



Leasiders rally to save historic Elgie building

Council votes unanimously to reject developer's bid to 'demolish' farmhouse

By **XUETING ZHAO**
The Observer

Originally built in 1883, the Thomas G. Elgie House was standing at 262 Bessborough Dr. for years before the neighbourhood roads were even paved. Over the ensuing 130 years, the house has continued to preside over the community that has grown up around it.

Now, the oldest residential house in Leaside is facing an uncertain future because of a demolition proposal made by a developer. In opposition are some Leasiders who have united to protect the designated heritage property.

During the North York Community Council meeting held on Tuesday, councillors voted unanimously to reject the application to demolish the Elgie House proposed by Matthew Garnet, vice-president of development of Renaissance Fine Homes.

"Heritage pieces are irreplaceable. Once they are gone, they are gone," said Nancy Elgie, the widow of the late Dr. Robert Elgie, in remarks to the councillors and members of the public who came to the meeting.

"We can't let every developer decide. 'It doesn't work for me in 2014,'" she said. "The house is part of our community and our life. It shouldn't be violated in order for someone to make a buck."

Susan Gordon, one of the home's neighbours, read a letter written by Kae Elgie, a member of the extended Elgie family who now lives in Waterloo. In the letter, Kae Elgie asked the community council to protect the house.

"The building is very important to me as an Elgie," she wrote, "but more than that, it's part of the community's history."

In an earlier interview, Kae Elgie recalled the special trip she made to Toronto to show the house to her children. She said history is much easier to appreciate when there is something people can actually see and experience.

"There aren't too many houses that we can point at and say, 'This is built by an Elgie and lived by an Elgie,'" she said. "If you can only read about it and only imagine in your mind what it might look like, it will become less important and less moving than if you can see it."

The Elgie House is a good example of the farming history of Leaside. It's also a rare representative of the farmhouses built in the late 1800s with the L-shaped plan and red brick walls.

■ See **FUTURE**, page 8



Lou Pin /// The Observer

Flower shops in full bloom

Carol Jeffries and the rest of the staff at Bill's Garden Centre are ready for spring. Located on Pape Avenue, Bill's is one of many small garden centres in East York.

■ OBITUARY

Willis Blair 'believed in East York'

Lifelong volunteer, family man, former mayor dies at age 90

By **RAJESH SAMMY**
The Observer

One of East York's most veteran politicians died on Saturday.

Willis L. Blair was mayor of what was then the Borough of East York from 1973 until 1975. He also served on borough council for 18 years beginning in 1958, and he held a variety of government and regulatory posts, including the chairmanship of the Liquor License Board of Ontario, and seats on the Ontario Municipal Board and what was then Metro Council.

He was 90 years old.

Blair died on the eve of Canada's National Volunteer Week — an apt connection, considering that for over 50 years, he was a supporter of Toronto East General Hospital, the Kiwanis Club of East York and Westview Presbyterian Church in the Bermondsey Road-O'Connor Drive neighbourhood.

"He was there in every possible charitable drive that was held in the community," said David Collette, a former member of Parliament representing East York



Courtesy of Toronto East General Hospital

Willis L. Blair and his wife Elsie attended a special garden unveiling ceremony to honour his involvement with Toronto East General Hospital in 2011.

ridings. "He was always there helping, donating and getting people into contributing."

Collette said he knew Blair for almost all of his life. When Collette was first elected in

1974, Collette said of his friend, "he made me feel welcome."

"He was great at strengthening our connection with the community," said Tereasa Vasilopoulos, the president of Toronto East

General Hospital.

When Blair was mayor of East York, he helped push to bring Major League Baseball to Toronto — an effort that succeeded with the arrival of the Blue Jays in 1977. He also helped establish the East York Curling Club on Cosburn Avenue, which famously hosted the Junior World Championships in 1974.

Although generally considered conservative, Blair didn't hold back on supporting politicians with different views.

"He would do what he thought would be the best for the municipality," said Beaches-East York MPP Michael Prue, a New Democrat.

