to openly apply.”

Anyone interested in applying for the program can visit accel.centennialcollege.ca for more information.



Photo reproductions by Nicole Dawe // Observer

Pepper's seasonings

The East York Foundation and the Leaside library recently mounted an exhibition of paintings by the late local artist Jack Pepper. Pepper was born near Ottawa in 1905 and later moved to East York, where he died in 1979. Many of his paintings and watercolours are of the Don Valley, and they form part of the extensive collection of art created by Canadian artists that's maintained by the East York Foundation. The Observer published reproductions of two of Pepper's works in our previous edition, and we conclude the series with this pair of "seasonal" offerings: "Old Swain House" and "Wishing Well at Fantasy Farm."

Leaside stop for Toronto Card Show

By MELVIN GOMEZ
The Observer

Wayne Gretzky, Larry Bird and Barry Bonds will all be under one roof in East York next weekend. The catch? They'll be inside glass cases — and in card form.

The Toronto Card Show, which showcases the city's best and rarest sports cards and memorabilia, will make another stop in Leaside on March 15, at the Amsterdam Brewery on Esander Drive.

It's an opportunity for vendors and collectors to buy, sell and trade together.

Non-sport cards such as Pokémon and Magic: The Gathering are also on tap.

Organizer Frank Williamson has been with the show since it began nine years ago.

"Myself and some fellow collectors saw a void in Toronto," he said.

"There were some small shows in town, but they were of a low standard and we wanted to put on a significant-sized sports card and memorabilia show with prizes and autograph guests that was of a



high standard and integrity."

The show doesn't admit vendors who have been proven to lack integrity or do not specialize in sports cards and memorabilia.

"Ours is very popular due to our reputation and longevity," Frank said. "We've been going strong since 2006."

Trevor Davis has been collecting cards for over 25 years and has more than 7,000 cards in his collection.

"My grandfather used to buy me packs upon packs of cards like Score, Upper Deck

and Pro Set when I was young in the early '90s," Trevor said. "Never looked back."

The sport card market has changed, from a sports card boom in the early '90s to a more niche hobby market.

These days there is something for everyone, and people find their collecting niche. It has become a very interesting hobby.

"It has more value to me than it would retail," Trevor said.

"I collect a lot of guys I watched and respected growing up. To have a card with a piece of their game-worn uniform or their signature is something exciting to have, and fun to look through and remember their career."

Felicien inspires students to strive for greatness

By SHELBY MORTON
The Observer

In celebration of Black History Month at Centennial College's East York campus, Canadian athlete and broadcast journalist Perdita Felicien spoke to students there on Feb. 12.

Felicien, born and raised in Pickering, is a two-time former Olympic hurdler and was the first female Canadian athlete to win gold in 2003 at the World Championship in Athletics in Paris.

"I'm literally halfway through [the victory lap] before someone dusts off a Canadian flag and gets it to me," she said.

Felicien spoke in detail about her rapid rise to fame after her gold-medal win, at only 22 years old.

"The trajectory that I was on would probably take the average athlete eight years to do. I did it in three years. It was crazy," she said.

After her win, she got the cover of Time and Maclean's magazines, several national billboards, her own shoe line and even the cover of a Cheerios box.

She said that as quickly as she rose to her highest high in Paris, she fell to her lowest low the following year in Athens. Felicien hit a hurdler in the lane next to her, then fell

during the Olympic event final.

She made it to the Olympics again in 2008 in Beijing but could not compete due to a foot injury.

She told Centennial students that despite both setbacks, she kept moving forward.

"I want to be the author of the rest of my career," she said. "Don't let one moment define you — define it."

She eventually went on to win six other international medals during her 10-year career as a top-ranking hurdler and still holds the Canadian national hurdling record.

