



Forecast for property market in 2018: Hot

East York realtor anticipates five-per-cent increase in local house prices next year

By **BAMBANG SADEWO**
The Observer

This year's East York housing market has been a rollercoaster ride of "crazy prices" and subsequent comedowns. Next year should see prices stabilize, realtors expect.

"We had a very strong market, but it still fluctuated during 2017," said Teuta Guci, a realtor who has been providing service in the Danforth area for 10 years.

As with much of the Greater Toronto Area, house sales in East York were brisk at the beginning of the year, buoyed in part by owners moving here from their downtown condos. Three-bedroom detached houses were the most sought after, according to reports from the Toronto Real Estate Board.

That demand began to wane in April after the provincial government introduced its Fair Housing Plan, which included a 15-per-cent foreign-buyers tax.

Buyers "stopped bidding" widely and lost their motivation to buy, Guci said.

"We saw so many houses come into the market. It created a glut with a downward-price adjustment," she said. "Also, banks started to project that the market would go down."

The slump continued through the summer. But by the final months of 2017, there have

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■ COMMUNITY



Zia Zarawar/The Observer

Snakes and shivers

Children attending the Pape Village BIA's Winter Festival, held Dec. 2, got a chance to get up close and personal with a variety of creatures, including snakes. The event featured turtles, spiders and — yes — snakes from Reptilia, Canada's largest reptile zoo, located in Vaughan. See page 4 for a story and more photos.

Cold, scared and alone: How cat colonies are saving lives



Nicole Royle/The Observer

Denise DiCicco prepares a warm resting place for one of the stray cats she looks after in East York.

Caretaker of East York feline colony stops at nothing to help stray cats weather the cold

By **NICOLE ROYLE**
The Observer

Denise DiCicco is concerned as she enters the parking lot behind a new residential building at the corner of Gerrard Street East and Woodbine Avenue. It's minus four degrees and the wind is hitting her face at a chilling speed. She is there to see a cat that she hopes she won't find.

DiCicco first heard of the cat two weeks ago. She isn't certain where it came from, but she's

heard residents from the building claim it fell from an apartment window in the spring and has been left outside since.

The unclaimed black cat is very close to DiCicco's East York cat colony, an alleyway near Greenwood and Danforth avenues. That proximity gives DiCicco a sense of responsibility for the cat, and keeps her going back to the parking lot every day to feed and check on it.

"No one can approach this cat, he's so jumpy and scared," DiCicco said. "It's so cold out and it's just getting worse, but the second I try to get close and trap him, he just runs away."

Cat-colony caretakers in Toronto will register a cat colony within the specific area — usually an alley

— where the cats gather. Once a colony is registered, the caretaker is responsible for immediately having each cat neutered at the Toronto Humane Society, caring for the cats post-surgery, returning them to the colony with proper shelter and feeding the cats daily.

DiCicco knows what she's doing when it comes to trapping abandoned cats and rescuing them. She has been a registered cat-colony caretaker for 10 years. Her methods are seen as unorthodox.

Caretakers must complete a Trap, Neuter and Return workshop before they can register a cat colony. The workshop teaches caretakers how to have their cats neutered and, more importantly, how to care

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POLICE & FIRE

Pedestrian hit on Broadview

A pedestrian was struck by a vehicle on Broadview Avenue at Westwood Avenue on Dec. 9 around 1:30 p.m. Police say the man, 30, suffered serious, non-life-threatening injuries.

Police arrest naked man

Police arrested an East York man for indecent exposure near Eaton Avenue and Selkirk Street around midnight on Dec. 2. The naked man reportedly banged on doors in the neighbourhood and smashed a car window with a rake. Police say the man was in crisis, but they are still investigating.

Teens arrested after robbery

Four teenage boys are facing charges after an armed robbery in the Dawes Road and Danforth Avenue area on Nov. 29. Police say two males walked into a convenience store wearing masks with one holding a shotgun. The males demanded money and fled in a car driven by a 14-year-old. Four teens are to appear in court Jan. 16.

Pornography charges laid

A man, 32, has been charged with five counts related to the possession and distribution of child pornography. Toronto police searched his home in the Victoria Park Avenue and Dawes Road area Oct. 16. Jason Banks appeared in court Nov. 28.

~ Emilie Must



Anissa Calma-Brown/The Observer

(Left to right) Ontario Premier and Don Valley West MPP Kathleen Wynne, volunteer Justin Van Dette and Global meteorologist Anthony Farnell announce East York's first flag campaign.

Flying the East York flag

Buy your flag and nominate a local resident who is 'doing great things'

By ANISSA CALMA-BROWN
The Observer

East York's Hall of Fame is inviting residents to show some community spirit by supporting the organization's first flag campaign.

The event took place Nov. 15 at the Rise & Dine Eatery on St. Clair Ave. E., with Ontario Premier and Don Valley West MPP Kathleen Wynne and Beaches-East York MPP Arthur Potts in attendance.

"At the heart of a strong province are strong communities, like East York," Wynne said. "I can't wait to see families showing their neighbourhood pride by flying the East York flag outside their homes."

The flags are almost sold out. (Small flags cost \$12; large ones are \$60.) A second order has already been placed.