"He believed in East York. He believed in Toronto," Collette said. "He epitomized everything that was good and decent in Canadian life."

Prior to his career in politics, Blair served in the Royal Canadian Air Force, was a student at the University of Toronto, and worked at the Canada Life insurance company.

His funeral was held at the Heritage Funeral Centre on Overlea Boulevard on Wednesday. He is survived by his wife of 70 years, Elsie, as well as three children, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

POLICE & FIRE

Man flees after assaulting teen

Toronto police are requesting the public's help in identifying a man wanted in a sexual assault investigation.

On March 27 at about 9 p.m., a 16-year-old boy was sexually assaulted by a man in the area of Mortimer and Pape avenues. The man then fled.

The man is described as white, 22-26 years old, approximately 5'10"-6'0". He has short black hair and a shaved line on the side of his head. He was wearing a dark-coloured top, jacket and pants.

Pharmacy to the rescue

Two arrests have been made in an alleged fraud against an elderly woman.

Norma Marshall, 94, hired a housekeeper approximately four years ago. Police say that, over time, the housekeeper and her husband and children moved into the home. They say the housekeeper and husband then confined Marshall to one room and sold her furniture and jewelry.

Vera Nunes, 32, and her husband, Luis Serpa Da Conceicao Santos, 38, have been charged with fraud and theft over \$5,000.

A deliverer from Thorncliffe Pharmasave raised the initial alarm, and now pharmacy owners Selina Chan-Ying and Bernard Woo have set up a trust account for the victim. Anyone wishing to donate can go to any RBC branch.

~ Rajesh Sammy



Dakoda Sannen // The Observer

It's a draw

Students from Cedarbrae Collegiate Institute in Scarborough get a crash course in life drawing on Monday, during a field trip to Centennial College's East York campus on Carlaw Avenue.

Leasiders fear loss of identity

Heritage gathering stresses need to preserve history

By EVAN PANG
The Observer

Leaside is a place where community comes first. Now residents fear that new city development will threaten not only their history, but the very sense of what that community is.

During the second annual heritage gathering at the Leaside public library branch last month, several residents and members of the East York Historical Society came together to pay homage to those who helped build Leaside.

Community advocate Geoff Kettel began the opening presentations by speaking about the importance of saving their history.

"I mentioned there is a lot

of interest in preserving and maintaining the built fabric of our community and a submission has been submitted to the city department of heritage for a heritage conservation district in Leaside," Kettel said.

Several other communities have filed similar requests with the city of Toronto, but Kettel hopes to get the submission approved before too much of the "original" Leaside is lost.

"The next thing will be a public meeting," Kettel said. "The big benefit is that it would allow the community to have some say in what happens. There are things that are called renovations, but really they're just demolitions, and we're losing that sense of a place, the history and uniformity... the rhythm of the street."

One of the speakers was Karen Fraser, an entrepreneur



Evan Pang // The Observer

Karen Fraser, writer for Leaside Life, shares stories and old photographs of Leaside.

and well-known writer for Leaside Life.

She recalled a time when the community banded together to save a public park from new development years ago.

"People had come to my door asking me what we were going to do," Fraser said. "We saved the park."

Faces lit up when someone mentioned buying ice cream

for three cents a scoop from King's Shop.

Laughter filled the room when another talked about the school teacher who could hit a student square in the forehead with a piece of chalk from the other side of the class.

Many of the shops that were fondly remembered have since been demolished or renovated into new stores or shopping plazas.

LRT project will be 'disruptive, but necessary'

City has dedicated traffic crew to handle jams, councillor says

By RAMON LAFEE
The Observer



Ramon Lafee // Observer

Councillor John Parker talks about the LRT at his office at city hall.

Toronto was once a leader in public transit — but the city has outgrown its system. To accommodate this growth, the light rail transit (LRT) construction on Eglinton was developed as part of a major upgrade of the city's transport system.

