



Police scour Thornccliffe apartment for evidence

By TAYLOR BRIDGER
The Observer

A month after accused serial killer Bruce McArthur's arrest, Toronto police continue to investigate his apartment at 95 Thornccliffe Park Dr., the site of the murder of at least some missing Toronto men, they say.

Det.-Sgt. Hank Idsinga told CTV News's W5 on Saturday that investigators believe the apartment is a homicide scene.



● For more on the Bruce McArthur investigation, go to torontoobserver.ca

It is unclear how long investigations will continue in the 19th-floor unit of the Leaside Towers apartment building, commonly known as the tallest in East York. The twin towers of the complex dominate the Don River Valley that gives the surrounding area its name.

Police vehicles were still parked in front of the building on Feb. 13, almost a month after McArthur was first arrested there on Jan. 18.

"We are conducting a thorough forensic exam and, as I'm sure you can appreciate, these things take time," police spokesperson Meaghan Gray replied to a query by email Wednesday.

At least one resident was not happy about the media presence near the apartment building, shouting at photographers as she walked her dog around what is usually a strictly residential patch of grass.

"You shouldn't be filming this property," the woman yelled, before walking back inside the lobby to report what she had seen.

Meanwhile, Toronto police have also excavated a section of drainpipe outside the 53 Mallory

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Trisha Sales/ The Observer

A bird in the hand...

It was a day of crafts — and fun — at the Todmorden Mills Heritage Site's recent drop-in family event. Held Feb. 16 on a PA Day, the theme was Chinese New Year and participants created different birds and animals. Here, Koah Cowan-Ishihara (right) helps his creation take flight while brother Kai and cousin Annabelle colour.

■ CRIME

Serial killers and skeletons: Just another day at the office



Ellen Samek/The Observer

Dr. Nafte holds an anatomical specimen of a spine.

Forensic anthropologist offers an inside look at murder investigations

By ELLEN SAMEK
The Observer

The thought of police combing through a neighbour's garden and finding human remains in planters has Leasiders horrified, but for forensic professionals, it's just another day at the office.

Dr. Myriam Nafte, a forensic anthropologist and instructor at McMaster University who lives in Leaside, is no stranger to this kind of investigation.

While the press and the public have been hanging on to every disturbing new

detail of Bruce McArthur's alleged crimes (he has been charged with five counts of first-degree murder and human remains were found in planters at a Leaside home where he did landscaping), Nafte isn't shocked.

The forensic anthropologist, who isn't involved in this particular investigation, has come across many similar cases throughout her career.

It's Nafte's job to examine old human remains and find out how the individual died and who they were, just from the bones. She has examined bodies that have been dismembered and burned, dumped in the woods, found in backyards and even discovered in water.

"In terms of the professional experience, I am very used to that in terms of work-

ing on cases like that in the United States," Nafte said. "That level of serial killing is not unusual there."

If Canadians think this case is horrifying, they haven't seen anything. In the United States, "bodies are found all the time," Nafte said.

Even the pattern of behaviour and victimology is common south of the border.

Nafte recalls a case she assisted on in the 1990s.

"There was one in Indianapolis that was very long and involved over the course of several years. He was married with children, very bright," she said. "He was cruising the gay nightclub scene, picking up young men and taking them back to a

■ See HOUSE, page 4

POLICE & FIRE

Teen charged after carjacking at Danforth and Woodbine

A 17-year-old teen is facing six charges, including robbery and possessing a weapon, in a Danforth Avenue carjacking. Toronto Police arrested the accused on Feb. 18. On Feb. 14, a 29-year-old woman was allegedly threatened with a weapon at Woodbine and Danforth avenues. Police say the accused pushed the woman to the ground before driving away with the car. An imitation gun was seized during the arrest, police say. The teen cannot be named under the provisions of the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Road closed after package discovered

Toronto Police shut down a section of Danforth Avenue on Feb. 17 after a suspicious package was found. Police closed Danforth Avenue at Dawes Road during the investigation. It was later determined that the package was not a threat to the public and the road was re-opened.

Pedestrians hit in Victoria Park, Dawes Road area

A vehicle struck two pedestrians in the Victoria Park Avenue and Dawes Road area. Police were called to investigate the Feb. 18 incident. Police say the pedestrians were not injured and no charges have been laid.

~ Jennifer Teixeira



Aileen Zaraineh/Toronto Observer

Ted Barris talks to people at the Leaside Library about the Canadian experience at Vimy Ridge.

Author brings Vimy Ridge to life

By LOUISE ALLYN PALMA and AILEEN ZARAINEH

The Observer

Grace MacPherson defied the norm by being one of the first Canadian women to earn her driver's licence.

She later battled misogynistic assumptions when she became an ambulance driver for soldiers in the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Hers was one of the stories told by Canadian author and historian Ted Barris during a visit to the Leaside branch of the public library on Feb. 13. Barris presented a colourful and exciting commentary about the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

Barris drew on the importance of the Canadian identity and the chemistry between citizens across the nation during this battle.

His goal is to help this generation have a deeper appreciation of the past so that they can better understand their future, he said.

"Young people have to get a sense of what happened there and then pick up the

stories and retell them as if they were their own," Barris said after his talk.

Creating a vivid timeline for his spectators to easily follow along, highlighting the stories of actual participants, including MacPherson, he brought the battle to life for young generations.

"If you experience something that's as close as Lyman Nicholls, Andrew McNaughton or any of the characters I sketch out, if they're real, if they're tangible, if they have a face — a young person's going to connect," he said afterwards. "Anybody will."

Natural Heritage Book representative Barry Penhale was happy to have Barris back at the library to speak about Vimy Ridge and his book *Victory at Vimy*.

"If it was possible to do so, I would have him come every week. I wouldn't even bother with other guests, he's so good," Penhale said.

Kin Martin, who has been attending events at the library for over two years,

with a different Canadian author each week, describes them as "truly fascinating, the best talks you've ever heard."

Martin especially appreciated Barris's talk about Vimy Ridge. Her father was a soldier in the First World War, joining the British Expeditionary Force.

Barris said he wants the public to understand the chemistry between each Canadian that took part in the battle. This "connection" between each individual at that time still resonates for Martin and is part of the reason why she appreciates these talks.

Writing this book was "an honour," Barris said. He wants everyone who reads his book to take away "a little piece of Canada and a reason to be proud of who they are."

