



■ COMMUNITY



Robin Dhanju /// Observer

Get your game face on

Hailey Blum (left) and Claire Wong, both 10, play on the Nintendo 64 at Game On 2.0, an interactive event running at the Ontario Science Centre until Sept. 2. It looks at the evolution of gaming, from vintage Pong to virtual reality, and visitors can try out over 150 games. See story on page 2.

In pain?
This man
wants to
help you

By THOMAS MORRISON
The Observer

Sam Mellace is on a mission. So while his storefront at 680 Danforth Ave. could easily be mistaken for just another doctors' office, the New Age Medical Clinic may soon also offer something that those others can't: medical marijuana.

Mellace's clinic, on Danforth near Pape Avenue, opened last week. The sign outside says it specializes in "pain management and family medicine." And inside, it looks like any general practice, with a waiting area and examination rooms. One difference is the prominent portrait of the late NDP leader and Toronto-Danforth MP, Jack Layton.

"Jack Layton, to me, was a gentleman of gentlemen," Mellace said. "He listened to me and agreed that our... society is being destroyed by pharmaceutical medications."

Mellace said that he became addicted to traditional painkillers himself after a car accident and that his only real relief has been from medical marijuana. He's a government-licensed user and grower and he's lobbied for more liberal access to it — even lighting up in the House of Commons three years ago to make his



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Flemingdon residents ready for the 'St. Dennis Diet'

Dangerous intersection target of plan by city, Toronto Public Health to curb collisions

By TICHONA TAPAMBWA
The Observer

Flemingdon Park residents have weighed in on city plans to tame car traffic at the St. Dennis Drive and Deauville Lane intersection.

The plans were considered at a community meeting March 19, after broadcast reports identified the converging streets on a list of the

100 most dangerous intersections in Toronto.

The proposal's main goal is to create a safer environment for neighbourhood pedestrians and reduce difficulties for motorists and cyclists at the intersection. It's labelled the St. Dennis Diet and locals, city councillors and representatives of Toronto Public Health in attendance were optimistic about the initiative.

Data shows that between 2007 and 2011, there were seven pedestrian collisions along the intersection.

The lack of parking nearby was also discussed.

"It's such a wide open roadway



■ LO

and the actual numbers per day and per hour for vehicles was so much lower than what's being provided in terms of space," said Janet Lo, project officer at the City of Toronto.

"We did see illegal daytime parking, so we found that there was a need for a parking system."



■ PARKER

The proposal includes repainting lane markings on St. Dennis to make better use of the space by adding dedicated left turn lanes at intersection, two bike lanes and on-street parking.

"We've come to realize that not everybody has a car," said Ward 26/Don Valley West councillor John Parker.

"We are re-examining all our road systems to find ways to turn them back to the way they used to be when they worked for everybody."

The project is still in its infancy, with the focus on raising awareness before it comes before council.

WHAT'S ON
THE MENU?

■ Lane markings on St. Dennis Drive will be repainted

■ Dedicated left turn lanes will be added at the intersection of St. Dennis and Deauville Lane

■ Two bike lanes will be introduced

■ To address the problem of illegal daytime parking, on-street parking will be created

■ All of this is aimed at keeping cars from hitting pedestrians

POLICE BRIEFS

No injuries in home invasion

Police are looking for a man who burst into an East York home waving a gun on Tuesday. No one was injured in the incident, which occurred in an apartment near Dawes Road and Chapman Avenue. The suspect is described as white, around 30 years old and weighing about 160 pounds. Anyone with information is asked to call 54 Division at 416-808-5400.

~ Erika Marucci

Keep things safe during Earth Hour

By THERESA SPOHN
The Observer

Tomorrow, East York residents will join people around the world to celebrate Earth Hour by turning off their lights at 8:30 p.m.

But Toronto Fire Services has asked that you don't forget about safety while expressing your environmental concern.

Many households use candles when the lights go out, but TFS encourages everyone to use a battery-operated flashlight instead.

If you can't resist the warm glow of candles then TFS recommends you follow these safety tips:

- Never leave a lit candle unattended.
- Extinguish all candles when you leave the room.
- Avoid using candles in bedrooms.
- Keep candles one metre away from anything flammable.
- Keep matches and candles out of the reach of children.
- Use candleholders that won't tip.
- Use a candleholder with a glass shade or chimney.
- Extinguish candles when they burn to within five centimetres/two inches of the holder base.



Bernard Toney // Observer

These are some of the clinicians and administrative staff people helping Toronto East General Hospital keep its "Baby Friendly" designation.

Babies come first at local hospital

By BERNARD TONEY
The Observer

Toronto East General Hospital's Baby Friendly designation has been renewed.

In 2007, TEGH became the first hospital in Toronto to be awarded the honour by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF. It's one of three hospitals in the province to have achieved this designation.

The Baby Friendly program

is recognized throughout the world for the level of care and support it offers breastfeeding mothers.