The Eglinton LRT will run for 19 km between Mount Dennis (Weston Road) in the west and Kennedy Station in the east, cutting right across the top of East York. Construction is scheduled to start soon in Leaside.

Councillor John Parker, representing Ward 26, held a public meeting on March 18 at Leaside Gardens to discuss the project.

"It's going to be enormously disruptive but

necessary," Parker said. "In Leaside, there will be three places where [there] will be construction sites: Bayview and Laird-Eglinton, where they will be a station, and east of Brentcliffe, where they will be digging [a lot] of the tunnels."

Parker said later that while it's clear the project is welcomed by many, that doesn't mean the Leasiders don't have concerns.

"It's like a trip to the dentist. It's nothing you look forward [to], but you do, because you know is good for you," he said. "It's a balance, a compromise, when you take a mega-project like this."

Parker added that the city has dedicated a traffic crew to manage the traffic issues that may spring up during the construction — and a whole department has been created to study possible problems.

The whole project will take six years, ending in 2020.

WHAT'S UP IN E.Y.

Charity dinner and auction

The Moeen Centre invites you to join its seventh annual fundraising dinner tomorrow, April 12, 5-9 p.m., at Leaside Gardens, 1073 Millwood Rd. It will feature guest speakers, entertainment and a silent auction. All proceeds go to the Moeen Centre, a non-profit organization for disabled and developmentally challenged young adults in Toronto. Call 416-264-5809 to reserve.

Like duct tape?

Find out how to turn that roll of duct tape into a handy wallet. Supplies will be provided; all that's needed are teens aged 11-18. The workshop will take place on Friday, April 24 from 4 until 5p.m. at the S. Walter Stewart library. To register, call 416-396-3975.

Family fun for a good cause

The ninth annual "Spring Into Action" fundraiser for diabetes awareness has something enjoyable for the entire family. Activities include going on the walk/run or attending the post-race barbecue. The barbecue will feature live entertainment and family-friendly activities. If you're interested, be sure to get your hands on early-bird tickets priced at \$25.

This year's event will begin at 9 a.m. at Sunnybrook Park on Saturday, May 3. For more information, call 416-849-7375.

~ Jelicia Saulter

POLITICS

Papadakis brings a blast from the past

As the weather heats up, so does the battle for seats at city council

By ALI NAQVI
The Observer

If all goes according to John Papadakis' plan, then this fall he'll pick up right where he left off exactly 20 years earlier.

Papadakis is running for city council in Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth — roughly the same constituency that he represented as a municipal councillor for what was then the Borough of East York, from the fall of 1991 until the fall of 1994.

But no matter how recognizable he may be, Papadakis faces an uphill battle in his bid to unseat incumbent councillor Mary Fragedakis.

He's a right-leaning candidate in a ward that tends to vote to the left. He supports Mayor Rob Ford, and Toronto-Danforth voted against Ford in 2010 — and that was before most of the Ford scandals.

Papadakis hasn't won a vote since his 1991 election, despite several tries for municipal and even federal office in East York and in Fort Erie, Ont., where he lived for a time.

His rival is no pushover either; in 2010, Fragedakis piled up a 14-point lead over another right-leaning and well-known opponent, former city councillor and one-time mayoral candidate Jane Pitfield.

But whatever the challenge, Papadakis says he's confident.

"I am not happy with the

way things are going in our city," he said in an interview with the Observer. "I am passionate about my ward, my community, and I will do everything in my power to save people money and move with new ideas and innovations to make Ward 29 in East York one of the best ward to live in the city."

Papadakis is 54 years old, and his LinkedIn resume lists him as former a law instructor at Everest College, "commander-in-chief" and senior training instructor for Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Canada, executive director of the Community Emergency Preparedness Association, and owner of Papadakis Legal Services, a paralegal firm.

He graduated from York University in 1988 with a BA in political science and government.

"I have a three-part platform on fiscal management," Papadakis said. "Number one is respect. It is the people's money. Number two is vigilance. We should be vigilant on how we spend our money. There are a lot of things that can be done, and there is still a lot of gravy out there that can be repaired. It takes common sense creativity and courage to do it."