Justin Van Dette, 38, started the East York Hall of Fame a year ago after attending an event for the Leaside Sports Hall of Fame.

"I was blown away by the strong sense of community in the room," he said. "How positive it was to witness celebrating the success of individuals in the community."

Meredith Jacobs, 39, is a local resident who is eager to see the community's spirit come back to life.

"I think people often forget that East York is a big part of Toronto. It is one of the friendliest communities within the

city," Jacobs said. "The residents deserve to be celebrated."

The East York Hall of Fame sells flags in an effort to build the spirit of the community back up.

Meanwhile, Van Dette hopes the community will also come together to nominate residents for the Hall of Fame.

"East York has a long and special history in Canada, and it is important we celebrate that pride," he said. "So many of our current and former residents are doing great things, and the East York Hall of Fame intends to recognize those individuals."

Nominations close Dec. 31. They can be made online or by completing a form at local community centres in East York.

Firefighters rush to contain apartment blaze

Sixth-floor unit source of early December fire on Dawes Road, officials say

By ANDRE SAUNDERS
The Observer

Toronto Fire responded to a one-alarm blaze at 500 Dawes Rd. on Dec. 3.

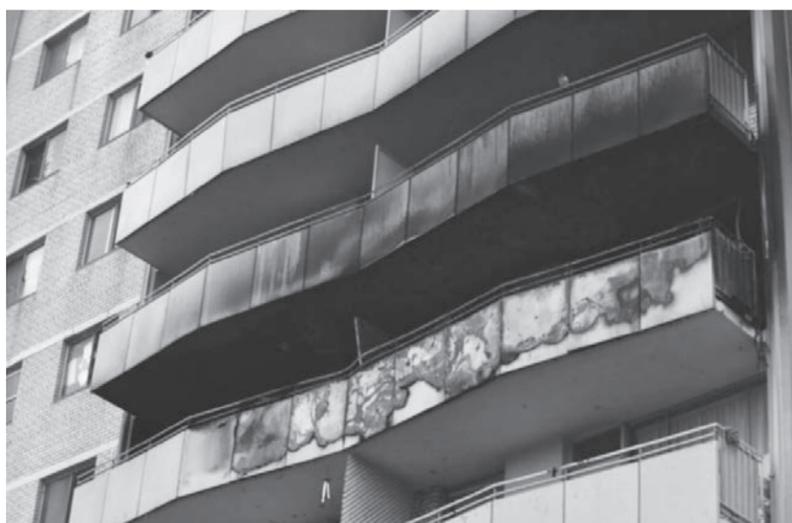
Toronto Police tweeted at 12:10 p.m., warning of a fire in the area of Dawes Road and Gower Street.

The fire started on the sixth floor of the building, spreading to a nearby unit, according to fire officials. The balconies of both units have visible scorch marks on the outside.

A resident of the apartment, who wishes to remain unnamed, saw the fire from outside the building.

"It was two balconies on a higher floor, and they were blazing — it was popping and the flames were just shooting out," said the resident, who added the apartment must have been totally destroyed.

"I feel sorry for that person coming



Andre Saunders/The Observer

The balconies at 500 Dawes Rd. had visible scorch marks after the fire.

home. I have a feeling they weren't home because you didn't hear anyone saying anything."

Residents of the building had TTC buses provided to them for shelter as the fire continued, Toronto police tweeted.

At 12:36 p.m., Toronto police tweeted

that the fire was out and firefighters remained on the scene to clear the smoke.

Dawes Road was closed due to the fire, diverting buses onto side streets, the TTC tweeted.

Toronto Fire Services is investigating the blaze. No injuries were reported.

WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

Dance in the holidays at local studio

East Yorkers of all ages can enjoy the first annual free dance social hosted by Access Ballroom Dance Studio. Attendees can enjoy the potluck, for which they are encouraged to bring a dish or a drink (alcoholic or not) followed by salsa lessons and ending the night with a dance party. The event will be held this evening (Dec. 15) at 276 Main St. and begin at 5:30 p.m.

Time to reflect on the year at St. Cuthbert's

With Christmas being a difficult time for some, St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church welcomes all to reflect on the past year while celebrating the holidays. The Christmas service is to be held on Dec. 16 and run from 4 to 5:30 p.m. at 1399 Bayview Ave.

Caroling with cookies, cider

All carolers are welcome to bask in the Christmas spirit at St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church on Dec. 18. The church welcomes those of all ages to an evening of carol singing from 7 to 9 p.m. Caroling festivities are to be followed by refreshments of mulled cider and cookies. The church also encourages donations of non-perishable food for the Flemingdon Park Community food bank.

~ Elizabeth Oloidi

Food banks banking on us for more cash

Cash donations used to buy food at wholesale prices and pay bills

By **RYAN ORLECKI**
The Observer

Donations of food are a popular choice at this time of year, but food banks are also happy to receive a type of non-perishable donation: money.

“We like both,” said Gail Nyberg, executive director of the Daily Bread Food Bank, which supplies food to local organizations for distribution. “Money is certainly easier to deal with, so then we can pay bills and buy food at wholesale prices.”

With Daily Bread serving around 40,000 hampers of food a month, buying in bulk is efficient and can save money.

Donations of money can also help food banks allocate money to specific things. For example, they can buy baby formula for families in need, because that is not a commonly donated item.