Linda Young is the director of the Maternal and Newborn Child program at TEGH. She provides leadership and support to ensure the program runs smoothly.

"We really believe in supporting mothers to breastfeed and the importance of breastfeeding," she said. "Staff are really committed to helping

mothers during the 24 to 48 hours that they are in the hospital."

According to the TEGH website, "94 per cent of mothers who register for birth indicate they want to breastfeed exclusively, but (the hospital) supports all mothers in their infant-feeding choice."

Registered nurses at the hospital are prepared to help new mothers with any questions or concerns they may have.

"We offer support on teach-

ing the mothers, so they see the lactation consultant," Young said. "We teach mothers how to know that the baby is getting enough milk. We also teach mothers what's important in terms of taking care of themselves."

The hospital offers many other programs to help mothers with their newborns. For more information, go to www.TEGH.on.ca and search for Breastfeeding Centre for Families.

Art will look at past, present, future

By WHITNEY REYES
The Observer

A community-inspired mural will brighten up Coxwell station as part of renovations over the next two years.

Members of the surrounding area met at the East York Civic Centre on Feb. 26 to discuss upcoming changes to Coxwell subway station, including the mural.

The artwork will be done by City on the Move, Young Artists in Transit East, a collaborative program among the TTC, the City of Toronto, Children's Peace Theatre and Arts for Children and Youth, that allows youth to express their creativity while learning leadership and art skills.

All of the artwork will be based on the community's concepts of past, present and future views of their neighbourhood.

Councillor Mary Fragedakis (Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth) spoke to attendees about her support of the program, the arts and transit itself.

"For me, public transit is more than just moving people from here to there, but it's actually an integral part of city building," she said. "When we bring art right into the building process that in-



Whitney Reyes // Observer

Nadira Pattison, manager of arts services for the City of Toronto, consults with members of the East York community about the art that will be used during the renovation of Coxwell subway station.

volves local children, we're actually saying something important and exciting about the kind of city that we want to live in."

Jim Bravo, a mentor for the program who worked on the St. James Town mural, was at the event to meet the youth artists and discuss images that were submitted. He said while the design is a secret, he has an idea in mind.

"It's supposed to infuse what I think might work with

what the public definitely hopes will work," he said. "Something that involves people in the present peering into the past and the future."

He also talked about the effectiveness of the program for both youth and the public.

"It's sort of a two-tier project, because on the one hand it's an image for the community, a mural, but on the second it's also a chance for the youth to actually learn." While the mural is certainly

a positive for the people involved, it also serves a practical purpose.

Councillor Janet Davis (Ward 31/Beaches-East York) spoke about trying to make the Coxwell renovations as pleasant as possible.

"We all know that sometimes we have to look at ugly boarding that gets graffitied and damaged," she said. "We will have an opportunity to beautify that station during the period of construction."

Pong was just the beginning

Exhibition takes a look at evolution, history of gaming

By ROBIN DHANJU
The Observer

Want to walk the streets of Moscow while your feet are firmly planted in East York?

The Barbican Centre's Game On 2.0 exhibition has made its way to the Ontario Science Centre. Children and adults can experience the history of gaming, and the future, by "walking" through the streets of Moscow inside a virtuosphere.

Mathieu Ranger, spokesperson for the event and self-described gamer explained that the exhibition's virtual reality ball allows visitors to immerse themselves in an alternate reality, and was used to showcase Moscow's streets for its Olympic bid.

"Basically, it's a big hamster ball," he said. "As the visitor goes in and walks around, the ball turns. The visitor puts on virtual reality goggles and as you walk through this hamster ball, you're traversing this virtual environment."

The exhibition originated at the Barbican Centre in England and is designed to showcase the evolution of gaming. By highlighting the development from Pong to newer generation consoles, Ranger believes the exhibit appeals to people of all ages.

"Families are going to come to the exhibition with their kids, which is great, because there's so much nostalgia. There's a lot of cross-generational appeal because parents can share stories with their kids, and kids can show off to their parents what they've been playing."

Sonia Quirin attended the exhibit with her kids Ella, 9, and Delano, 9. She believes playing video games comes naturally to her children.

"I'm always amazed that they know how to work these machines, although we have very limited exposure at home and it just comes as a third hand to them," Quirin said. "I'm here, and I want to teach them what I know, because Pac-Man is my generation and they're just doing their own thing and I'm running behind them."