Papadakis also said that "Toronto needs a new relationship with the province of Ontario." He explained that "our infrastructure is falling apart. We don't have the resources to build subways. Toronto loses between \$19-20 billion a year. Times are changing and we have to change our relationship with provincial government. There is a lot of money out there and Toronto should be getting its proportion."



Photo courtesy of John Papadakis

John Papadakis, 54, is running for city councillor in Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth. From 1991 to 1994, he served as municipal councillor for what was then known as the Borough of East York.

But while he reiterated that he wants to keep taxes low for individuals and businesses, Papadakis also said that he understands "the importance of city. If you keep cutting services and not give something back it won't be a pleasant place to live. We want good quality of life for our residents."

Papadakis said he'd also address the "severe crisis" of bed bugs in Toronto. He also wants to see the city address hydro bills. "Hydro is out of control. Why we are paying 23 cents a kilowatt when we can be buying it for five or six cents a kilowatt from Quebec? The hydro system does not work. Cheap, efficient and cost-effective hydro is what we need, since businesses will not open in an area where hydro is expensive."

About public transit: "I

am a subway supporter," he said. "I believe in the Scarborough line, but we need an E.Y. relief line that should have been built 25 years ago."

As for the turmoil at city council around Mayor Ford, "there are a lot of members holding big rocks. This council has been absolutely biased and discriminatory. They took our mayor's power away. Right now we don't have a legitimate government at city council; we have tyranny."

He added: "I am really offended by the conduct of this council. It is time to reinstate the mayor's power. He is the mayor of Toronto and after Oct. 27, the people of Toronto will decide — not this council. They don't have a right to do this. Maybe they should consider resigning for going against democracy."



Observer file photo by Ali Sharif

A victorious John Papadakis is hoisted by supporters Tassos Daskalakis (left) and Bill Panagakos on election night, Nov. 12, 1991.

VISUAL ARTS

Who you gonna trust? How about these artists?



Shawn Fournier /// The Observer

Gabriella Mayers, a student in Centennial College's fine arts program, stands next to her creation, Weapons With Holding Rack.

Exhibition featuring student artists opens on April Fool's Day

By SHAWN FOURNIER
The Observer

"Who can you trust nowadays?" That was a phrase that cropped up repeatedly during the *Trust Me, I'm An Artist* exhibition, which opened — appropriately enough — on April Fool's Day, April 1, at the Toronto Centre for the Arts.

The show featured an array of artists exclusively from Centennial College's East York campus and ran until this past Sunday.

At exactly 7 p.m., the attendees of

the event were greeted by the sound of enticingly soft piano music as the doors to the 5040 Yonge St. studio opened. Lining the white walls of the building hung a cornucopia of designs, works you might not have expected to be created from someone who bore the title of "student."

"I've been doing art for about three or four years," said Sergiu Berbec, one of the artists featured in the show. "I'm influenced by Picasso."

When asked about motivation, Sergiu talked about the concept of development.

"What I like to do is explore my works, how we (as humans) tend to think and how we are able to evolve and bring the world past what it is," he said.

Also in attendance was David McCly-

ment, co-ordinator of the fine arts program at the Centennial's Carlaw Avenue campus.

About an hour into the show, he herded the guests into a circle and asked this question: "Do you trust these people?"

The thunderous applause could only be construed as a yes.

In turn, the smiling McClyment presented each artist to the audience.

"You'll see by looking around the walls and seeing the diversity that we have everything and that speaks volumes about what the program is all about," he said. "It isn't about the facility imposing esthetics on the program.

It's about mentoring the students to find out who they are. You'll see around the room each artist has their own voice."



Rajesh Sammy /// The Observer

Dan Frankian and Jerry, teaching students about pests, birds and Harry Potter.