Though some people are skeptical about giving money because they worry about what it will be used to buy, the donor still has a choice.

“We have an option at Daily Bread that you can choose to say that (your) money can only be used for the purpose of food,” Nyberg said.

Mary Zahariadis-Hart has been donating food at Thanksgiving and Christmas for 10 years. She likes the idea of donating money, but said it’s a lot harder to find extra cash than extra food in her overstuffed pantry.

“For families who want to donate, like us, I think the tangible canned-good donation is better,” Zahariadis-Hart said. “Chances are, families (find it) easier to be charitable with food they already have versus a cash donation.”

Alicia Dellegrazie has been using food banks for 12 years. She started visiting Bethany Baptist Church on Pape Avenue for food almost

four years ago and also volunteers there. Donations of money aren’t something they’re used to, she said, but can help the food bank meet specific needs.

“It doesn’t happen often, but when it does, we are very thankful,” she said.

Bethany Baptist Church serves about 100 people every Thursday, and it’ll only get busier as the holidays approach and the weather grows colder.

“A lot of the food banks in the area have closed, like (the one) by Pape Station, so everybody is starting to come here,” Dellegrazie said.

With more people coming to Bethany Baptist Church for food, support is growing, too. They receive a lot of non-perishables from local residents. The Daily Bread Food Bank gives them milk, cheese and vegetables. Canadian Tire and the local police department donate toys and money during the holiday season.

For people in need, whatever type of donation someone can give — money, food or gift cards — goes a long way.

“We owe it to our community to support each other in need,” Zahariadis-Hart said. “You never know when you’ll need help.”

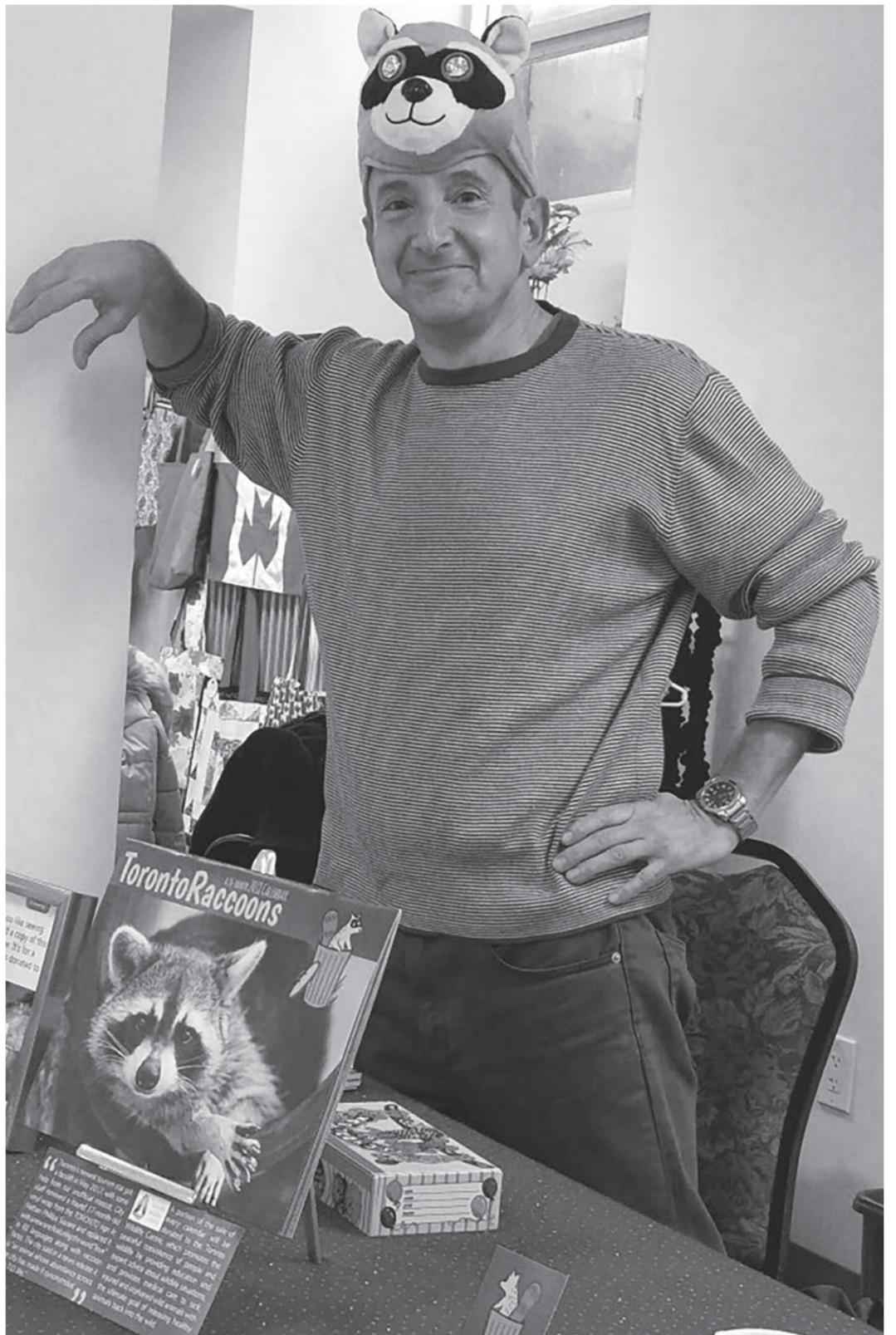
WHERE TO GET FOOD

■ Bethany Baptist Church
1041 Pape Ave., M4K 3W1
416-425-9472

■ Flemington Park
Community Food Bank
10 Gateway Blvd., M3C 3A1
416-422-4322

■ Salvation Army, Community
and Family Services -East
Toronto Corps
107 Cedarvale Ave., M4C 4J9
416-467-7664