Barris's new book, *The Dam Busters: Canadian Airmen and the Secret Raid Against Nazi Germany*, is scheduled for release in September 2018. History buffs can expect an in-depth account of a raid inside Nazi Germany during the Second World War.

Teacher seeks PC nomination for Toronto-Danforth

By ELLEN SAMEK

The Observer

Despite the roller-coaster ride of turmoil facing the provincial Tories in recent days, Patricia Kalligosfyris couldn't be prouder to be a part of the party.

The high school business teacher from York region is currently seeking the nomination as Progressive Conservative candidate for Toronto-Danforth, an area her Greek family first settled in when coming to Canada.

She is especially proud to be a young woman making strides in a party that hasn't always been known for its female presence.

"I have always felt part of the team and to see more women as a part of the PC party and becoming candidates is amazing. I think the PC party stands for both males and females," she said. "I think in this election we're going to see some amazing females come forward and hopefully win and become MPPs."

She is running against another nominee who has yet to be identified by the party. The selected candidate would represent the party in the provincial election to take place in June 2018. The Toronto-Danforth riding is currently represented by Peter Tabuns of the NDP.

Kalligosfyris held a meet-and-greet event

Sunday at Sophie's Sports Bar on Cosburn Avenue to connect with community members.

"There are a lot of things within the Toronto-Danforth I want to focus on because this would be my riding," she said in an interview. "They have issues with their downtown line; they want a relief line. It's really busy during rush hour, so that's something I want to really push for them."

In addition to improving transit along line two, Kalligosfyris says she wants to focus on helping small businesses in the riding.

Stopping the construction of bike lanes along Danforth Avenue and slowing down the increase of the minimum wage are issues touched upon in her speech.

Her passion for supporting small businesses is important to Peter Viris, a finance professional who attended the meet-and-greet.

"I like the fact that she supports small businesses. Small businesses are key, especially now with Canada," Viris said. Kalligosfyris made a good impression on attendee David Lasker.



■ KALLIGOSFYRIS

"She spoke briefly at an event on Monday and I liked what she was saying," he said.

While the event focused on the issues important to Kalligosfyris' platform and her pride in representing a riding close to her heart, the issue of Patrick Brown's sexual misconduct allegations and entry into the leadership race hung in the air.

Kalligosfyris had reservations about Brown running for the leadership again.

"There would have been many opportunities in the future for him to come forward, to be a leader," she said. "Maybe when these allegations fully get resolved and his name is fully cleared, then maybe he could run again."

Others at the event also voiced concerns about Brown entering the leadership race in an effort to regain his former position.

"Him coming back isn't what's best for the party because what it's doing is creating a big distraction," Viris said.

Kalligosfyris would not specify if she supported anyone in the current leadership race, but said this regarding a possible Brown victory: "At the end of the day I'm running for Toronto-Danforth," she said, "And if PC members in Ontario vote for Patrick Brown, I can't say anything against that."

The nomination vote is to take place Feb. 28.

WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

Strike up the brass band

Looking for something to help fight those seasonal blues? Look no further than Toronto's own Eighth Street Orchestra. The brass band will be performing tunes from the '20s and '30s at Hope United Church, 2550 Danforth Ave., on Feb. 24 from 4:30 to 5:15 p.m.

Measure your carbon footprint

Find out how you can care for the earth at Creation Care 2018. Taking place at St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church on March 3, this event will feature exhibitors and speakers focused on environmental education. Don Valley West MP Rob Oliphant and Ward 26 Councillor Jon Burnside will be making an appearance. There will be children's programs and a chance to measure your very own carbon footprint. The event is to start at 11 a.m. at 1399 Bayview Ave.

Strap on your skates for some family ice-time

Join Ward 31 Councillor Janet Davis on Sunday, March 4 for East York's annual skating party. Cookies, juice and face painting will be featured, as well as a special performance by the East York Skating Club's Ice Dreams. Admission is free. Skate rentals and sharpening will be available. The event will run from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at East York Memorial Arena, 888 Cosburn Ave.

~ Claire Mcinroy

School of 'jock' an adventure in music

By RYAN MACKENZIE
The Observer

Much like Jack Black's *School of Rock*, Erik Laar's Off Centre DJ School is devoted strictly to music (except they don't have to hide it from the principal). Its mandate is simple: Have fun with records and electronics.

"It's about building the art form," said Laar when asked about his two-storey school at 201 Coxwell Ave., south of Gerrard Street East.

In a world where electronics seem to be taking over, DJing (or disk jockeying) seems to be following suit. Festivals all around the world celebrate the most renowned DJs, and EDM/house music is one of the most popular genres.

A DJ himself, Laar knows both the industry and the music well. He has worked in many down-tempo clubs in Toronto, toured across Canada, and was also a part of the group called iNSIDE-aMiND.

Although the DJ life is fast and fun, it often leads to burnout.

After travelling for music and doing side jobs here and there, Laar decided it was time to settle down, make some

real money and start a career. Without venturing too far from his passion for DJing, he decided to start his own DJ school.

Off Centre began with one-on-one lessons and grew organically. The staff then created different courses for separate lanes of the art (production and standard DJ) and the business started to really expand.

After a year or two, the space was torn down by a developer and they had to relocate. The school was forced to relocate two or three times more but has stayed in business for 14 years.

"The first five years were definitely a struggle," Laar said. "There was never anything like this before us, so there was never a business model to build off. We were just trying to figure it all out."

The goal of the school is to keep the esthetic of intimacy in the classroom. Laar doesn't strive for large classrooms, but instead a very personal experience.

He wants to be within "arm's reach" of his students, and wants to create a connection with every student who enters his doors.

Jack Black would be proud.



Nida Zafar/ The Observer

Billy Dertilis (left), owner of Red Rocket Coffee, with baristas Sarah Ziegler (centre) and Zachary Corindia (right) at his café located at 1364 Danforth Ave.

Red Rocket takes on TTC

By NIDA ZAFAR
The Observer

A local coffee shop owner is fighting expropriation with a petition.

Billy Dertilis has collected 700 signatures to fight the expropriation of his establishment, Red Rocket Coffee, on Danforth Avenue, two minutes from the Greenwood subway station. The expropriation would allow the TTC to add a new subway entrance and exit in the space of current businesses or homes.