Hawkeye falconer Dan soars into East York to talk with students

By **RAJESH SAMMY**
The Observer

Students at Centennial College's East York campus readied their cameras for the moment when Dan Frankian would open up his mysterious box to show them what he had inside

On top of the metal box was a plastic dish and a pair of brown leather gloves, but inside was something special: a one-and-a-half-year-old falcon named Jerry.

Jerry is a bird of prey, one of many that Frankian uses to scare away pests from businesses and homes. Birds of prey — like owls, eagles, hawks and falcons — hunt and kill small animals for food.

They can also scare larger animals, and so Frankian, the owner of Hawkeye Bird Control, guarantees he can remove and control some of those animals with what he says are humane and environmentally friendly techniques.

So when it comes to animals like raccoons, pigeons and seagulls, Frankian told the students on class assignment that homeowners have two conventional options: they can euthanize the pests or relocate them a kilometre away from their home.

Frankian says a better alternative is to stimulate fear into the animal.

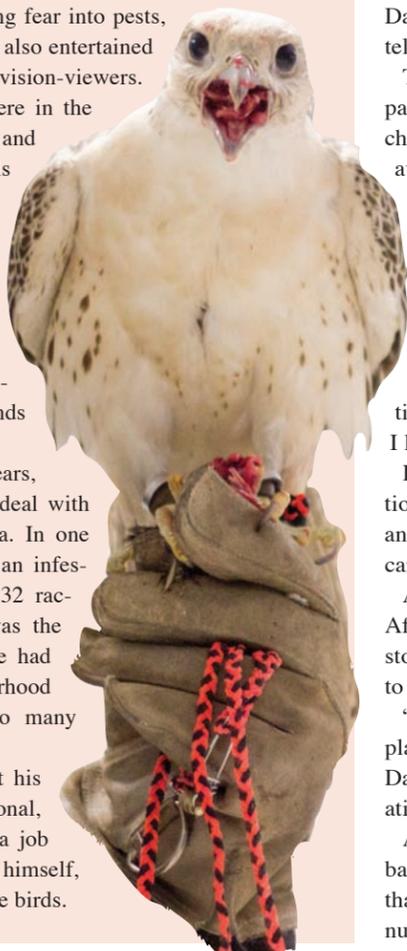
"If I kill you, you won't tell the person next to you that you are scared of me," Frankian said. "If I scare you, the first thing you are going to do is you tell the person next to you that you are scared of this guy. It's the same thing with them. If I scare one seagull, and if I kill only one of them, the rest of them are going to go 'Ahh! I don't want to be anywhere near him.'"

Aside from instilling fear into pests, Frankian's birds have also entertained movie-goers and television-viewers. Three of his owls were in the Harry Potter films, and some of his animals were part of Panasonic television ads for plasma TVs.

In the course of his work, Frankian has become a master of falconry, a technique used for thousands of years for hunting.

In more than 25 years, Frankian has had to deal with pests all over Canada. In one home, he dealt with an infestation of more than 32 raccoons. Then there was the coffee shop where he had to stop a neighbourhood bear from eating too many donuts.

One could say that his job is unconventional, but to Frankian, it's a job worth doing — for himself, for Toronto and for the birds.



Peder Myhr /// The Observer

Bring home the (little) cup!

Members of the East York Hockey Association's peewee house league Boston team celebrate their win of the EYHA's "Little Stanley Cup," at the East York Memorial Arena on March 29.

The art of storytelling

Acclaimed author takes time to share stories with young readers in East York

By **PEDER MYHR**
The Observer

A tricky spider, bone button borscht soup and a bear with a taste for baking soda.... This strange collection of things were all at St. David's Anglican Church on March 23 as author Aubrey Davis told stories at the Mosaic Storytelling Festival.

The audience of children and their parents sat quietly captivated in the church hall at Donlands and Danforth avenues, occasionally breaking into laughter as Davis performed his award-winning stories.

"Oh it went well," Aubrey said. "Did you see the kids? They all sat there. There were no props, just imagination. Our world is so cluttered with technology and distraction. But they were using their minds. I love that."