■ Thorncliffe Food Bank
1 Leaside Park Dr., #5B, M4H 1R1
647-428-9755



Nicole Reis/The Observer

Ken Gruber, a Toronto entrepreneur, poses with his 2018 Toronto Raccoon calendar. Gruber came up with the idea of featuring the city’s love-hate relationship with the adorable critters.

Love ‘em or hate ‘em, raccoons creating a buzz in local calendar

A collectible 2018 calendar has drawn enthusiastic reactions

By **NICOLE REIS**
The Observer

East-end residents Ken Gruber and Berta Mascarenhas noticed the love-hate relationship between Torontonians and raccoons — and thought they could capitalize on it.

After sourcing photos online, the two former marketing executives produced the 16-month 2018 Toronto Raccoon Calendar, creating a buzz among East York residents and even Mayor John Tory in the process.

Beaches resident Gruber and Mascarenhas, who lives at Danforth and Woodbine avenues, printed an initial run of 1,000 copies and released it for sale after Labour Day

weekend. More than 20 Toronto retail outlets are carrying the calendar, including the ROM boutique, VII Design Gifts, Home James, Midoco and Book City.

“People ask for (the calendar) every day, if not every other day,” said Rowan DeHaan, who works at Book City in the Beaches. “I think people think that raccoons may be pesky, but they’re cute.”

Toronto’s mayor seems to agree. In November, he tweeted a photo of himself frowning while holding the calendar. “You gotta be kidding me!” he wrote. “If you like seeing images of raccoons, get yourself a copy of this 2018 Toronto Raccoons calendar. It’s for a good cause, too!”

One dollar of each sale’s proceeds will be donated to the Toronto Wildlife Centre.

“It’s gratifying to have local support,” Gruber said.

A thread on the Danforth and Woodbine Facebook group ex-

pressed keen interest in the calendar, including questions about where to buy it.

“I have purchased one,” said Kim Avery, a member of the Facebook page. “The money goes towards the Toronto Wildlife Centre, which promotes the peaceful co-existence of people and wildlife, and provides medical care to sick, injured and orphaned wild animals. They live in our habitat, as we do theirs. We are all wildlife.”

After the calendar concept dawned on the pair last spring, they hoped to include local user-generated photos, but the quality of submitted images became “tricky,” Gruber said.

About 100 calendars are still available from the Toronto Raccoon Calendar website.

Residents can email quality images of the masked creatures to info@torontoraccoons.ca for a chance to be featured in the 2019 calendar.



Ryan Orlecki/The Observer

Alicia Dellegrazie started using Bethany Baptist Church’s food bank almost four years ago. She also volunteers there.



Zia Zarawar/The Observer

(Top right) Blair Watson is a member of Reptilia, Canada's largest indoor reptile zoo and education centre. He brought some of his creepy crawlers to entertain children at the Pape Village BIA's Winter Festival. (Top left) A brave child holds one of Watson's spiders.

Spiders and turtles and snakes, oh my

Reptile handler, Santa Claus among the attractions at Pape Village's Winter Festival

By ZIA ZARAWAR
The Observer

The Pape Village BIA celebrated the season with a winter festival featuring everything from Santa to snakes.

The event was held Dec. 2 at Bethany Baptist

Church at Pape and Cosburn avenues. Children performed seasonal songs on the piano, guitar, violin and other instruments, while seniors danced to live accordion music.

Blair Watson, a member of Reptilia, an attraction in Vaughan that bills itself as "Canada's largest fully indoor reptile zoo," entertained people of all ages with his reptiles and spiders. Kids, he said, usually love to touch snakes and spiders.

"If they grow to be an adult before they get a chance to touch them, that's where they develop fear," Watson said.

More than 500 people enjoyed cookie decorating, face painting, arts and crafts, live entertainment and getting their picture taken with Santa.

The Pape Village BIA was established in 1986 and represents about a hundred businesses on Pape Avenue from Mortimer to Gamble avenues.

It takes a portion of the property tax and uses that to beautify the area and stage events. It holds the winter festival each year on the first Saturday of December.

"We all volunteer our time to help make the

community better," said Charleen Beard, secretary of the BIA. "We help to beautify the area by putting plants, as well as extra benches, on the street, and help clean the area."

Toronto-Danforth MP Julie Dabrusin was there to watch her friends' children playing the piano.

She said the Bethany Baptist Church is different each time she's there, adding there are days when it draws more seniors and other times when it's full of kids.

"To me, that shows how wonderful of a hub this location is for the community," she said.