Felicien retired from sports in 2013, graduated from Seneca Col-

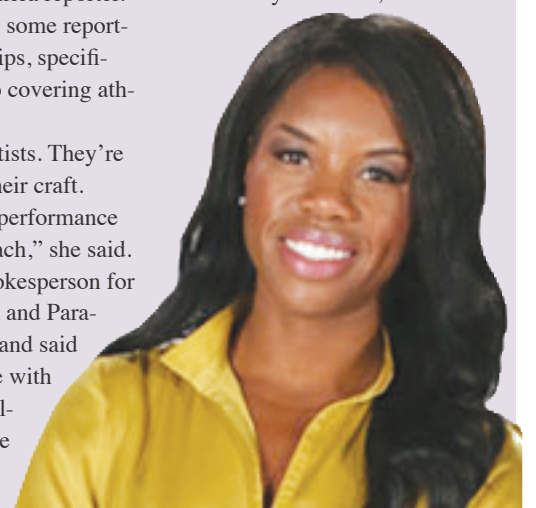
lege's broadcasting program, and she currently works for CHCH in Hamilton as an on-camera reporter.

She offered students some reporting and interviewing tips, specifically when it comes to covering athletes.

"Athletes are like artists. They're very sensitive about their craft. Don't [criticize] their performance unless you're their coach," she said.

Felicien is also a spokesperson for the upcoming Pan Am and Parapan American Games and said that the games are ripe with opportunity for journalism students, like those at Centennial College.

"Volunteering, freelancing your time, pitching stories; there's so much that you can do," she said.



■ EDITORIALS

Free speech not so free

Many are offended by unwarranted criticism

Freedom of speech is the human right to voice one's opinion publicly without fear of censorship or punishment. It's in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

But what happens when you voice your opinion, but anger a religion? Where's the fine line between what you should say and what you shouldn't say?

As we all know, a dozen journalists were killed this winter in a terrorist attack against the satirical Paris newspaper Charlie Hebdo. The gunmen murdered these people because of the depiction of the prophet Muhammad in their cartoons.

They may have murdered these people because of their religion, but in the Qur'an, murder is strictly forbidden. Before this attack, Charlie Hebdo had been receiving death threats because of its depiction of the prophet.

So it begs the question again: Where is the fine line between what can and can't be said or done in the context of freedom of speech? As objectionable as they were, the Charlie Hebdo killings could be interpreted as simply an attack against blasphemous cartoons, rather than a general attack on freedom of speech.

Many Muslims around the world sincerely believe that their prophet Muhammad must never be drawn. Doing this is blasphemous. Though in the context of the law, non-Muslims can draw the prophet.

There are dramatic contradictions in this area — a very uneven playing field. If you can draw the prophet in cartoons, why can't you state an unpopular opinion about the Holocaust? It's actually against the law to deny the Holocaust in many countries.

To be clear: The Holocaust is an established fact of history. But the point here is that there is an inconsistent application of laws that we claim to cherish — up to the Universal Declaration Of Human Rights (Article 19; it is within your right to have an opinion).

So where is the fine line between religion and freedom of speech?

Perhaps that line can be drawn simply and practically: We must try not to provoke others, even if under law we can.

Every human has the right to voice his or her opinion publicly without fear of censorship or punishment. But if you continue to poke the bear, the bear might poke back.

~ Jibril Osman

Education or perversion

New sex-ed curriculum stirs debate

Some are asking: How would you feel learning about the birds and the bees at the same age when you're still coping without nap time?

This coming September, elementary school students across Ontario will be taught from a new sexual education curriculum that is supposed to help with a child's awareness and protect them from unwanted sexual acts.

After not having an update for over 15 years, the revised version on the curriculum was just released last week. The proposal to first update the curriculum from 1998 was made in 2010 when Dalton McGuinty was still premier of Ontario and Kathleen Wynne was his education minister. But the premier backed off after a small but loud backlash from some religious groups and other social conservatives.

Now that Wynne is premier, she thinks it's necessary to try again to get the new curriculum passed, with the help of education minister Liz Sandals.

Yes, some aspects of the curriculum may seem jarring. Children as young as five years old learning the names of their private parts and their functions. And learning about sexual consent. You might ask: Why would a five-year-old need to know about something like that?

Starting in Grades 2 and 3, children will be taught about the concept of consent, homosexuality and same-sex marriages. In Grades 4 and 5, they will learn about puberty, menstrual cycles and the reproductive system. In Grades 6 and 7, students will learn about sexting, masturbation, contraception and the risks of STIs. In Grade 8, they will be learning about sexual orientations, gender identities and stereotypes.

But while some Toronto parents who don't agree with the changes protested the day after the new curriculum was announced, a strong, silent majority stayed home in quiet approval of the update. The parents who do agree might look at it as a way to ensure their children are being taught all the necessary skills to prepare them for adulthood.