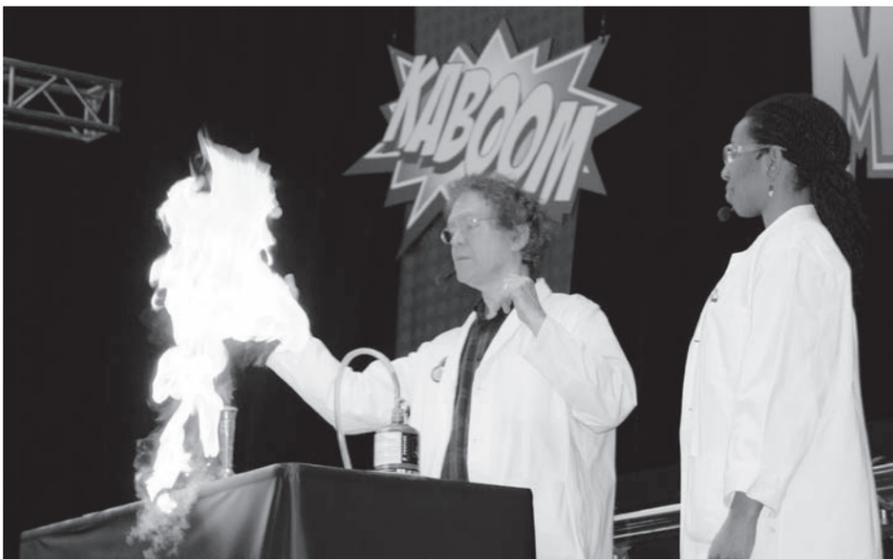
If you want to get your hands on the original Donkey Kong arcade game or experience walking in virtual reality, the exhibit runs until Sept. 2. For more information about the centre and the exhibition, visit www.OntarioScienceCentre.com.



Bernard Toney // Observer

They 'break' for science

There was something for everyone during March Break at the Ontario Science Centre. Above: Alex, 10 and Abby, 7, learn about snakes that can be found in Ontario. Top right: the Ahitan family enjoys the show. Bottom right: Researcher-programmers Donna Francis and David Sugarman set the stage on fire — literally.



Change coming from Ottawa

Cont'd. from page 1

political point. And there is change in the air around the way medicinal marijuana is distributed in Canada. Under Ottawa's proposed amendment to the rules, the federal government would give distribution licences to clinics, like Mellace's, rather than distribute the marijuana itself, through Health Canada.

If the new system goes ahead, Mellace would be able to dispense marijuana to patients by April, 2014.

But he cautions that nothing is set in stone.

"It was an announcement, and

that's as far as I take it," Mellace said. "It can change. Chances are it will. But it won't stop us from helping people and getting them off their addictions" to conventional pharmaceuticals.

The clinic is already advertising what it calls "harm reduction" through the treatment of drug addiction and pre-emptive drug counseling. It's also promoting holistic "alternative services."

"We have psychologists, dieticians, psychiatrists, and interventionists on board," Mellace said. "We provide services that not many clinics provide. We do same-day blood service, X-rays, and ultrasounds."

Although it only opened last week, the clinic is already working on a backlog of more than 400 appointments for the various doctors.

But the one thing the clinic is not, Mellace emphasizes, is a prescription mill for conventional drugs.

"If you want opiate narcotics, don't come here," he said.



For more East York coverage, please visit us online at torontoobserver.ca

Olympic rower talks naturopathy

By TICHONA TAPAMBWA
The Observer

Three-time Olympic rower and 2012 Olympic silver medalist Rachelle Viinberg was the latest moderator of the Big Carrot's weekly wellness series.

"Being here represents a sample size of the population and it's really nice to talk to people about what they want to hear," said Viinberg, who is also a licensed naturopathic doctor at Omega Health and Fitness in the Beaches.

The welcoming atmosphere of the Danforth natural food market's seminar room on March 14 sparked discussions about weight management, exercise regimens and even methods of overcoming constipation.

Viinberg's athletic background provided tips and advice for the inquisitive attendees.

"Healthy weight loss is hard work, there is no easy fix," Viinberg told the packed room.

She prompted a healthy dialogue

giving way to testimonials from guests about their own weight struggles. Maria, who lost 70 pounds in the last year after doctors discovered a hernia, shared her perspective.

"Weight loss is important to me right now so I would like to take in any information I can," she said. "It's also close to home and free and nice to get hints for how to be healthier."

The lighter half of the discussion came when Viinberg explained how she overcame her nerves on game day,

noting rowers train years for a race that lasts six minutes.

"We had 50,000 people watching us and millions around the world, so if you think about it you are going to get freaked out," she added. "We were so consistent three months going into that race that we just locked into auto pilot and pretended it was a practice."

She hopes the determination that won her and seven other women the silver medal inspires guests at the Big Carrot in their pursuit of better health.

'Prolific' artist's work on display at library

By KRISTIN ELIASON
The Observer

A diverse collection of paintings by iconic Canadian artist Mary E. Wrinch is on display in East York — but not for long.

The East York Foundation is exhibiting the works. The show is located in the John S. Ridout Auditorium inside the S. Walter Stewart library branch at 170 Memorial Park Ave.

Ray White, chair of the foundation, noted that community residents contributed many of the pieces making up the foundation's collection.

"I'd encourage all (East York residents) to go because it's part of our history," he said.

"The forefathers of the borough had the foresight to donate (the paint-

ings) so that the people could enjoy them."

Mary E. Wrinch (1877-1969) emigrated from England to Toronto in 1885. Over many years, using a variety of techniques, she produced ink drawings, oil paintings, graphites, colour blocks, woodcuts and linoprints, all of which can be seen.