MUSIC

VOCA Chorus serves up a magical night of Canadian tunes

Group delights a sold-out crowd at Eastminster United Church with mix of Christmas songs, homegrown music

By NEIL POWERS
The Observer

A sold-out crowd packed Eastminster United Church on the Danforth Saturday night to hear the VOCA Chorus of Toronto serve up a smorgasbord of mostly homegrown Canadian tunes and a couple of traditional Christmas songs. The program was called The Great Canadian Choirbook.

After Toronto-Danforth MP Julie Dabrusin welcomed the audience, VOCA artistic director and conductor Jenny Crober introduced singer Cheri Maracle, Mohawk of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. Maracle began the show singing the *Women's Honour Song*.

The two-hour program strayed for the most part from the usual holiday fare, featuring classics such as *Northwest Passage* by Stan Rogers, *Log Driver's Waltz* by Wade Hemsworth,



Photo courtesy of VOCA Chorus

Members of the VOCA Chorus are pictured above after their festive performance at Eastminster United Church last Saturday night.

Hallelujah by Leonard Cohen and *Frobisher Bay* by James Gordon, who was at the concert.

Other songs included pieces less often heard at choral concerts this time of year, such as

Jane Siberry's *Love is Everything*, *Le Voyageur* by Angele and Albert Arseneault and *River* by Joni Mitchell.

"The artistic director arranged the music in

a really imaginative way," concert-goer Earl Groenewegen said enthusiastically.

Conductor Crober beamed as she talked about the choir.

"They're a wonderful group of people," she said. "This is a special occasion in many ways. It's a seasonal celebration, but it's also (Canada's) sesquicentennial."

It's no accident that the VOCA Chorus focuses on a range of Canadian music.

"I love bringing all different aspects of things into a melting pot," Crober said.

"I actually think about my programming really carefully."

The show incorporated Indigenous and Quebecois music into the program. Crober took an interactive approach, talking with the audience and providing history on a given song about to be performed.

She included a few standard Christmas sing-alongs for the audience, such as *Deck the Halls* and *Silent Night*, while adding an Indigenous song, *Huron Carol*.

The choir, with over 80 singers, including guest performers, holds two concerts a year. It began in 1986 as the East York Choir. Their songs are still enjoyed today just as they were over 30 years ago.

Muddy York Brewery raises the bar

Small-batch brewery in East York offers its customers a unique experience, along with a history lesson or two

By KATHERINE FORTE
The Observer

In East York, beer doesn't get much more local than it does at Muddy York Brewery.

The brewery, which has operated out of its 22 Cranfield Rd. location for the past three years, started in head brewer Jeff Manol's home.

When the long-time judge of beer competitions and enthusiastic home brewer decided to share his long-time hobby with the public, his wife, Susan Michalek, agreed to help with marketing and designing labels for the beer.

While the small-batch brewery started with a modest three-hectolitre system, it's flourished since then, Michalek said.

"We are now 10 hectolitres and we have nine fermenters," she said. "We probably didn't do it as fast as some other breweries that have opened up in the city, but we've grown it all ourselves with all of our know-how and hard work."

Toronto history runs deep in the Muddy York brewing brand. The name itself is a reference to a nick-



Katherine Forte/The Observer

(Left to right) Susan Michalek, head of marketing and design, and founder and head brewer Jeff Manol relax in front of their taps at the Muddy York Brewery.

name from Toronto's early days as the (unpaved) settlement called York.

The names of the beers themselves are also inspired by Toronto's past. Along with the Muddy York Porter, there's Diving Horse Pale Ale (both Michalek and Manol's current favourite), which alludes to

Hanlan's Point amusement park and its famous diving horses.

The Stork Derby Stout is a nod to the Great Stork Derby in the 1920s, where Toronto women raced to have as many children as possible in the hopes of benefitting from a rich financier's will.

"Actually, one gentleman was

here and said his grandmother was the result of the stork derby," Michalek laughed. "No one would believe her when she told the story, but it's true — you can look it up."

Manol takes a less-is-more philosophy when it comes to brewing and ingredients, which he finds is beneficial to the taste.

"I kind of figured the less ingredients you use, the more of a challenge it is to have a better process of brewing and do a better job," he said.

"If you get good-quality ingredients, just like with food, you don't need to do a lot to it. You just showcase the inherent quality in the ingredients you're using."

It's not just about the flavours, though. The experience of purchasing Muddy York Brewery beer is unique as well.

"People like coming here because you're going to talk to the people that make the beer. We're generally here a lot — it feels very personal," Michalek said.

"You're not just buying your beer at the beer store from a faceless monopoly. When you buy beer from us, you connect with us."

As the brewery's fourth anniversary approaches and its Helles Lager hits the shelves of the LCBO, Michalek and Manol are hoping to expand the brand and their connections to the community.

They plan on hosting food pop-ups and a brunch, among other events. Manol wants to "get people to know us and stop in."

"Many people feel very comfortable here. It's very welcoming and that's very important to us — to be open and welcoming to everybody," he said.

"Whether you're new to craft beer or not, everyone is welcome here."



Bambang Sadewo/The Observer

This home in the Mortimer and Logan avenue area was recently sold. The housing market in the GTA is expected to be more stable in 2018.

Realtor predicts more stable market

Cont'd. from page 1

been indications the market is on its way up.