Davis's books have garnered international acclaim, but it was performance and live storytelling that launched his career in children's literature.

As a young adult, Davis travelled to Africa where he discovered traditional storytelling methods. He then returned to the vibrant Toronto scene.

"Toronto really was a wonderful place to begin a career in storytelling," Davis said. "There was a lot of appreciation and opportunity."

After settling in Toronto, Davis embarked on a 30-year storytelling career that would see him perform in jails, nursing homes, hospitals, radio and



Peder Myhr /// The Observer

Aubrey Davis spins a yarn at the Mosaic Storytelling Festival, held at St. David's Anglican Church.

television.

"Storytelling really did come first. My writing career really was just an off-shoot of that," he said.

Davis was asked to perform a Jewish story to an audience of children but could not find one he liked, so he wrote Bone Button Borscht. It won him a publishing deal and launched his career as an award-winning children's book author.

Events like the Mosaic Storytelling Festival at St. David's are what give Davis the most satisfaction though.

"I get out of it what they get out of it," he said. "It's sharing with them. They get to enjoy language and their imaginations are activated. I mean it's a pretty good deal."

Story time

Aubrey Davis's award-winning stories include:

- A Hen for Izzy Pippik
- The Enormous Potato
- Bagels from Benny
- Bone Button Borscht
- Kishka for Koppel
- La Grosse Patate

Fair Elections Act could 'suppress' voters: MP

By **ARTURO CHANG**
The Observer

Toronto-Danforth MP Craig Scott says that if the Conservative government's proposed Fair Elections Act isn't altered, it will make it harder for seniors and college students, who might lack proper identification, to cast a vote.

Speaking to constituents on March 19 at a town hall event, Scott, the NDP's democratic reform critic, explained that Bill C-23 would eliminate voting information cards and the "vouching" system that made it easier for some groups, including seniors, to vote.

"Eliminating both methods of proving your identity in order to vote is, in the result, voter suppression," he said.

Scott and Hamilton Centre NDP MP David Christopherson hosted the event, which was held at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education on Bloor Street. The Toronto session was one of eight



SCOTT

public consultations launched by the NDP to discuss the Fair Elections Act. Bill C-23, which detractors have dubbed "the unfair elections act," is a widely criticized electoral reform bill introduced by the Conservative government earlier this year.

Criticism of the bill has been strong enough that the Conservatives have hinted they might be open to changing it, including their proposed restrictions around vouching. Vouching is the provision that allows a properly identified voter to vouch for someone without proper identification. Bill C-23 would curtail the practice, and some experts say that could potentially disenfranchise hundreds of thousands of voters.

Scott said that overall, the bill doesn't do enough to solve existing problems with the electoral system and actually makes things worse.

"There's a deliberate inversion — almost an Orwellian inversion — from the focus everybody thought had to be in this bill," he said. "Everybody's pushing for electoral reform to deal with organized fraud coming from the ranks of organized actors. For example, the fraudulent robocall and live voice call fraud of 2011."

The bill would add a registry for automated election cards, but according to Scott, this is not enough to combat issues such as robocall fraud. Instead, the bill would actually reduce Elections Canada and the Chief Electoral Officer's ability to investigate such cases.

"What could have been done to beef up Election's Canada's power to investigate didn't occur," he said. "In the process, what happened instead is 'Oh my God, all of these ordinary Canadians, they are the source of the danger to our democracy. We have to get rid of vouching and voter information card because that's how fraud can occur.'"



Preston Dozsa /// The Observer

Saving the Earth, one marshmallow at a time

Mia Cook roasts some marshmallows with her mother Valerie at the Toronto Don Valley Hotel and Suites Earth Hour event on March 29. The Wynford Drive hotel was among buildings across the city that turned off lights from 8:30 until 9:30 p.m. as a symbol of environmental awareness.

■ ENVIRONMENT

Students rise to the challenge

Milk mats, eco walkabouts all part of school's approach to saving the environment

By **VERA EL-TIMANY**
The Observer

One young person may not feel like he or she is able to make a huge difference in the world — but what about a whole school full of people?