That process could impact up to 10 locations in the area, said Toronto-Danforth councillor Mary Fragedakis.

The selection of locations considered for expropriation is not made by the TTC.

"It is a working group made up of local residents who are developing recommendations for a second exit

location for Greenwood Station," Fragedakis wrote in an email.

Dertilis's business could be affected in two ways. If the property next door to his coffee shop is selected for expropriation, the construction would affect foot traffic for his business. The other, far worse, option is that his shop will be torn down. Either one is troublesome.

"It would impact people's access, and additionally it would not be a pleasant experience to come and have a coffee when you're hearing the sounds of construction next door," he said.

So far, Dertilis hasn't presented the petition to a higher body. He's been to public meetings and has spoken with TTC officials about the matter, but he wants to make sure he delivers the petition and his concerns in the correct manner.

"I don't want to be one of those

voices clamouring for attention and making a fuss at a public meeting," he said. "I know we have many channels for communications, and I'm just sitting tight waiting to see where the process leads."

Dertilis has also received a lot of support from the community. Customers continue to frequent the cafe, a place he says people call "a home away from home."

The once-struggling stretch of businesses has now become a busy one. "This strip of the Danforth had trouble restarting for a long time, and we're finally seeing some organic business success along this strip," he said.

But Dertilis now fears that businesses in the area won't be able to survive the difficulties of the expropriation process.

A retail ecosystem "is fragile," he said.



Ryan Mackenzie/ The Observer

Off Centre teacher Erik Laar prepares for a DJ class.

Celebrating Black history with a story about perseverance

By MOUHAMAD RACHINI
The Observer

For 44-year-old Dwayne Genus, *An African Story* is not just a book about the Biafran War.

"For me, it's more than just writing a story," he said. "It's saying that I understand what the situation is and I want to be a record that says that these people matter."

Speaking to a small group of readers at East York's S. Walter Stewart Library on Feb. 13, the Richmond Hill-based author, whose background is Jamaican, was presenting *An African Story*, his family's first published book. In it, he describes the experiences of his mother-in-law, Nkechi Iroaga, during the Biafran War.

"It was very emotional for the people she had lost, never to be seen again," he said. "Sometimes I wonder how she even managed the trauma of that."

Genus first got the idea when he asked his mother-in-law about a photo she had above their fireplace. The picture showed a younger Nkechi Iroaga and her late husband dressed in traditional African attire. Iroaga explained to Genus that it was the couple's first picture before the Biafran War.

"She tells me this story that sounded like a movie," he said. "I was like, 'Oh my God, I better write this down.' So the next day I came with a camera, and she didn't just tell me her story, she told me her whole life."

He couldn't do it alone, though. While writing the story, his wife, 42-year-old Uchenwa Iroaga Genus, provided details about life in Nigeria and fact-checked her mother's story.

"I added colour because I actually went to boarding school in Nigeria when I was a teenager," she said. "What the boarding school was like, a lot of the language and the songs and things like that."

Uchenwa Iroaga Genus said although her family often took the story for granted, they're glad that it has been published to a broader audience.

"It's kind of like you're rediscovering some gift you had," she said. "(Dwayne Genus) definitely did a lot of research and a lot of work in putting it together for us. I was also really happy because it meant a lot to my mother."

One of the book's major themes was love. To Dwayne Genus, that is what struck him most from Nkechi Iroaga's story.

"I love the love story," he said. "The whole idea that he was always writing letters to her and

that eventually one got through and they were able to be reconnected in Toronto. It was important to emphasize that part in the novel."

Uchenwa Iroaga Genus saw just how important that love story was to her mother following her father's death.

"He died in January (2016) and (the book) was published in the summer," she said. "So it was almost like it was a gift to her. Not that it could replace my dad, but these are her memories of her life from before, and it was like giving her a new gift."

The way her mother dealt with her father's passing was evidence of another theme of Nkechi Iroaga's story: perseverance.

"My mom is such a strong woman," she said. "She's very practical, moving on to the next step and the next step, and each little step completes a picture for her."

With Canada celebrating Black History Month, the couple believes Nkechi Iroaga's story will also help Canadians better understand the history of Africa from first-hand experience.

"You have to understand that Canada is a country of immigrants and everybody's story makes up the mosaic of what we are," Dwayne Genus said. "So to have a proper perspective of history and what makes this country run, you have to have a proper understanding of each part of that whole."

"A lot of African history has been oral history, and that's fantastic because that act brings people together," Uchenwa Iroaga Genus said. "But there's also something for writing it as well, because these days it needs to last much longer than a generation."

Dwayne Genus has another story in the works. His next book, *The Story of Lovers' Leap*, tells the legend of two slaves in Jamaica who, in order to prevent their plantation's owner from separating them, jumped off of a cliff to remain together. Genus said he wants to use the tale to talk about Tacky's Revolt in 1760.

"It was a big event that happened (in Jamaica) where the Africans of that time revolted over the British," he said. "I think it's a historical event that needs to be remembered and told, so that's my next work."

An African Story is available in the Toronto Public Library system.



■ UCHENWA GENUS

School comes together for girl battling cancer

By JESSICA LAM
The Observer

Ten-year-old Hailey Conroy has always loved to sing. Despite being diagnosed in November with leukemia, the Grade 5 student is still singing.

"I've been teaching her music for the last few years," said Heather Bailey, a teacher at Gledhill Junior Public School. "I've been able to see that artistic, creative, fun, musical side of her, and it's really nice to see that, despite what's going on right now, she's still keeping such a positive, happy spirit."

After Hailey took a couple of falls in 2017, X-rays revealed she had compression fractures. She was put on a waiting list for the bone clinic.

Her mother Patricia Baranyai said that during this time Hailey was not recovering properly and had mobility problems that resulted in her having to stay in bed for a month and miss two months of school.

After she went through physiotherapy sessions, Hailey's walking improved. But then came spells of random fevers and a rash that appeared when she was in the sun.

Eventually she was diagnosed and started treatment right away.

"We just finished three months of treatment," Baranyai said. "The first month was not too bad, but the next two months were more difficult because sometimes it was four days a week. There were a lot of spinal taps and chemo."

To be with Hailey through all her treatments, Baranyai has had to shift her focus from her job where she runs her own jewellery-making business and sells jewellery at shows to support Hailey and older brother Oliver Conroy.