In November, TREB recorded 7,374 transactions in Toronto. That's up from October. It's also a 37.2-per-cent year-over-year increase, defying the regular seasonal trend.

The average selling price for November was \$761,757. That's down compared to the year-to-date average of \$827,608.

The fall season has brought "an uptick in demand" for ownership housing in the

GTA, TREB president Tim Syrianos said in a press release. Homebuyers might be snatching things up before changes to the mortgage-lending guidelines by the financial regulator kick in, he said.

Due to take effect on Jan. 1, the updated mortgage-stress test — aimed at ensuring that borrowers can pay back their loans in case the interest rate goes higher than their actual mortgage rate — will include a test for those with uninsured loans.

Guci believes the effect will be temporary. By February, she said, homebuyers will have assessed the situation. She pre-

dicts that the market will be more stable, with home prices possibly going up by five per cent.

"It's not going to affect anything for 2018," Guci said. "Toronto has lots to offer. We still have a lot of buyers, professionals."

As for East York, she said it will continue to be a popular area for homebuyers because of its proximity to downtown and easy access to highways, subway stops and trendy shops and restaurants.

"It's going to be a really great year," she said.

Colony's keeper won't give up on scaredy-cat

Cont'd. from page 1

for them after the operation. The final step is to return the cats to the colony with proper amenities.

This last step is where DiCicco veers from the norm.

"A lot of people think that if a cat is on the street long enough, they can't be tamed and adopted." She shook her head. "That's crap. Even the roughest of cats who have needed a lot of surgery, I've seen them adopted and become the most loving lap cats."

DiCicco has found homes for hundreds of East York cats in her years of being a caretaker. She has never had problems with rehabilitating the cats that come into her colony, which is another reason this black cat is troubling her.

"He is in the system. He's already been trapped, neutered and adopted," DiCicco explained.

"He's gone through abandonment twice, and now he's out in the cold, scared and alone."

DiCicco rallied community members, from her website and an East York Facebook group. With their help, she raised enough money to buy a trap to help the cat.

However, the cat already knows what a trap is and can't be fooled into entering another. DiCicco is at a loss.

"I wish I knew which shelter he was in before," she said, looking concerned. "Then I could find out who adopted him and make sure they never do this to another animal."

DiCicco feels like she's out of options, but she's not out of hope. She will continue to visit this parking lot and is posting about it on the Facebook page, from which she has over 100 comments, some from residents in that building.

In the meantime, she urges the community to think about the city's pets this holiday season. Report stray cats found in neighbourhoods, keep track of your own pets, and donate cat and dog food to local food drives.

"It's terrible when you see people out on the street. But even worse when they have a cat or a dog with them," she said. "These pets need food, too."

EDITORIALS

400 is not enough

Last week the city of Toronto approved the addition of 400 spaces for people experiencing homelessness. With the winter weather approaching, these additions could be a matter of life and death.

The new spaces will come from current shelters, motels and drop-in centres. Mayor John Tory has quoted the cost of the plan at \$10 million. The proposal was met with widespread approval in City Hall. However, Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam was left disappointed after her own plans for the addition were rejected.

Wong-Tam was hoping to create additional space by opening armouries to people facing homelessness during the winter. Her proposal was thrown out after gaining only 17 out of 25 votes.

One of the factors against using the armouries is cost. To open them as shelters would require more than the \$10 million from the current plans, although the exact amount is unclear.

The rejection of Wong-Tam's proposal caused frustration among Toronto's anti-homeless community. These extra beds would help keep hundreds more off the streets this winter. Mayor John Tory is hesitant to allocate funds to this temporary solution, although he claims he will not rule it out.

So the real question, then, is one of principle. Should the city provide the extra funding to help those experiencing homelessness this winter find shelter, or is it better to save that money and put it towards a long-term solution?

The State of Homelessness in Canada 2016 reported at least 235,000 Canadians experience homelessness in a year. The Toronto Star published an article in October claiming at least 70 people have died due to homelessness in Toronto already this year, before the snow had even started. The city is demanding a state of emergency.

According to the Globe and Mail in 2015, the approximate cost of ending homelessness in Toronto would be \$44 billion over 10 years. This would require finding more space (a scarcity in Toronto) for housing, funding programs to make that housing more affordable and providing services to prevent homelessness in the city.

Ending homelessness is expensive and complex, but not impossible. San Francisco's non-profit, Tipping Point Community, is raising \$100 million to cut the city's homeless population in half in five years. The organization has already raised \$60 million for the cause. And Seattle is proposing to tax its highest-grossing businesses with revenue going into ending homelessness.

Tory needs to declare an emergency and begin tackling this issue with everything we have.

~ Nicole Royle

This is where...

Harassment can occur anywhere. But does everyone recognize that? Do people still believe you have to put yourself in a "dangerous situation" to encounter something like that?

The TTC is hoping to show that you can be targeted anywhere at any time, and for no reason. Its anti-harassment campaign targets sexual harassment, racism and homophobia, and uses posters, each of which starts with the hashtag #ThisIsWhere and ends with a true story that happened on the TTC.

The posters are visible on buses and subway trains all over East York. The stories are shedding light on a topic that might have been considered taboo a few years ago. So why talk about it now? Well, maybe bringing up these incidents will help citizens see just how often things like this can happen.