"I think (the collection) shows a varied group of art by a single artist and she was very unique in the way she did her artwork," White said. "Mary Wrinch was a prolific and famous Canadian artist."

Wrinch's work captures landscapes familiar to many Canadians, including the Scarborough Bluffs and Muskoka cottage country.

The exhibition runs until this coming Tuesday, March 26.



Tarah Bleier // Observer

Neither rain nor snow...

An East York cyclist was treated to both during an unexpected snowstorm earlier this week. Never fear, spring is here. (Officially, at least!)

■ MENTAL HEALTH

Stress levels skyrocketing for students

Survey of high school students reveals teens are grappling with anxiety and depression regularly

By ERIN CASSIDY
The Observer

In a new survey focusing on high school students, one in seven say that they “feel like crying.”

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) conducted a survey of nearly 103,000 students in grades 7-12 in 2011 and released its findings last month. The results indicate today’s junior high and high school students are experiencing high stress levels, with 73 per cent saying they “worry about their future.”

Sheila Cary-Meagher, the TDSB trustee for Ward 16/Beaches-East York, said this was the first time questions about mental health were asked in a student census.



■ Sheila Cary-Meagher

“Is it surprising? Well, on some levels it’s surprising,” she said. “But I don’t know how they felt six years ago, when the survey was done last” without questions about emotional states.

Students are dealing with stresses including anxiety, depression and starting at new schools. So Cary-Meagher thinks it is perfectly logical they should be feeling somewhat unsettled.

She added schools in East York have programs to help those in need, and guidance counsellors on staff.

Cary-Meagher mentioned East York Alternative, a school that those who have dropped out typically choose when resuming their studies.

“They dropped out of school and they decide to get their diploma,” she said. “They’ve often got a lot of stuff to deal with. It’s a reason why they go to an alternative school, because it’s smaller and there’s a more immediate availability of a response of a teacher.”

The study’s release may open the eyes of many to the problem of student stress. Parents and teachers can help by just being there to talk and understand.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Be aware of your child’s behaviours and emotions.
- Be available and open to talk and listen.
- Encourage them to tell you if things start to get overwhelming.
- Remember to show them constant love and support.
- Make sure your children know how to get in touch with the Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868).



Image below courtesy of Devin Horne

Rajesh Sammy /// Observer



(Above) A blend of new and old “art” at Pape Station, photographed from the opposite platform.

(Left) When the artful renovation of Pape Station is complete, it should resemble this digital rendering.

Pape Station gets a facelift

By RAJESH SAMMY
The Observer

It’s approaching the final stages of construction and almost complete. After three years, the TTC’s Pape Station is taking shape.

Since opening in 1966, the station never got a fitting facelift — but in 2009 the Toronto Transit Commission started revitalizing its aging infrastructure.

The TTC worked alongside Canadian artist Allen Harding MacKay to design art for the station. MacKay previously created art for the department of National Defence depicting Soma-

lia in 1993 and Afghanistan in 2002.

According to the TTC, the overall vision behind the art is to create images reflecting “variations that, through slices of time, act as reminders of past moments in the life and context of this public space.”

“The aim of this art is to integrate it into the station,” said Devin Horne, senior community liaison officer for the TTC.

Most of the art is digital glass-mirror images etched into glass and put onto the platform, while some of the tiles have been substituted with art created by MacKay. These works of art act as a wall tile and help create a new persona for Pape Station.

The art that has been put up on the station is “a part of the installation of the tiles and the rest of the art will be done on street level, alongside the outer building of the art,” says Horne.

Since the installation of some pieces there has been positive feedback and it has gathered attention among TTC riders. Horne said that while on the TTC, he has personally seen how riders have responded. The art has created new life for an aging station and along with its fresh minimalist look, will likely lead the way in artistic designs.

The entire project will be completed this fall.

We need to ‘up our game,’ expert says

By JOSH GENEREUX
The Observer

An executive with Toronto’s “MaRS” medical research corporation visited East York last month and told a college audience that Canada is failing in innovation and more needs to be done to improve its current 14th-place standing among innovator-nations like Japan, Switzerland and Austria.

The director of Strategic Partnerships at MaRS, Earl Miller, was at Centennial College’s East York campus and addressed students on the importance of being innovative in business and in everyday life. Miller sees this as a huge problem and called on students to help.

“What does this say? Well, as an innovation nation, we need to up our game,” he said.

“That’s a complex process. Part of this

is simply upping our game by understanding what innovation is, why it is important to our society and how it makes a difference in our lives. That’s where you guys come in.”

Miller said Canada must increase its production of items in high demand from consumers such as cellphones and computers.

“What innovation boils down to is, we make these things in our society, which creates valuable jobs, which creates better communities and better quality of life because of our involvement at the front end,” he said.

“As a developed nation, we need to do better. On the issues of innovation, we are not a leader.”