Ontario is one of the last provinces to update its curriculum. Not everyone likes change, but it can work. With the digital age we all live in, and its contribution to the hyper-sexualizing of our culture, and with the fact that puberty is happening earlier than before, this is an update that's overdue. It is in the best interest of the children.

~ Dannika Russell

■ COLUMNS

New tech catching criminals

By now you've heard that some of the technology that surrounds us is evil — and even sure to lead to our downfall. With all of our Facebooking, our YouTubeing and our incessant finger-talking it's a miracle any of us still know what the real world is.

But there is a lot of good that smartphones can do as well.

On Jan. 20, Jennifer De Costa was assaulted while riding a TTC bus in east Toronto. While on the bus at around 6 a.m., De Costa crossed paths with another woman. De Costa wanted to sit next to the woman but the woman refused. When De Costa pressed the matter, the situation worsened. The women exchanged glares and unpleasantries but after some arguing, De Costa settled to sit in another seat.

While she sat in her seat, she remembered Toronto's very own

Internet-famous meme, the "TTC Leprechaun." And just as Juan Hodem did, De Costa captured an image of the uncooperative passenger on her smartphone. But unlike the incident Hodem captured, De Costa's incident only got worse. On her way off the bus, the woman who denied De Costa a seat allegedly bumped into her. This led to a physical altercation between the two — which left De Costa with a cut on the side of her head.

She also took a picture of the cut and the resulting damage.

De Costa uploaded both pictures from the incident onto her Facebook account and explained the details. Friends of De Costa commented that they had seen the woman in the pictures and within 10 days, the police had identified her.

According to De Costa, charges and a court date have now been set.

Of course,

this is not the only time someone has used a photo or a video taken with a smartphone and used it as evidence. Overseas, a video has just emerged of a group of Chelsea Football Club supporters denying a black man entry to a train in Paris — and then taunting him with a racist chant. A French journalist found the video, tracked down the man in the video, identified as Souleyman S., and now Souleyman has filed a formal complaint with the Paris police.

"I didn't know I was filmed. The fact that I'm talking about it now gives me courage to go to the police and file a complaint," Souleyman said in an interview with the BBC. He said he would have kept the altercation to himself if not for the video.

Too many times videos like these end up in the wrong places. They end up on YouTube and on WorldStar and serve as nothing but cheap entertainment. But they can offer physical proof to back up the claims of a victim and increase the likelihood of justice being served.



Marcus Medford

Zero leniency at Leaside

Amateur sports hit yet another low point in recent days. The issue was the Leaside Girls Hockey Association's initially rigid — and then more flexible — interpretation of guidelines around no physical touching between coaches and players. At one point, the edict appeared to exclude even a high-five or a pat on the helmet.

The relationship between a coach and a player is a vital component of sport, but also a way to build a child's personality and life skills outside of the game. So the Leaside Girls Hockey Association's initial position of discouraging coaches from physically touching players seemed absurd. It seemed likely only to break down the bond between player and coach and diminish the true value of the game.

The negative stigma created by coaches like Graham James — former Canadian hockey coach convicted of sexual abuse — has forced many parents to reevaluate this player-coach relationship. But, in some quarters, it's gone too far, to the point of a ridiculous paranoia regarding

the relationship between both player and coach.

Everyone understands the need to provide safety and protection to kids not under immediate supervision of their parents. The idea of leaving your child with a complete stranger for hours at a time is a daunting mental hurdle that a lot of parents are incapable of wrapping their minds around.

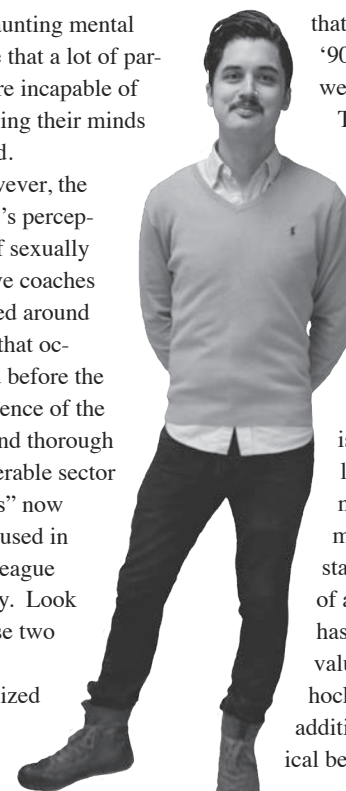
However, the public's perception of sexually abusive coaches is based around cases that occurred before the emergence of the new and thorough "vulnerable sector checks" now being used in little-league hockey. Look at these two recent publicized cases: former Eto-