On March 28, the students at Holy Cross Catholic School on Donlands Avenue participated in the TCDSB Earth Hour Challenge. Since environmentally conscious people around the world were supposed to dim their lights at 8:30 p.m. local time on Saturday, March 29 — when school was closed — the Catholic schools' challenge was to make posters, say a prayer on Friday morning, and turn off the lights from 10 to 11 a.m.

"People don't realize how big of an impact one person can make," said Ioanna Provoka, 'eco team facilitator' at Holy Cross. "Children in particular thrive off of knowing that they can in fact make difference."

Earth Hour jobs were divided up based on the students' grades. The "Power Rangers" of kindergarten and Grades 1-3 and the "Waste Warriors" of Grades 4-6 paired up for school walkabouts, making sure that the recycling and garbage had been placed in the correct bins and that the lights and monitors were off when not needed.

"Eco walkabouts that these students do is so great because it allows the students to take ownership and feel that they are stewards of the earth," Provoka said. "All week we have been making announcements regarding Earth Hour... and hyping the student body up for the event."

The school's light switches and monitors al-



Vera El-Timany /// The Observer

Holy Cross Catholic School students (l-r) Carmine Taglioni, Victoria Godhino, Maria Dodaj and Natalie Abbate take on the Earth Hour Challenge. One of their 'milk mats' is on display behind them.

ready have "Lights off" stickers posted near them to remind students to conserve energy. Students also decorated cardboard boxes as GOOS (Good On One Side) to promote paper recycling.

Finally, the students raised over \$250 for the World Wildlife Foundation, through National Sweater Day and Eco team T-shirt sales. All proceeds will go to animal adoption.

The students even took their accomplishments beyond the school walls. It was only two

months ago when they started making mats out of milk bags and shipped them to Haiti and Africa to be used in hospitals and classrooms. It takes 50 milk bags to make one mat, and the students have made nine so far.

"It's unbelievable... how much it helps the land because they (the milk bags) don't dissolve," said Maryam Tomazadeh, a teacher at Holy Cross. "It takes millions of years for them to dissolve. But with this project, at least we can save."

■ EDITORIALS

Focus on practice

There are about a dozen public and Catholic high schools either in East York or close enough to its borders that they teach East Yorkers. Thousands of students between Grades 9 and 12 pass through these buildings every year. But while they're in the business of teaching and learning, at their respective boards of education headquarters, funding and budgets often dominate the agenda.

Meanwhile, curriculum is largely a mandate of the province. Perhaps because curriculum development seems removed from local control, it's easy to forget about that. But we shouldn't, if we want to ensure that East York children grow up to become educated in all the right ways.

Today's youth are being given every resource possible on how to bring great ideas to life, but not on how to express themselves. If you doubt this proposition, consider the following: With classrooms full of all these bright students, it's a shame to hear the buzzing silence when someone asks a question. It's not that the answer isn't known; it's just that these students never honed their ability to speak with confidence.

Many courses in the Ontario curriculum focus so heavily on writing development that it seems the importance of verbal achievement has been neglected. That is why it only seems logical to have formal debate as a component to any English course. That way, youth will not only be able to answer questions, but they will be capable of critically arguing their stance. And those are traits that will most certainly help them outside the walls of academia.

Furthermore, the applied and academic math programs in high school manage to cover concepts such as the Pythagorean theorem and trigonometry, but skim over practical mathematic knowledge such as how to calculate taxes or how to budget properly. It seems that while we are busy sticking to the cookie-cutter curriculum, essential knowledge and skills fall through the cracks, with little being done to address it.

From resume preparation in English classes to CPR training in physical education, why are we striving so hard to push home theoretical work such as essay writing — which has little application to the real world — when opportunities for a practical education are being lost among these young minds?

~ Shawn Fournier

Keeping kids safe

On March 29 at 11 a.m., a five-year-old girl was sexually assaulted on Danforth Avenue while momentarily out of her mother's sight. We are all repulsed. But incredibly, sexual violence against girls and women is happening all the time — literally. Just over half of all Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of sexual violence in their life, according to Statistics Canada.