Hailey's father Kevin Conroy had previously assisted Baranyai during the shows, but he could no longer help out after falling ill. To help pay for family bills, Baranyai has set up a Go Fund



Photo courtesy of Patricia Baranyai

Hailey Conroy 10, and her mother Patricia Baranyai, at the Hospital for Sick Children. Conroy was diagnosed with leukemia in Nov. 2017.

Me page (www.gofundme.com/healingforhailey).

Through it all, Hailey has remained both brave and resilient.

"She has a lot of fears that she has to face a lot, but she's facing them even though she's scared," her mother said. "She's a really positive and joyous person."

Hailey has so much love for singing and music, she was given the nickname Haileybird.

It's because she's a very musical girl, said Bailey, who has organized fundraisers including Hearts for Hailey and Light Up the Night for Hailey.

During Hearts for Hailey, which took place Feb. 5, 7 and 9, handmade paper hearts were sold at Gledhill Junior Public School as part of

Valentine's Day.

Eager students gathered on the second floor to buy red hearts for their friends. Boxes filled to the brim also included free pink hearts that students used to send special Valentine's Day messages to Hailey.

"This is something we thought would be a great initiative to support a member of our school family, and we really want to help Hailey and her family in this really difficult time," Bailey said.

School principal Cathy McAleese spoke of the support from teachers and students to Hailey's family.

"I think the school has a real sense of community and they want to help. The students and staff come together. They support one of their

own," she said.

McAleese, with three teachers, delivered Valentines to Hailey themselves. They each also brought a gift for Hailey for Valentine's Day.

"It's really so touching," Baranyai said. "I find that I almost sometimes can't think about it because it's so much love that I've never known, so much love and support, it makes me want to cry when I think about it."

Gledhill teachers Emma Pace and Agnieszka Kopka helped out at the Light Up the Night for Hailey event on Feb. 15. While glow sticks and glow necklaces were sold all week at school, Pace and Kopka helped sell more to those who participated in a walk around the school that evening in support of Hailey. In total, more than 300 necklaces were sold.

That night also happened to be parent-teacher interview night, and Andrea Nichols Egan, who is on the Parent Council, was helping out.

"I think the teachers have really done a lot to organize the Hearts for Hailey and the bake sale that was attached to our movie night a few weeks ago," she said.

Students Zauraz Khan, 12, and Jackson Graham, 11, held their own little fundraiser during Light Up the Night for Hailey. They sold original artwork and decorated cups with apple juice and homemade butterbeer.

The proceeds from all the events will go to Hailey's family to help pay their bills.

Baranyai is touched by the show of support.

"This school year, I had on my mind that I wanted to do more for the school, to raise funds. Then this happened with Hailey and the tables have turned and they're doing so much for us," she said.

"So I feel guilty because I had intended to do something for the school and instead it's the other way around, but at the same time I'm incredibly appreciative."

Teeth could be the answer to solving the planter bodies mystery

Cont'd. from page 1

Herb Baumeister of Indiana was the prime suspect in the disappearances of several gay men from the Indianapolis area.

The remains of 11 men were found on his property.

Baumeister fled to Samia, Ont. in 1996, where he committed suicide before the case could be taken to trial.

When it comes to excavations with multiple remains, similar to what was going on inside the green tent on Mallory Crescent in Leaside, Nafte has been through the complex process firsthand.

"It's got to be done very methodically. You never excavate with a big deep excavator; you're going in the shovels and picks and surface material and brushes and things like that," she said. "You don't want to be digging and breaking bones. Some of our bones are very delicate and tiny: our wrist bones, our ankle bones."

A process called "chain of custody" tracks each bone that's found at a forensic scene.

Keeping physical evidence safe is crucial.

Once transported to the morgue, forensic anthropologists like Nafte can start to de-

termine what happened to an individual or individuals found.

"Teeth really are the ideal thing to find," Nafte said.

Dentists in Canada have a legal obligation to comply with records requests made by coroners' offices for criminal investigations.

By narrowing down characteristics like race, gender and age, forensic anthropologists can comb through dental records and hopefully find a match.

Other medical records like X-rays and DNA samples that are either in databases or a match from an immediate family member can also be used.

But what happens when a victim isn't from this jurisdiction, perhaps from a country from the other side of the world? Two of McArthur's alleged victims, Selim Esen and Majeed Kayhan, were immigrants from Turkey and Afghanistan respectively.

"We can get medical and dental records from other countries. Usually homicide investigators would be looking for that sort of material. With the internet, that's not as lengthy as it used to be," Nafte said. "If we suspect the remains belong to an individual and we are in touch with his family, they



Ellen Samek / The Observer

Dr. Myriam Nafte, a forensic anthropologist, sits with her dog Spartacus. Spartacus, a Belgian Malinois, is a retired law enforcement canine.

could submit records."

In Canada, databases and the circulation of information that can assist in criminal investigations tends to be more centralized. The RCMP has a database for tracking firearms and Canada has a national database listing missing persons cases from across the country.

In the United States, solving cases involving missing persons can be more complicated.

"It's state by state. Rarely do they communicate what's going on in different states regarding



Ellen Samek / The Observer

Nafte uses anatomical specimens of a foot and spine for teaching purposes.

missing people, potential perpetrators, etc. It does happen, but it requires a real co-ordinated effort," Nafte said.

She recounts a case she worked on in upstate New York, in which man and the family's babysitter conspired to kill the

man's wife. After burying her in the backyard, the man panicked and changed his mind.

"They put [the wife] in the trunk of the car and he and the babysitter and the children drove, went on a road trip," Nafte said. "They stopped midway and dumped her body in the desert — it may have been in Utah."

The change in environment mummified the body, so the forensic team Nafte was working with was able to use facial reconstruction.

The case took years to solve because of the lack of centralized information in the U.S.

"She was in storage for quite a bit of time before everybody was communicating around the state about it," she said.

When she speaks about the cases she has worked on in her career, Nafte makes clear forensic anthropology is a team effort. This is where television gets it wrong, she says.

"It's never just that one rock star of a person that stands above all and has this epiphany of the discovery of who did it and how," she said. "People are specialists. We all come together. We have to work together to put the pieces of the puzzle together."



Brandon Wong/Toronto Observer

Toronto Tool Library co-founder Ryan Dyment relaxes at the branch's East York location, which also offers board games and sporting gear.