bi-coke hockey coach Michael Dimmick was apprehended based on allegations of sexual assault during the late '60s and '70s. Michael Kachonovsky, former Streetsville minor league hockey coach, was charged with sexual assault stemming from incidents

that occurred in the early '90s. Both instances well before VS checks.

The emergence of thorough background checks should provide parents with the comfort of actually knowing who is coaching their children.

This issue, like many similar social issues, is directly related to the growing mistrust between human beings. The constant fear and paranoia of a complete stranger has diminished the true value of community. But hockey is a sport that, in addition to providing physical benefits, also provides kids with an opportunity to engage people through teamwork.



Brandon Kajioka

Former mayor bids East York adieu

Cont'd. from page 1

Shamsh Kara, who said he has known Prue since the early 1980s.

"I've never seen him angry or annoyed," Kara added. "He has always had a smiling face and I hope he always has that because that's his specialty."

The East York Foundation sponsored the event. Foundation vice-chair Dr. John Carter helped organize it.

"What I remember most about him is his love of the community and his involvement in the community," Carter said.

"He really is an East Yorker; he's really the heart and soul of East York."

Over 26 years in politics, Prue also served as a hydro commissioner and municipal councillor at both the borough and city level. He was known for a "happy warrior" approach to the electoral process.

One of his "signatures" was the bright EY logo sweater that he often wore publicly — including as a knitted good-luck charm on election nights.

But Barry Penhale recalled another side to Prue: vintner.

"One of Michael's hobbies is making wonderful wine," Penhale said. "Frequently when he was mayor of East York, you could always count on Michael to donate bottles of his wine



Observer file photo

This Observer file photo, from 2010, shows now-retired East York politician Michael Prue (far right) with some other past luminaries of East York and Toronto politics. From left: former East York mayor and MPP Dave Johnson; former borough and city councillor Case Ootes; and former Toronto mayor Mel Lastman.

if it was a good cause, and I remember very much how active he was — and somewhere in my home, I have an empty bottle of wine with one of his East York labels on it, because he had a special label that commemorated East

York."

And the provincial NDP Leader, Andrea Horwath, said that Prue was a mean baker too.

"We liked the banana bread he brings in," Horwath said. "It was always fun at work."

Janet Davis, the city councillor for Ward 31/Beaches-East York, said it has been "a remarkable privilege" knowing Prue.

"I've been honoured to carry a tradition left by Michael," Davis said. "He continues to stand up and give a voice."

Toronto Mayor John Tory added: "There are very people who gave the great length, depth and quality that Michael has given."

The Prues will be relocating to Bois Blanc Island, also known as Boblo Island, off Amherstburg, at the tip of southwestern Ontario — where they've had a summer home for several years.

"We thought we'd start there, spend the summer, and see where we're going," Prue said.

What's next for Michael Prue? For one thing, travel.

"We've been to 85 countries, so I've still got 100 to see," Prue joked. "First place I'm going is to set up the new house."

Contributions from the evening went to the Michael Prue Art Award, which will add to the fund to buy art from local artists for the East York Foundation's collection.

You can contribute by mailing a cheque to 50 Merritt Rd., East York, M4B 3K6.

"There are so many people's lives I've touched — but so many people touched mine," Prue told the assembled throng last week. "I'm proud of the people in this room."

Doula's presence 'very comforting,' mom says

New mothers say that hiring a doula to assist in childbirth is expensive, but well worth it

Cont'd. from page 1

Kowaleski explained. She makes suggestions about diet and provides guidance on techniques to aid with the aches and pains of pregnancy.

And once she's been hired as a doula, she's on call from that point on.

"(Clients) can call you with questions; they can text you to see if certain things are normal. We deal in normal — we're nothing medical," she said.