Miller’s solution is an entrepreneurship revolution. He believes young people tapping into their ideas and dreams can help turn Canada’s fortunes around.



Josh Genereux /// Observer

Earl Miller, who helps manage MaRS, says Canada is failing in innovation.

Catching up with the East York running club

By **AARON NILES**
The Observer

While walking along the Danforth, you might see a group of people running in a pack. They are not running away from danger or fleeing a crime. They're the East York Toronto Runners.

"It's a chance for runners to get together and gives an opportunity for people who want to do different things," said Becca Miller-Marans, one of the group's organizers.

The club started in October 2009 and has since become a fixture in the community.

"A lot of people who have joined us have said that they have seen us running on the street or waiting outside Starbucks," Miller-Marans said. "So they see us and want to join."

The organization has made some changes to become more attractive to non-competitive runners.

"We just started up a beginners' run on Saturdays. We were finding that people

would see our runs and be intimidated. We made the change so people who want to join the group would come out, give it a try and have a good time."

The group also offers plenty for runners looking for competition. On Sundays, it holds 15-21 km runs, and some members participate in marathons. Last weekend, the club had a team compete in the annual Achilles Canada St. Patrick's Day 5K run.

"We're planning on doing the Around the Bay road race in Hamilton on the 24th. That is a 30-km race in which we have 16 or 17 runners participating," Miller-Marans said.

Despite the exercise and competition, it isn't running that keeps the group together.

"In the beginning, for most people it's the exercise, but as you get to know the people in the group it becomes the camaraderie and friendships," she said. "Even if I moved out of the area I would still continue to come back to this group for the friendships."



Aaron Niles // Observer

(Left to right) Jennifer Rideway, Paul Kavanagh, Mic Whitehorn, Oscar Strawcznsk and Patrick Mulrooney are all dedicated runners.



Theresa Spohn // Observer

(Left to right) Store manager Gizella Feteke, city councillor Mary Fragedakis, LCBO president and CEO Bob Peters, and senior vice-president Bob Clevely toast the opening of the Danforth LCBO.

It's bubbly time at the LCBO

New Danforth store offers collection of Greek wines, spirits

By **THERESA SPOHN**
The Observer

The March 12 opening of the long-anticipated new LCBO store on the Danforth was celebrated in style.

Not only was Bob Peters in attendance — in his capacity as president and CEO of the Liquor Control Board — but so was city councillor Mary Fragedakis of Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth and Marlene Stephens, the Toronto chapter president of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD).

What was a MADD chapter head doing at the opening of a liquor store?

Peters told the small crowd in attendance that the LCBO has a longstanding commitment to responsible drinking and to MADD. In turn, Stephens expressed her organization's appreciation of LCBO support.

Funds raised by LCBO staff will be used in MADD's school assembly program, which teaches young people about the dangers of impaired driving, with an emphasis on "making responsible choices," according to Stephens.

The new 13,000 square-foot store is located at 200 Danforth Ave., at Broadview, on the north side of the street — the site previously occupied by the Albany Medical Clinic.

The store is twice as large as the former one on the south

side of the Danforth, according to the LCBO. Peters explained that the new store is part of the LCBO's plan to offer excellent customer service to all Ontarians.

"New and renovated stores like this contribute to high levels of customer satisfaction and have helped the LCBO deliver 18 consecutive record-dividend transfers to the province, including an all-time high \$1.6 billion dividend in fiscal 2011-12," he said.

Fragedakis expressed her excitement over efforts that the new LCBO made to fit into the neighbourhood.

She even reminded the crowd that Greeks who populate the surrounding neighbourhood could teach everyone about "how to party."

In recognition of its Greek-

town location, the store is carrying a special selection of Greek wines, spirits and beers.

Overall, customers can now enjoy a selection of 1,900 beverages including wine, spirits and gift packs. There is also a special vintages section of high-end wines and a walk-in cold room for beer, ready-to-drink cocktails and coolers.

Peters emphasized that the focus of all LCBO stores is changing.

"LCBO stores are no longer just about bottles on shelves," he said.

"This is a place where you can get advice on planning a dinner party, improve your product knowledge and sample products from Ontario and more than 84 different countries."

'Musique et chansons' brings sweet music to the library

Children sing in French at special event in East York

By **ERIN CASSIDY**
The Observer

The children had a blast singing traditional French songs — proudly belting out the kids' classic, Frère Jacques.

They were on their March Break last week and at the S. Walter Stewart branch of the Toronto Public Library on March 14, Toronto-based Parisian-born singer Philippe Flahaut led them in a sing-along.

"Musique et chansons avec Philippe Flahaut" was or-

ganized specifically for the spring break. And musique et chansons it was. Traditional songs from both France and Quebec were on the queue for the afternoon. Flahaut spoke and sang mostly in French, with some English when necessary.

Thirty-three children sang along with Flahaut in French as parents watched and joined in, clapping after each song.

The children seemed involved and excited for each song. And Flahaut doesn't take that for granted.