Tool Library still open for business

Crowdfunding campaign comes to the rescue of library's three branches, including one in E.Y.

By **BRANDON WONG**
The Observer

Thanks to a successful crowdfunding campaign, the Toronto Tool Library is still the go-place for East Yorkers looking to borrow a power drill or belt sander.

The library, which has a branch on Danforth Avenue in East York, is a non-profit organization that provides members with access to tools for construction projects.

It was facing closure after the grants it relies on to operate fell through, but has been able to raise \$38,613 through an Indiegogo campaign.

"We missed all the grants we applied for this year. There's not that many to apply for out

there," said co-founder Ryan Dyment.

Unexpected permits and audits added to the struggle, which was when the store turned to crowdfunding as an alternative source of income.

"We try to do the best we can for free, but we can't always do it, so that's what we needed to crowdfunding as an alternative source of income." "Fortunately, our supporters made that happen."

As well as grants, the store also depends on membership fees, which range from \$50 to \$100 a year.

They've been increased slightly to help with expenses, the co-founder said, but it can be difficult to find a fair balance.

"If you're not winning on new things and we're not winning on convenience, which we can never win, you have to win on something else," Dyment said. "Price is the best thing that we can control to win on."

The Toronto Tool Library, which Dyment

and partner Lawrence Alvarez first launched in Parkdale in 2012, has helped numerous homeowners with renovation projects over the years.

"There are people who have been able to fix up their homes that wouldn't have been able to afford it otherwise or don't have the space to store everything that they wanted," Dyment said.

The Danforth Avenue branch, the largest of the library's three locations (the Hillcrest branch is on St. Clair Avenue West), has a wood shop complete with 3D printers and a laser cutter. It offers community nights on Wednesdays where the public can learn woodworking for free.

"It's a really unique service in the city and I don't know anybody else that does it," Dyment said.

The crowdfunding campaign is still open for those interested in supporting the cause. Visit "Keep the Tool Library Alive!" for more information.

Avid gardener immersed in plant paradise

By **KASY PERTAB**
The Observer

There are over 22,000 species of plants in South Africa, and Anna Leggatt set out to see them all.

Leggatt shared her recent journey with the East York Garden Club, as well as her encounters with other life forms along the way.

A member of the local club herself, she was more than happy to show several photos of each plant and flower she saw during her trip.

The plants varied from orchids to lilies, and even to some aloe and succulents. Since she carries a degree in botany, Leggatt described each plant by its scientific name. Those names included *Rhodohypoxis rubella*, *Disa porrecta*, *Gladiolus dalenii*, and more.

When asked how she remembers each name, Leggatt explained that she almost always had a plant expert accompany her on her travels.

"Our group was provided with a list of different plants, and if you weren't quite sure which were which, you'd Google it and hope the right one would turn up," she said.

One of the world's six floral kingdoms is entirely contained within South Africa.

"There are more bulbous plants there than anywhere else in the world," Leggatt said of the Cape Floral Kingdom.

Leggatt grew up in England near Stratford-on-Avon, and built her own rock garden when she was only 12.

She was recently awarded the 2017 Garden Writers Association's silver medal for her article "*Dandelion — Is it a weed?*" She has written pieces for Toronto Botanical Garden, Landscape Ontario and The Globe and Mail.

Fellow East York Garden Club member Monique Gauthier mentioned that she, too, will soon be going to South Africa to visit the extravagant plants.

When asked about her experience at the event, Gauthier replied, "Anna's really great. We haven't seen a presentation like this in a while."

This is the third time that Leggatt has visited South Africa in hopes of finding as many of the plants species as she can.

"It's like a paradise," she said. "It really is the most wonderful place."

Skateboarding making an impact in church basement

By **D.J. LLEWELLYN**
The Observer

Some of the students are practising standing on their skateboards without falling. Others are doing ollies — jumping with the board under their feet — and getting serious on the indoor ramp.

It's another Saturday morning class with Yash Presswalla, who offers skateboarding classes to young people aged six to 16.

He's been teaching the sport around Toronto for more than a decade, and during the winter months, the lessons don't stop. They're simply moved from the local skate parks outside to an unexpected place, the basement of Danforth Church.

Today, Presswalla is teaching kick flips and board slides. That's for the more experienced kids, though. Most are still learning the basics before tackling the harder stuff.

"I know quite a few tricks, but skateboarding can be very much a mental battle; what's difficult for me might come easily to someone else," Presswalla says. "However, the most basic trick, the ollie (jumping in the air with the skateboard), is probably my favourite."

Once kids can balance on their skateboards and push off comfortably, the ollie is the first trick they work on. There is definitely a sense of order despite all the falls, scrapes and botched tricks in the class.

Skateboarding is only one part of what participants learn here. Perseverance, self-confidence and other life skills mean just as much.

"The most rewarding part of teaching skateboarding is watching a child's confidence take form and grow," Presswalla says. "We make it a point to address those feelings of accomplishment and offer tools to build on them, both on and off the skateboard."

You get a real sense of that when talking to the older kids who volunteer and help out. One of them, Kalen Dennis-Cartasano, 15, says it's about more than simply honing his skills in the sport he loves.

"Coming here helped me be inspired to help others. I used to skate all the time for myself and on my own until my friends would show up," he says. "I started helping just to pass the time and it made me feel real good."

In a place where the sounds of churchgoers fill the halls above, the laughter of friends, the smacking of boards on hardwood ramps and pings off metal rails echo below. There are plenty of falls and injuries in this sport, even among experienced skaters, but according to Dennis-Cartasano, it's all worth it.

"I've broken my hand, tore up both my ankles, but I love it," he says.

Down here, it's clear he's not the only one.



D.J. Llewellyn/Observer

Yash Presswalla teaches a few of his young students the basics of skateboarding at Danforth Church.

■ EDITORIALS

In praise of drivers

Who wants to be stuck behind a car that isn't moving? Or a too-timid driver who steadfastly refuses to enter an intersection under any circumstances, blocking traffic?