During McKane's pregnancy, Kowaleski came by twice in the third trimester to prepare the couple for labour, nutrition, "various pain relief techniques for Anton to learn, care stuff for newborns such as bathing, and how

many wet/dirty diapers to expect," the new mother said.

"She was at the hospital for almost the full 18 hours of labour and delivery."

While McKane found Kowaleski through a referral, the more common route for expectant couples is to interview a number of doulas as they search for the right match.

"When you're finding a doula, what we talk about is finding a good fit," Kowaleski said.

"It may not be the doula that has a ton of experience. It may be the doula that only, let's say, is two years into it."

Jessica Powell, a self-employed doula who works primarily in east Toronto and Durham, agrees. She emphasizes the importance of meeting your doula face to face to assess the connection.

"This is the person who is going to be providing you with continuous support during one of the most important experiences of your life," she explained. "You want to ask ques-



Photo courtesy of Erin McKane

Doula April Kowaleski gets a quizzical stare from baby David Dean Swanson. She provided support to his mother during his birth in June.

tions about her training/experience, but also make sure that you feel comfortable with her. This is why it's such a good idea to have an in-person interview with any potential doula."

McKane knew that Kowaleski was the right fit from the start and admits that having her doula with her was a luxury — one that not every woman can afford.

Doula services range from \$900 to \$1,200 for birth support, Kowaleski said, while postpartum support costs \$30 to \$35 an hour.

"It is pricey," McKane conceded. "None of it's covered, not even by independent insurance plans."

For her, it was worth it. Having Kowaleski in the delivery room with her really helped, she said.

"It was just all so overwhelming, and it was a super long process," she recalled. "I remember losing track of time. I remember asking Anton how many babies were going to be born before ours came."

When David Dean Swanson eventually

did arrive — all nine pounds, three ounces of him — on June 14 of last year, he was whisked away to be cleaned up before being returned to his mother for some skin-to-skin time.

McKane admits to feeling lucky that she had her doula there with her throughout the experience.

"(Kowaleski) was always close by," she said.

"She was always within arm's reach, and I could always see her. It was very comforting."

McKane's baby boy is now almost eight months old, but she remembers the moment the midwife brought him back to her hospital room and handed him to her husband as clear as day.

Cradling his first child, Swanson bent over to pick up his camera to capture the moment, but Kowaleski already had it ready.

She lifted the camera up and, seeing her client with her husband holding their first child, she pressed click.

Op-ed 'Observations'





Photo courtesy of Vince Berns/East Side Players

Lydia Kiselyk (left) and Kizzy Kaye perform in the East Side Players' latest production, *Speaking in Tongues* — a play by the award-winning Australian writer, Andrew Bovell. *Speaking in Tongues* concludes its three-week run this weekend, with performances at 8 p.m. tonight and tomorrow night, March 7. It's playing in the Papermill Theatre at Todmorden Mills on Pottery Road.

Local cast in command of *Speaking in Tongues*

By CHRIS DeMELO
The Observer

If staging a play is a challenge, director Anne Harper has helped the East Side Players rise to the occasion with its nearly completed run of the play *Speaking in Tongues*.

"They like to do things a little more challenging in this theatre company," she said in an interview at intermission.

Speaking in Tongues, written by award-winning screenwriter and playwright Andrew Bovell in 1985, depicts the indiscretions and extramarital affairs four characters in a nameless town.

Part of the challenge director Harper faces is portraying the intermingling characters with an interesting twist — staging

multiple scenes at once.

Playwright Bovell once said of his play, "It is a story about contracts being broken between intimates while deep bonds are forged between strangers."

Each performer in the East Side Players production plays at least two characters. This offers each an opportunity to show breadth of acting ability. Actor Ted Powers pulls it off, in that at one moment he plays articulate Pete; the next he transforms into deadbeat Nick.

In the play, Powers, as John, recalls an incident in which Sarah, played by Lydia Kiselyk, accosts someone for no reason. The scene flows between her shouting what she said, while he simply includes the details. Similarly, Steve Switzma, as Neil, writes a letter to Valerie, played by Kizzy

Kaye. She reads aloud the parts illustrating that she is in control, while he reads the parts depicting his weakness.

Director Harper said she began her directing career in children's theatre, then worked as assistant director on adult productions. In Toronto, she has directed for shows at Village Playhouse and the Alumnae Theatre.