The poster campaign is accompanied by an app called SafeTTC. This allows transit users to report incidents of harassment. The goal is to raise awareness and possibly prevent future attacks.

Luke Palmieri is a student from East York who uses the TTC often. He feels that certain "this is where" stories relate more to him than others, and make him think twice about his safety.

"I saw one where it said, 'This is where Antonio got mugged,' and I feel like that is something that could happen to me too," he said. "It made me kind of nervous, but I think it's a good way of making people aware of the things that go on."

One of the cons of the campaign, Palmieri said, is that not every story is eye-catching.

"It's not that I didn't care about some of the stories. It just didn't relate to me as much, but I think that if I don't relate to them, someone else will."

Others feel the campaign is doing a great job regardless of what the individual stories are about. Anna Jenkins, also a student from East York, believes awareness is the most important thing.

"I think it helps show not only the victims that they're heard, but also shows the people doing these things that they are seen," she said.

According to Statistics Canada, only six incidents out of 100 are reported to police. This might be precisely why we need a campaign like this. By encouraging people to come forward with their stories, the TTC is attempting to abolish victim-shaming, as well as breaking the silence on harassment.

~ Divya Rajan

COLUMNS

Will the power of #MeToo inspire a lasting change?

Scrolling through Facebook statuses these days inevitably means coming across someone, most often a woman, using the hashtag #MeToo. They are sharing stories of moments in their lives when they feel they were sexually harassed or assaulted.

The movement was started a decade ago by activist Tarana Burke, but actor Alyssa Milano turned it into a burgeoning Twitter trend.

In the wake of the long list of women accusing Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein of sexual assault, Milano posted these words, "suggested by a friend": "If all the women who

have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem."

Since then, millions have used #MeToo to share stories of harassment and sexual assault. This movement is crucial in making people in various industries realize what is OK and what is not. Now I wonder how this movement could change the ways we treat one another.

I have never felt so helpless as I have reading posts by some

of my closest friends detailing an experience they are probably trying to forget. I am so grateful that this movement made so many feel they are not alone and gave them the courage to speak out about an issue that is more common than many may have thought.

The widespread hashtag has created a feeling of unity among women who have experienced any kind of sexual abuse. It made me feel I was not alone, and gave me the strength and support to use the hashtag myself.

Progress is often slow. But I hope this movement makes swift changes in how people are treated, and in people's willingness to come forward when they have not been treated properly.

It is so important for people to feel comfortable with themselves and live a happy life. Social media's widespread reach is being put to good use with this hashtag. And I hope that it helps people in their everyday lives.



Mursal Rahman

'Adulting' is hard: Student's journey to self-acceptance

As 2017 quickly comes to a close, it's a time for self-reflection.

This year mostly consisted of me proving not only to my parents, but also to myself, that I am an adult, capable of taking care of things on my own.

I am 21, but I don't feel 21. But what is a 21-year-old really supposed to feel like in 2017?

At the age I am now, my parents were married and preparing to bring new lives into the world.

People often say that it was a different world back then, but that doesn't stop me from thinking that somehow I am behind in life.

For many, our early 20s seem to be the most confusing years. We are expected to be independent, but some of us are still very dependent on our parents.

With phrases like "adulting" or "I can't adult today" spreading across social media, being an adult seems to be seen as more of an option than

a part of growing up.

Being an adult in 2017 is not cheap.

The cost of living keeps increasing every year. While our parents were able to move out and support themselves at young ages, it seems next to impossible in the economy we live in now.

With my amount of debt after finishing school, living with my parents seems like the only option, an option other people in their 20s also choose.

So do I live



Melissa Stephenson

on my own? No.

Do I buy my own groceries? Rarely. I don't have to worry about bills and doing my own taxes, but does that make me less of an adult? What does make you an adult? Your age or the amount of responsibility and independence you have?

Even though I may not have the responsibilities my parents had at my age, there are steps I can take in order to feel more like an adult. It starts off with finding my independence.

It took some time, but I now realize that I am maturing, but at my own pace, and that is OK.

Enjoying a century of Withrow Park



City of Toronto Archives



Nicole Royle/ Toronto Observer

Withrow Park was constructed in the 1910s, with plans beginning as early as 1905. It is south of Danforth Avenue, bordered by Carlaw, McConnell, Logan and Bain avenues. The park was named after John Jacob Withrow, a local builder who founded what became the Canadian National Exhibition. Above left is a photo of the McConnell-Logan intersection being created in 1905, setting the northwest corner of the park. Above right is the same intersection today, looking south.

First union in fitness world

Trainers at GoodLife urge other gyms to form unions as well

By EMILIE MUST
The Observer

Personal trainers at Canada's largest gym are hopeful favouritism in the workplace will end after agreeing to a union deal — a first for the fitness industry.

On Dec. 4, management at GoodLife and the employees, backed by the Workers United Canada Council, finalized a two-year contract at GoodLife locations in Ajax, Peterborough and Toronto, which includes East York.

In 2016, 25 per cent of GoodLife personal trainers across Canada came together to form a union.

"There was no system in place for the company to hand out clients that were sold by management," said Connor Power, a personal trainer at the GoodLife on Coxwell Avenue. "This caused massive favouritism and harassment by club fitness managers towards their personal trainers."