"Believe me, it's not easy to do a show with the little ones," he said, "because if they aren't interested, they will go everywhere and do

other things."

Some of the songs he sang to them, while playing guitar, were songs they are learning in school. Familiar songs like Frère Jacques were a particular hit with the children and parents.

"They know the songs from school," Flahaut said, "or perhaps, they have a CD they listen to at home. But that's why they know them so well."

Flahaut got the children participating by asking questions, getting them to act out certain scenes and started a mini-band as well. In a song about elephants, he got them to stomp around like the animals would, moving their arms as if they were trunks.



Erin Cassidy // Observer

Philippe Flahaut sings with the children and parents in attendance at a March Break event at the S. Walter Stewart library branch

■ EDITORIALS

The people's man

Jack Layton was a leader worth remembering

What's the deal with Jack?

Jack Layton's supporters certainly have not wavered in their reverence for the man, even a year and a half after his death. That may be particularly true here in East York, where he represented the federal riding of Toronto-Danforth for seven years. But the buzz around last week's national telecast of the CBC biopic "Jack" demonstrated that the affection and respect for the late Mr. Layton extends coast-to-coast.

Sadly, the movie turned out to be entirely forgettable. The film does, however, raise an important question: Why Jack? What makes Jack Layton so special? What did he do to earn such admiration and respect? Why have we put him on a level approaching Tommy Douglas and Pierre Trudeau?

Under his leadership, the New Democrats ran third in three federal elections between 2004 and 2008... and it wasn't until 2011 that he became leader of the official Opposition. But winning or losing elections is not the reason people loved Jack.

First, they loved him — and still do — because he was an honest politician, which is a rare thing in itself. Jack was the exception where he should have been the rule.

Second, he inspired people. Especially toward the end, he dealt with significant health concerns; at the same time, he certainly did not have it easy, going against the contemporary political giants of this nation. And yet, despite everything, Jack just kept on going.

Third, he rallied people around him more effectively than any politician in the past decade — and he was a champion for the downtrodden members of our society, campaigning for things like affordable housing.

So that's why Canadians love Jack. That's why we name local streets and other things after him. It is not about the titles he earned or the elections he won or lost; it's about what he did for Canada... or at least what he tried to do for Canada.

But perhaps the best reminder of why East Yorkers and other Canadians loved Jack Layton is simply this excerpt from his final, open letter. It simply and eloquently shows the kind of man he was. This is how he lived and how he wanted Canadians to live:

"My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world."

~ Dillon Hiles

Game on, violence off

The Ontario Science Centre's new exhibition, Game On 2.0, lets visitors explore video game culture in a fun, even innocent way.

But outside the centre's walls, if we look at the history of these games, there's a troubling undercurrent over time.

Certainly, they've come a long way — from Pong to Call of Duty. They have evolved, and so have their violence levels. Today's games are more realistic, more graphic and more engaging than ever before. An important question that has been debated over the years — and has escalated in importance in light of recent tragic events, such as the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. — is simple: are these games promoting and encouraging people to act violently?

A new study published last week, called "Online First," in the journal Psychological Science, found that in a group of 20-year-old males, frustration makes violence in video games more appealing.

Shooting someone in a game has no real-life consequences. But it isn't so much about who you are killing in the game, as opposed to the idea of killing others in general.

Most people are able to tell what is real and what is fiction, but for those who have trouble with that distinction — such as the youngest in our society — something needs to be done.

Games like Call of Duty and Killzone promote the idea that violence is acceptable, even routine, when in reality, it isn't.

For instance, soldiers fighting overseas in real life aren't fighting for fun; they are doing it to make our lives safer. It's a lesson that seems lost on many gamers, who seem oblivious to the fact that these are serious adult issues and not to be taken lightly.

On the other hand, saying that video games are the sole reason for violence is not the right answer either. Video games will always have violence and we can't put a stop to that.

What we can do, however, is control who's being subjected to this violence and educate kids about it. Guns and grenades are actually dangerous weapons — and when it comes to real life and real people, playtime is over.

~ Tarah Bleier

■ COLUMNS

Rome needs Canada

All eyes were on Rome last week when, to everyone's surprise, Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio of Argentina became Pope Francis.

But what if the first pope from the Americas had been from Canada instead of Latin America?

The pontiff would have found a number of able, talented Canadians to call upon to help solve the Church's many problems.

Former Supreme Court Justice Louise Arbour could fairly address the sexual scandals that Rome has failed to adequately confront.

If she could bring someone to trial like the Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic at the International Court at The Hague, there is no reason she could not systematically ensure justice was done in past, present and future claims of abuse.

Then there's the Vatican Bank — and its less-than-clean financial reputation. Canada's central banker, Mark Carney, would be just the person to straighten out

the books.

Of course, there is that little issue about him becoming the governor of Bank of England in July. But could he really ignore the call to lead an international financial institution if Rome called?