Yes, it sounds irritating. How about crossing the street in front of a moving car, in a snowstorm, unsure if the car will stop for the traffic light telling you it's your turn to walk? Now, imagine if those cars had no drivers. That driverless cars are coming down the pike is inevitable. We have been promised they won't be a threat to other drivers, and all but guarantee safer roads for everyone else – pedestrians, cyclists, commercial vehicles and first responders. We have been assured of how liberating this technology will be to seniors who cannot drive, as if they couldn't be passengers as things are. Toronto city council has climbed into Google's passenger seat, it seems. From Uber's aggressive approach to its transportation business it's partly funded by Google to the "smart" neighbourhood planned by the tech behemoth for Toronto's eastern central waterfront, to the deployment of self-driving vehicles on Toronto streets last August, our city has become a veritable incubator for Google endeavours and data-gathering.

Kathleen Wynne's Liberal government has proposed accelerating its 10-year plan to phase in driverless vehicles. Her government is even open to platooning, in which commercial vehicles form artificial-intelligence controlled convoys.

Nationally, a Senate subcommittee has expressed concerns about safety precautions and cyber-security issues such as hacking the driverless cars which already communicate with each other. Ultimately, these cars will be programmed either to stop for obstructions or to make life or death decisions on our roads.

There are related concerns. Will irate pedestrians, cyclists and road-raging drivers be able to vandalize driverless cars, rendering them dangerous or immovable until the vehicles are taken somewhere for repairs? Will cars with AI designed for suburban America have trouble navigating Toronto streets with its aggressive drivers and often scofflaw pedestrians and cyclists?

While there may be drivers on stand-by in Toronto's self-driving vehicles, the goal is to have AI take over all aspects of operation. As it stands, there are difficulties associated with the human-AI partnership behind the wheel. Ian Reagan, representing the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, an American organization, said there have been problems when "drivers can fail to notice when systems reach their limits, and can have trouble retaking control of the vehicle, especially in emergency situations."

Just because driverless cars are on their way, doesn't mean we are obliged to rush them to our streets. Following the brief Waymo-Uber civil trial last week, emails surfaced featuring ousted Uber CEO Travis Kalanick claiming "we need ... to take all the shortcuts we can" and "I just see this as a race we need to win" with regard to getting Uber's self-driving cars to market before the competition.

Ontarians don't owe Uber anything. Let's not join the rush simply because Silicon Valley millionaires want us to hurry.

~ Erik Twilight

Time to modernize

Under the helm of Mayor John Tory, Toronto has been swept up in streetscaping, the process of upgrading infrastructure and the modernization of roadways and sidewalks for better use.

East York will reap the benefits of the overall project, as the community will receive millions in funding to conduct key road and safety improvements over the next two years. Due to the devastating floods East York has endured in the past, the project will include the construction of a rain garden, additional sewers and the realignment of water mains.

These improvements will help ensure that local residents and business don't again see the costly damage associated with flooding.

The project will also see an additional increase to pedestrian safety efforts through the reconfiguration of the O'Connor Drive and Woodbine Avenue and O'Connor and St. Clair Avenue intersections, improvements geared towards creating a safer neighbourhood.

The entire revitalization project, while pricey at an estimated \$17 million, is necessary for the future of the East York community. It's particularly important to the development of local businesses, which in the past have been negatively affected by flooding. The project follows in the footsteps of major metropolitan cities like New York City and fellow Toronto neighbourhoods such as Roncesvalles Village and the Annex. Streetscaping will see East York residents receive the necessary improvements needed for their community to thrive.

Toronto has had a successful history with similar infrastructure modernization projects. In 2010, Roncesvalles Avenue underwent a streetscaping process that saw the elimination of parking spaces and the expansion of pedestrian sidewalks, and last fall saw the permanent addition of bike lanes on Bloor Street.

Both adjustments changed each neighbourhood for the better, allowing for safer and more accessible means of moving around for pedestrians and cyclists alike.

East York needs similar improvements in order to become one of the top neighbourhoods in Toronto.

~ Daniel Samuel

■ COLUMNS

Putting down the phone

Are you addicted to your phone?

You've asked yourself this question in one form or another. Your phone is undoubtedly a productivity-enhancing, communication-enabling, information-processing, knowledge database of a machine.

It's also a hub for platforms and all of their business models centre on holding as much of your time as possible.

I recently came across something called the Smartphone Compulsion Test.

By answering 15 yes-or-no questions, you'll find out if your phone usage is in the normal range or if you should consider seeing a mental health professional specializing in behavioural addiction.

Yes, that's an actual survey result, and I achieved it. Granted, the survey was created by David Greenfield, who runs the Center for Internet and Technology Addiction.

Prominent figures partially responsible for our smartphone dependence have also expressed concern.

Apple CEO Tim Cook, Tristan Harris, former Google executive. Even the head of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg,

has said spending less time on Facebook is a good thing. But he also just launched a Facebook chat app designed for children.

Discussions on cutting back smartphone usage often take the slant of "you have a problem, and so you need to deny yourself something you like."

That's not always the best motivation. Think of it this way: for all the time you spend, non-productively, on your phone, you could be doing better things. Things you've been putting off; things you haven't had the chance to try. Work. Or relax. Whatever.

Scrolling through tweets or photos can keep your brain in a state of constant distraction. It's hard to stomach sometimes, but bore-

dom encourages you to be creative. The absence of your phone can force you to think deliberately.

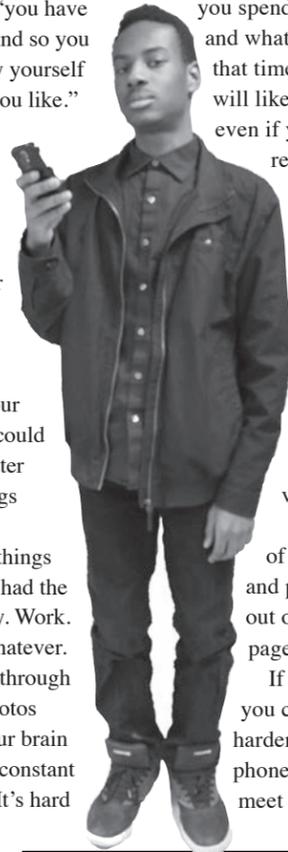
The first step is awareness. There are apps that accurately record just how much time you spend on your phone, and what apps you spend that time on. The numbers will likely be surprising even if you brushed off the results of the Smartphone Compulsion Test.

Start with small steps. Keep your phone on silent mode. Turn off notifications for social media, or delete apps and use browser versions.

Reduce the number of downloaded games, and put remaining ones out of sight of the home page.

If you can do that, you can try something harder, like putting your phone away when you meet friends, family and workmates.