Personal training is a physical industry where there are risks of workplace injuries, yet there was no compensation in place.

"The company did not care if we were injured and unable to work," Power said. "A lot of trainers would have to quit because they were



Emilie Must/The Observer

GoodLife Fitness at Danforth/Pape settled its contracts.

injured and unable to come into work."

Along with injury and no guarantee of clients, trainers were required to do extra work for no pay.

"We were required to put in several hours a week at the gym to find clients and the company was not compensating personal trainers for this work," Power said.

The union is part of the Workers United Canada council, which advocates for ending precarious work in unstable industries.

"Until this contract, (there was) total lack of unionization, total lack of sick days, limited benefits," said union representative Adrié Naylor. "This is an industry with a lot of young people where there's a high rate of turnover."

She noted that GoodLife is by

far "the largest fitness company in Canada. (The union deal) will give workers the opportunity to have a voice at work, which is a really positive step around health and safety at the workplace."

Lack of opportunity for a steady income is making precarious work an issue in the fitness sector. This is a problem in a growing number of industries in Ontario.

"The goal the personal trainers have is to make positive changes within their own workplace," Naylor said. She also hopes "to see a positive change in the industry as a whole."

Naylor says GoodLife is a large enough company to influence other gyms to form unions and try to negotiate better rights for their employees.

COMMUNITY

East York Historical Society ends the year with a classic

Organization screens Charlie Chaplin's film *The Kid* at its final meeting of the year

By SAMMY ABDO
The Observer

Charlie Chaplin was the star of the East York Historical Society's last meeting of 2017.

On an unusually warm November night, the gathering was larger than normal, with members showing full support.

The meeting on Nov. 28 commemorated art. The speaker, Dr. Rob Prince, who has a PhD in history from the University of Toronto, spoke about silent films. *The Kid*, the 1921 classic by Charlie Chaplin, was screened.

"This was, in fact, Chaplin's first feature film," Prince said.

"It was also the first major studio film that attempted to combine comedy with drama, so this is something of a landmark film."

The Kid is about a man on his morning promenade who discovers a baby boy abandoned near a garbage can.

After unsuccessfully trying to find

the baby's mother, he decides to raise the child by himself. Over the last half of the film, the baby has grown into a young boy, and the two become joined at the hip.

The screening left some members of the society emotional, especially Donna Glazier, who had to be comforted by her husband, Bruce Horner.

"It was a really good movie, eh?" Horner said. "Amazing how good it was without any dialogue."

Prince also discussed the East York connection: Mary Pickford, business partner of Chaplin, had a bungalow on Glenwood Crescent in East York that was built in the 1940s.

The bungalow was eventually raffled off to raise money for the war effort.

Though she owned it, Pickford never lived there, and chose to live in Pickfair, her estate in Beverly Hills.

"After the war, Mary Pickford, fighting alcoholism, became a recluse," Prince said.

"But the bungalow she never lived in, here in East York, is still standing, though I understand that her signature on the door has been painted over."

The East York Historical Society's next meeting will be Jan. 30. Refreshments will be served at 7 p.m., followed by a presentation at 7:30 p.m.



Bambang Sadewo/The Observer



Tina Adamopoulos/The Observer



Tina Adamopoulos/The Observer

Winter tales

(Top left) Megha Soni, 21, takes a selfie outside her workplace on Danforth Avenue during East York's first major snowfall on Monday, Dec. 11. (Top right, bottom right) Eastminster United Church is selling Christmas trees to raise money for its Out of the Cold program. The program provides shelter for people in the community who are experiencing homelessness.

Christmas pageant embraces 'radical hospitality'

Message of this year's pageant is love and generosity, director says

By MICHAEL LINENNEN
The Observer

Leaside United Church's annual Christmas pageant is a family affair for the Lapier family.

Not only have Nina Lapier, 12, and her sister Brianna, 5, participated in the pageant for the last three years, but their father Robert was also in it when he was a child.

"It was many decades ago, back in the '60s and '70s," he said.

This year's will take place on Dec. 17 at 10:30 a.m. The theme is radical hospitality, which means going the extra step when helping others.

"Focus on love and the generosity that we can give each other as humans," said director Tanya Wiles-Bell, who has been involved with the pageant for the past nine years.

"We often think that if we do something nice, if we give a homeless person a Tim Hortons card, that we are great people, but it goes deeper than that. Ask them their name, find out who they are, because we all have a



Michael Linennen/The Observer

Children from the Christmas pageant (pictured above) are rehearsing for their show at Leaside United Church.

story," she said.

This year's pageant will follow a young couple who have just arrived in Canada and are struggling to make it their home. At the same time, there is a mother who thinks Christmas is all about everything being perfect.

"She forgets that main message of love

and hope and generosity," Wiles-Bell said. "This modern story is playing out parallel to the ancient story, and so makes it new again."

She said directing the pageant reminds her of the time when her children were participants.

"It's something that I have given my

kids," she said. "They have that choice to carry that on."

Meanwhile, this will be Nina Lapier's first time taking on a speaking role in the pageant.

"I'm actually really shy," she said. "I always thought I like acting. I think it's a really fun thing."