The Curia, the Church's bureaucracy, is known to be inefficient if not downright unmovable

Commander Chris Hadfield of the International Space Station would be the ideal candidate to make it work. If he can manage a multinational team in the celestial heavens, he would have just the right touch to inspire an ancient institution to reach for the stars.

And the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean and

her predecessor Adrienne Clarkson could certainly provide invaluable direction about how to integrate women into the senior echelons of the Church hierarchy.

All of this work is going to require the newly appointed residents of Vatican City to stay fit... and who better than "the Great One," Wayne Gretzky, to be the Curia's first Minister of Sport.

Now to figure out how to freeze a section of the Tiber River long enough to get in a game of hockey.

Many of these individuals are not Catholic and likely would want nothing to do with the Western world's oldest standing institution.

But the church's inability to reach beyond the familiar and the known has likely been the problem all along.



Theresa Spohn

You had me at 'meow'

There was a time when I was in high school that I used to go into pet stores and beg my parents to let me get one of the little kittens that would be running around in the pens.

It had been two years since my beautiful border collie, Oreo, passed away. Every day I would come from school to home, where both my siblings had moved out, where my parents were off at work, where there was no wiggly-tailed puppy to greet me at the door.

It was heart-breaking. More than anything, I wanted a little companion.

One night, after

hearing me complain for months about not having a pet, my best friend was over at my house and she asked my mom if there was any way that she would be allowed to get me a kitten for my birthday.

Mom quickly defused that idea and expressed — for what seemed like the millionth time — that "we do not want any animals in this house." My friend and I felt defeated.

Then right on cue, as if right out of a storybook, we heard a tiny "meow" come from outside.

We ran to see where the little voice had come from and there, hiding under our minivan, we saw a pair of bright

green eyes.

He was a pretty big guy (I guess tall would be a better description, because he was nothing but skin and bones) and he came right to me. I picked him up and took him into the house.

I have never heard a cat purr as loudly as this one did. (And he still does.)

He was a ratty-looking fella, with protruding ribs patchy soft, grey fur... but I instantly fell in love with him.

I opened a can of tuna for the young cat and pronounced: "His name is Ninja and he shall be mine."

Almost four years later, he is still with me and even now, every time I come home from college, he greets me at the door.

I am so happy my parents never gave in and bought me one of those pet-store kittens, because sometimes the things you think you want most will find their own ways into your life.



Jamie Anderson

Kellway fights against Islamophobia



Radina Vencheva// Observer

Above: Fuad Chowdhury and Matthew Kellway speak to their audience about the documentary, *Change Your Name Ousama*.

Right: Audience members watch the documentary intently during a screening held at the Crescent Town Community Centre.



By RADINA VENCHEVA
The Observer

Beaches-East York MP Matthew Kellway was in two places at once during the local screening of a documentary about Canadian Islamophobia earlier this month: in the audience and on the screen.

The New Democrat joined the city councillor for Ward 31/Beaches-East York, Janet Davis, and other members of the community at the Crescent Town Community Centre on March 1 for the screening of Fuad Chowdhury's movie, *Change Your Name Ousama*. The film is about how Canadian Muslims have become marginalized since the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States.

Kellway helped sponsor the screening, and appeared in the documentary, commenting on how Muslims in Canada were also victims of 9/11 — when they were caught in the broad North American backlash against Islam and its followers, from racial epithets hurled on the street to increased official scrutiny at airports and Canada-U.S. border crossings.

Filmmaker Fuad Chowdhury's worked on the documentary with former CBC News security correspondent Bill Gillespie.

"Canada is a very liberal, very multicultural country, but the laws are very conservative," Chowdhury said. "They're not appropriate for Canada, they are more American and the mainstream Canadian politicians should not suspect that all Muslims are responsible for terrorism."

The film suggests that some of Ottawa's policies are merely the result of Washington's lobbying and it makes the point that Canada's government should be more liberal in its treatment of Muslims.

"There's American pressure on the Canadian government and the government believes in this philosophy of national security," Chowdhury said.

Kellway said the subject matter of the film is important not just for Muslims and the broader Crescent Town community — but for all Canadians.

"I hope who sees the film will come to understand the harm that comes from a legislative response that paints entire communities with broad brush," Kellway said. "9/11 was the work of a handful of hateful people, not a religion or race, and that should never be forgotten."

Kellway further said that Canada's prosperity as a country depends on the economic and social inclusion of new Canadians, not their exclusion.

Crime writers share tales of murder, mayhem

McCracken and Shrott inspire mystery-lovers, future novelists

By RADINA VENCHEVA
The Observer

There's a whole lot more to writing a novel than just the plot, character, and setting.

On March 5, both crime fiction fans and future novelists gathered for a lecture on mystery and crime fiction by

Canadian authors Rosemary McCracken and Steve Shrott, held at the S. Walter Stewart library branch.

The two writers are both members of Sisters In Crime Toronto and Crime Writers of Canada and the audience enjoyed listening to excerpts from their latest novels as well as receiving tips on fiction writing.