You get the drift.



Fran Mbadiwe

No more Logan Paul, please

YouTube finally demonetized Logan Paul's videos.

Unfortunately, it's only temporary. And we're partially to blame.

Logan Paul, a 22-year-old YouTube star with over 16 million subscribers, has been under fire for his Dec. 31 video of Japan's "suicide forest" and, more recently, for tasing a dead rat.

He has shown that, despite revealing outrageous content — including a dead body — in his vlog, he is able to make money through viewership and subscribers.

But why? Though many purportedly hate what he does, a lot of us still watch his content. Researchers such as Bridget Rubenking at the Nicholson School

of Communication at the University of Central Florida and psychiatrist Dr. David Henderson point to biological functions that explain why we cannot look away from tragic or disgusting content in entertainment media.

Although there are evolutionary and biological reasons for why we continue to watch controversial content, they are no excuse for how long YouTube took to remove advertising from Paul's videos.

At the core, when Paul gains viewers and subscribers, YouTube ultimately benefits in revenue.

It's a business. Why would it want to remove a source of money?

Ariel Bardin, YouTube's vice-president of product management, admitted in a blogpost that the site's response to controversial content was sometimes "slow and didn't always address

our broader community's concerns."

YouTube is aware of the concentration of contentious content on its channel, but it still provides an excuse.

In the blogpost, Bardin chalks up YouTube's lack of a better response to scandalous videos to its belief "in the freedom of expression," and "a responsibility to protect the entire community of creators, viewers and advertisers from these rare but often damaging situations."

That's fine, but it's too late. YouTube continued to allow a creator to provide content despite a pattern of reckless behaviour.

The choice to upload a video of a dead body in Aokigahara Forest in Japan should have been enough to suspend this creator indefinitely.

That didn't happen. We must take it upon ourselves to be aware of careless creators and simply ignore their content, without thinking twice.

So, if you know a video was created by Logan Paul, don't press play.



Louise Palma

You've come a long way, Danforth



City of Toronto Archives



Jennifer Teixeira / The Observer

The view of Danforth Avenue looking east has changed substantially in the last 100 years. In the photo on the left, the road is unpaved and buildings are few and far between. Today (right), the area is much more built up and features a variety of stores and restaurants for the community's use.

TDSB helps ready students with disabilities for work

By KASY PERTAB
The Observer

The Toronto District School Board is taking action to help youths with disabilities transition into the workforce after completing their education.

In a recent story in the Toronto Star, high school graduates with disabilities talked about not having confidence or the proper skills when entering the workplace. The TDSB says it has programs to make this transition easier for them.

Every student with a disability will have an individual education plan, said Lori Moore, centrally assigned principal for special education at the TDSB, in an interview with The Observer.

That includes transition planning, in which the students are informed of their expectations prior to leaving secondary school.

"The students would work with the school staff to see what the exit will look like from school, and the entry into the next pathway," Moore said.

Many young people with disabilities can feel uneasy or discouraged when diving into work after school.

Susanne Dorder, disabilities counselor for the Centre for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at Centennial College's East York campus, has come across a number of students who feel this way.

"It can be scary because there are stereotypes and stigmas associated with people who have disabilities," Dorder said. "So the students have that fear of judgment, fear of being unable to perform."

When asked how schools could better prepare students for post-secondary life, Dorder said it helps if they know what they will be facing.

"It's important to help students be aware of what's out there," she said. "What's also good are programs that provide equitable studies that will help them to be aware of what exactly they're walking into."

Fortunately, the TDSB has programs to do just that, Moore said. Schools are equipped with pre-employment co-op placements for the students to aid with the transition.

In these placements, students can discover what kind of work they want to do and how to make the process go smoothly. Accommodations would be made for each student, whether they have a learning or physical disability.

"Quite often, students who have been in a co-op placement will lead to employment post-graduation," Moore said.

The TDSB also features Centres of Innovation for Skills and Technologies, where all students, including those with disabilities, develop skills to make it easier for their lives post-secondary.

Investigation ongoing: Police

Cont'd. from page 1

Cres. property in Leaside linked to Bruce McArthur's landscaping business, Artistic Design.

A portion of the drain removed from in front of the property has been sent for testing, Gray said.

Mallory Crescent has been the object of media and police attention

during the month-long investigation of the residential property that yielded six sets of partial human remains.

Two weeks ago, police officially identified the remains of Andrew Kinsman, a man who had been reported missing last spring, among those found in planters that had been removed from the residence for forensic examination.



Cheryl Darling/Leaside Curling Club

Team Epping poses with the Recharge With Milk Tankard it won Feb. 4 in Huntsville.

It's about Epping time, team

By CLAIRE MCINROY
The Observer

Team Ontario has found a home in East York.

Leaside Curling Club's own Team Epping hit, drew and swept its way to the top earlier this month in Huntsville, winning the Ontario Recharge with Milk Tankard trophy over 17-time champion Glenn Howard, 5-1.

This was skip John Epping's 11th appearance at the Tankard. The team will go on to represent team Ontario at this year's Brier. It will be its first appearance at a Brier, and a first for Leaside.

"(It) was instant excitement and joy," Epping said of the team's Feb. 4 victory. "I've been close many times before, and it's nice to finally get to the Brier."

Team Epping will have a chance to represent not only Team Ontario, but the whole of Leaside.

"Team Epping is not the only Ontario champion from the club, but it is the first Leaside team to win the Men's Tankard and advance to the national Brier," said Leaside Curling Club general manager Paivi Liitela. "(It's) great for Leaside."

Members of the club are excited that one of their own has come so far.

"When I heard John had won, I was absolutely ecstatic," Liitela said. "(We're) so proud of the team."

As one of two curling clubs in East York (the East York Curling Club is the other), it's no surprise that this is exciting news for the community.

"Curling is already tremendously popular in Leaside and East York," Liitela said. "This result, combined with the additional coverage the sport will receive during the Olympics, will only bring more attention to the sport." (Canada won a gold medal last week in mixed doubles curling.)

Along with skip Epping, the team comprises third Mat Camm, second Patrick Janssen and lead Tim March. Team Epping has become well known at the club, as well as in the community.

"Leaside's response has been overwhelmingly positive," Liitela said. "John is well known at the club, having been involved in numerous clinics run by our education committee, as well as doing private lessons."