Harper says in this production even the backgrounds were designed to split the scenes with colour co-ordination defining each room in which the characters are speaking.

"I've always liked looking at the whole picture, (not just acting)," she said. "As a director you have to be interested in the music, the lights, the costumes, the staging."

East York gets a valuable lesson in black history

By DANNIKA RUSSELL
The Observer

Black History Month may now be over, but symbols of black history endure in East York year-round.

At a winter meeting of the East York Historical Society held at the S. Walter Stewart library branch, Karen Carter, the executive director at Heritage Toronto, joined the members of the society to share the importance of black history in the community.

Near the intersection of Danforth and Broadview avenues stand two houses built in the 19th century that figure into black history. They can be seen on an historical tour organized by the Ontario Historical Society. These houses belonged to William Peyton Hubbard, the son of slaves who escaped from the United States to Canada in 1840 via the so-called "Underground Railroad." Hubbard went on to be elected and re-elected to Toronto city council — perhaps the first black person elected to political office in Canada. He even served for a time as acting mayor of the city.

From talking about Hubbard to other historical luminaries like Wilson Abbot, Josiah Henson and Lincoln Alexander, Carter told the historical society that African-Americans and African-Canadians have significantly influenced Toronto's development. She said those who challenge norms and break boundaries tend to do that.

With cosmopolitan neighbourhoods like Thorncliffe Park, Flemingdon Park and Crescent Town, and with the Danforth being virtually synonymous with Greektown, black history can seem pushed to the side in East York.

But Carter noted that "if we don't do the work to keep the local stories alive, you miss the diverse and interesting layers that make the city interesting."



Dannika Russell /// The Observer

Karen Carter talked about black culture at an East York Historical Society meeting.

Sex-ed curriculum will prompt safer sex, mom says

By SUZANNA DUTT and JEFFREY SZE
The Observer

For Ashley Stolk, Ontario's new health and physical education curriculum came too late.

"My mom was never open with me about intercourse," she said. In 2008, Stolk, then 17, gave birth to her daughter Hailey.

"Some (people) think all young moms pawn off their kids to go and party," she said. "In my case, Hailey pushed me to graduate high school, college and get a career. We have a better life now."

Last week, the Ontario Ministry of Education unveiled a new curriculum that will take effect when students return to elementary and high school this fall. It covers topics such as stereotypes, gender identity, sexual orientation and consent — content not included in the 1998

curriculum. This fall's sex-education curriculum will also cover topics in health and physical education.

Peter Tabuns, MPP for Toronto-Danforth, said the NDP supports the modernization of the curriculum.

"We hope the curriculum will lead to better health for young people and a reduction of prejudice against gay, lesbian and trans-gendered people," he said.

The 244-page document, titled Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum, drew criticism last week when topics such as masturbation and oral sex were included in planned instruction. According to the curriculum documents, these topics appear in the teacher prompts and student responses.

In response to the criticism, a ministry spokesperson said these prompts provide illus-

trations for teachers in support of their program planning.

"They're to support teachers in answering and clarifying questions and situations that arise in the learning of the curriculum expectations," the spokesperson said. "(Teachers are required to) address all of the learning expectations in the curriculum, (but) they are not required to use the examples, prompts, and student responses."

Angela Kennedy, the TCDSB trustee for Toronto-East York, hasn't fully endorsed the new curriculum. She said she's "awaiting the decision" from the Institute for Catholic Education. Meantime, she's also consulting her constituents.

"I am also taking every opportunity to talk with parents to hear their views," she said.

Former premier Dalton McGuinty tried to introduce sex-education reform in 2010, but

because of controversy his administration withdrew the planned changes. Although former teen-mom Stolk agrees with the new curriculum, she believes the heavier topics should be introduced no earlier than Grade 4. Stolk puts emphasis on educating teens on contraceptives, especially those teens who are sexually active.

"There is no better way than parents and teachers working together to make teens aware of the positives that safe sex practice brings," said Stolk.

As a young mother, Stolk said she is prepared to talk to her child about sexuality.

"When Hailey reaches her teen years, I'll have condoms available in the house for her to take," she said. "Other parents say I'm asking for her to become a teen mom like I was, but I disagree with them.... Children need guidance and support."