McCracken, who has been writing crime fiction and short stories for over 10 years, is also a freelance journalist who wrote her first mystery novel, *Safe Harbour*, last year.

"It's become a very popular type of literature," McCracken said.

"Another thing with crime fiction is you have to grab the reader right on, and this is partly because it's very hard to get published today."

McCracken said that even though both plot and setting are extremely important aspects in fiction, what intrigues her most are her characters.

"I'm a writer who is character-driven rather than plot-driven," she said.

"I develop my characters first and then develop the plot

around them, which takes me quite a long time, because I have to get to know my characters."

Steve Shrott, who is an award-winning crime and horror writer, has also written two humorous novels. He said flow is important when it comes to writing.

"In crime fiction, the interesting thing is that you get to feel the emotions of odd people, twisted people and crazy people, but it's also kind of interesting because normally we don't get to experience those kind of things in our normal lives."



Radina Vencheva // Observer

Rosemary McCracken and Steve Shrott hold their novels at the 'Author Talks' lecture at the S. Walter Stewart library branch.

WANT TO WRITE A NOVEL?

- McCracken and Shrott say the three essentials in novel writing are plot, character and setting.
- Mystery/crime writers tend to write only about 200 pages and the crime is usually placed at the beginning of the novel.
- "High-concept" describes crime fiction that is unusual, particularly interesting and rare.

- Most humorous novels have a unique, funny premise to begin with.
- There are three human dimensions in humour writing: the family, the "challenge character," and the wisecracker.
- There's a big market for short stories because they are more flexible and have a bigger impact.

There's a new kid in town...

Shoppers throng to new store

(Left) Target opened the doors to its newest location, at the East York Town Centre, on Tuesday.

(Bottom left) Shoppers check out the new store while making their purchases.

(Bottom right) One doesn't have to look far to find the store slogan.



Robin Dhanju// Observer



■ PARKS

Burgess Park moves to the front of the line

By TICHAONA TAPAMBWA
The Observer

Thorncliffe's R.V. Burgess Park has been named a Frontline Park by City Parks Alliance, an urban advocacy organization based in the United States.

In February, the park became the first in Canada to receive this honour.

"Being selected as a Frontline Park means that you are on the top list for that particular month," said Sabina Ali, project co-ordinator at the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office and a member of the Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee. "It's more about the revitalization of the park and the activities that are being done in it."

The park has been going through a transformation since 2008. The initiative was led by a group of women who regularly met in the park and believed the area's needs weren't being satisfied.

Ali spoke of being a newcomer in Toronto and the dislike she immediately felt walking through the park for the first time.

"Thorncliffe is a community of children where we have more than a quarter of the population under 14," she said, adding that the park wasn't encouraging the younger demographic.

As a result, the women who became the Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee began seeking help from local councillors, city staff and other government agencies. The park has become one of Thorncliffe's bright spots during the summer.

Some of their programs include a market where local businesses are able to promote their products.

"We thought of women who run businesses from home and thought of introducing the concept of a bazaar," Ali said.

The bazaar started with five vendors, and has increased to more than 100.

■ YOUR SAY

What do you think about Target?



Janice WISMAR

"I love Target. I always go to the ones in the States. This store is exactly like the one in the States. I'm impressed. It seems like the price is done very well, competitively. I know when J. Crew opened up, their mark-up was huge and it was still cheaper to buy through the U.S. and pay duty."



Nurul KHAN

"I think it's awesome. I think it's good for us because we are living beside this place. We were waiting all this time for it to open, and now I have already bought something, so I'm really happy."



Noor ZALALI

"It's really good. We missed the last Zellers when it closed and we were waiting for the Target to open. Target is really good for middle-class and upper-class families, so I like that it's a very good business for everyone."



Michael HABERMAN

"I think the store looks great. I think they've got to fine-tune some of their assortments, and I think they've got to fine-tune some of their pricing — because they're not competitive in certain areas, which I was surprised at. But I've got to say: the parking lot has never been this full."

Withrow playground slated for makeover

By DILLON HILES
The Observer

Kids, rejoice! The playground at Withrow Park is getting an update.

Area residents met with Ward 30 councillor Paula Fletcher and a city planner at Frankland Community Centre on Logan Avenue on March 18 to discuss what parents and kids would like to see done with the playground.

City of Toronto senior landscape architect Alex Mut headed the meeting, offering participants ideas by showing pictures of other playgrounds and playground equipment. He stressed that the project is still in the conception stage.

"The idea of these preliminary meetings is to find out what people are interested in having, seeing what that wish list would cost and seeing where the money can be found," he said.

There is no official budget for the project yet. However, Fletcher is confident she can get \$250,000 for the upgrade. Every park gets about \$125,000 for updates and touchups and she said she can redirect some funding from other projects.

"I was advocating for this particular park to get an upgrade. We have a certain amount of money every year for replacing equipment," Fletcher said. "I thought this would be a good place for that, and I will find some other park's money so that we can have a really great upgrade."