Bringing the trophy back to Leaside is something Epping is looking forward to.

"It means everything, really," he said. "The club has been so good to our team and accommodating. Every time I step in the club it's a warm feeling from the members. We really appreciate their support and can't wait to make them proud at the Brier."

That feeling is mutual.

"John is such an ambassador for the sport and for the club," Liitela said. "He and the entire team have the full support of the membership."

The team will be heading to Regina to represent Ontario at the 2018 Brier, March 3-11. The winner of the Brier will represent Canada at the 2018 World Curling Championships in Las Vegas, March 31-April 8.

Lawsuit keeps pressure on for new French high school

By DAVID LYNCH
The Observer

A new French-language high school in the east end of Toronto is closer to becoming a reality, but that doesn't mean everyone is content.

Though the province has allocated \$16 million for the school, a coalition representing parents from the Beaches-East York area is keeping alive a lawsuit against the government.

The action is the result of parents wanting a new French-language school in their area that is equal to their English-language counterparts.

"We want to make sure the school is built, so we'll keep the pressure on until the school is constructed," said lawyer Nicolas Rouleau, who is representing the parents coalition.

Rouleau doesn't necessarily want it to go that far.

"We're giving the government a chance to respond to it and we're giving the government a chance to provide us a school without using the

court system," he said.

Conseil scolaire Viamonde, the French public school board for southwestern Ontario, believes the neighbourhood definitely has a need.

"All the students living in the east end of Toronto don't have access to a secondary school, so this is why we want to open a secondary school in the Danforth region," said Claire Francoeur, Viamonde's director of communications and marketing.

The school is expected to have around 500 students, which for this area would be quite large, she said.

Right now, Viamonde's preferred option is the former Greenwood Secondary School, at 24 Mountjoy Ave. just south of the Danforth. The building is still owned by the Toronto District School Board.

Extensive renovations would be needed to get the building up to the standards of Viamonde and today's standards for schools, said the board's chair, Jean-François L'Heureux.

"The building will not look the

same at all," he said.

With renovations and the time needed to acquire the school, the opening could be some ways off.

"As we see it right now, the soonest is if everything goes smoothly and fast," Francoeur said. "If it's not, it could take even longer."

While Viamonde isn't directly involved with the lawsuit, "We do believe that the pressure the parents are putting on the government is a good thing," L'Heureux said.

Even if the school becomes a reality, however, it's only part of the solution.

"We want to ensure that a) the school is provided and b) when the school is provided, it's equal to what the English language students have," said parents-coalition lawyer Rouleau.

"We've agreed to hold off on moving forward with the lawsuit, for now. We're not dropping it altogether, but we're not pushing it hard."



Kasy Pertab/Toronto Observer

Political hotcakes

Mayor John Tory and Don Valley West councillor Jon Burnside help flip pancakes during a Mardi Gras/pancake supper held recently at St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church in East York.



Rashida Powankumar/Toronto Observer

Deena DelZotto and Rachel Kimel speak about the Bowery Project at Leaside Public Library in East York.

Founders of Bowery Project turning vacant lots into food

By RASHIDA POWANKUMAR
The Observer

Rachel Kimel and Deena DelZotto, co-founders of the Bowery Project, love working with plants.

They started the non-profit organization because they were interested in growing food and educating the public about healthy eating. The Evergreen Brick Works and greenhouse, which specializes in "sustainable practices," was one of the spaces that inspired them.

"Bowery" actually means "farm" in Dutch. So we wanted to come up with a name not too simplistic as "green in the city" or "green spaces downtown," Kimel said at a meeting at the Leaside Public Library in East York on Feb. 8.

"In New York, the Bowery was the road that led from the settlements to the farms. (That's) why we named our project after the New York City street."

The Bowery Project would not be what it is today without milk crates. All of its produce is grown in "re-purposed milk crates that sit above the land," its website explains.

The crates are light and mobile, making it easy for anyone to lift.

"A farm of up to 5,000 crates can be disas-

sembled and relocated within 24 hours," which aligns with the mission to "create opportunities for urban agriculture through the temporary use of vacant lots."

Environmental sustainability is important to DelZotto, a mother of three, who explained the importance of thinking twice before eating unhealthy meals.

"I think that once you have a child, you realize that everything that goes into their mouths becomes a part of their body," she said. "I think you become more aware of the process because you see how it grows. Maybe you will eat it and want to taste it."

The Bowery Project has several sources of funding, The Ontario Trillium Foundation, fundraising events and chefs among them. It benefits many diverse communities, including a Toronto Community Housing neighbourhood for single mothers for which Kimel and DelZotto's organization helps provide three healthy meals a day.

The founders of the project are looking for summer students and volunteers to continue educating the public and turning more vacant lots into farms. If you're interested, you can find more information at www.boweryproject.ca/what-you-can-do.

Michael Garron Hospital redevelopment now underway

By JOSEPH RANNI
The Observer

After years of planning, work is finally beginning on the redevelopment of East York's Michael Garron Hospital.

The preliminary step involves the relocation of the public parking lot to Sammon Avenue, west of Coxwell Avenue, which is now underway.

The project's official start will happen in the spring, when the E wing and the F wing podium will be demolished to construct a

new eight-storey patient care centre at the corner of Coxwell and Sammon avenues.

In 2021, the Ken and Marilyn Thomson Patient Care Centre and four underground levels of parking should be completed.

Also scheduled for that year:

- the demolition of the A, B, C, F wings and the D-wing podium
- renovation of the rest of the existing spaces
- construction of the front entrance; some landscaping

The project will add around 550,000

square feet of space to the hospital. Another 100,000 square feet of existing space will be renovated.

"The contract is valued at \$411 million," said Hannah Ward, co-ordinator, Corporate Communications, Redevelopment and Accreditation at the hospital. It was awarded this month to EllisDon Infrastructure MGH Inc.

Several of the hospital's historic features will be preserved, including the stained-glass memorial windows in the main Coxwell lobby; memorial plaques in the lobby; and

cornerstones erected during the many building phases. Formerly known as Toronto East General Hospital, the facility opened in 1929.

"The design embraces our rich history, incorporates best practices and paves the way for our continued success delivering outstanding care," said Sarah Downey, the hospital's president and CEO.

The work is expected to be completed in 2023-2024.

Michael Garron Hospital will stay fully functional during the redevelopment process.