Sexual assault is considered to be a vastly under-reported crime. Having said that, a 2007 study by StatsCan showed that half of the sexual assault victims who reported to police were children and youth under the age of 18.

The particular vulnerability of girls raises an uncomfortable question for the adults responsible for their care: At what age is it appropriate to allow your child to be out in public without adult supervision?

The answers vary, of course. For some parents, this age can be as early as eight or nine, while others prevent their children from leaving home alone until as late as 16. There is no law in Canada that stipulates at which age a child can be left unmonitored; however, the Canadian Safety Council (CSC) recommends that children under the age of 12 shouldn't be unattended.

But there are various factors that come into play when deciding the appropriate age — and the ultimate decision is going to fall to the parents and their own discretion in deciding what is best for their child.

On the other hand, we can all likely agree that it's essential to discuss with our children what to do in an emergency, if one should arise while they're unsupervised. Providing them with a cellphone for emergency purposes is a good first step — along with additional phone numbers they can call if they feel uncomfortable or scared.

Additionally, talk to your children about what they feel comfortable with in the first place... and their thoughts on being left alone in public. Perhaps a buddy system would be suitable and would ease their — and your — minds in case an emergency occurred. Role-playing key scenarios can also be useful, like what to do in the case of being approached by a stranger.

Besides the threat of assault, missing children reports are filed hourly in Canada. Providing our children with the correct information that includes ways to deal with situations that may arise when they are not in our sight will help ensure that they stay safe.

Safety is key, and by talking to our children and providing them with the appropriate information, we can have some measure of assurance that they will know what to do in any event of a dangerous situation.

~ Samantha Turchan

■ COLUMNS

Leafs need a change

Saturday, March 29. Hockey Night in Canada. The night hope was lost for the struggling Maple Leafs. This past Tuesday's official elimination from contention notwithstanding, it was the game two weeks ago, the eighth loss in a row, when what was once almost an assured berth in the post-season became all but a dream.

Brian Burke's allegory of an 18-wheeler falling off a cliff was once again invoked, and the narratives began. Dion Phaneuf is no leader, they said. Phil Kessel disappears when it matters most, they said. With Jonathan Bernier's return, James Reimer could shoulder no blame for this loss.

No, this loss was indicative of their entire season, and while they didn't get out-played and out-possessed as badly as they normally do, the bounces just didn't go their way.

Too long



Dakoda Sannen

has this Maple Leaf team been riding on abnormally high percentages. This applies to shooting, with the likes of Tyler Bozak at around six points above his average percentage, or world-class goaltending from the likes of Jonathan Bernier and, to a lesser extent, James Reimer.

With a team giving up nearly the worst shots against total in the past 20 years, you just knew the percentages couldn't sustain. The team had to regress.

With their first playoff berth in seven years in last year's 48-game season and a few key off-season acquisitions in David Clarkson and David Bolland, hope was high coming into this season.

The truth is, the Leafs rode high percentages

last year as well and 48 games was just enough for them not to fall from grace.

A full 82-game season was enough for that fall — though no one expected it to be quite this dramatic.

The truth is, the Leafs aren't this bad and they weren't that good early in the season.

They have one of the top scorers in the game in Phil Kessel, two budding young defencemen in Jake Gardiner and Morgan Rielly and world-class goaltending.

The talent is there. Their problems lie in an insistence on old NHL ideals in a new NHL. You can't dress only three competent lines and hope to win. You can't have one-dimensional enforcers taking spots away from young, skilled players. And you certainly can't get out-shot and out-possessed, night in and night out.

The problems the Leafs have are systemic. This monumental collapse merely highlighted those problems.

The Maple Leafs have talent; what they need is a new outlook, a system more suited to their talent, and, quite frankly, a new coach.

Don't mind the... gap

It's that time of the year again when we kiss the cold weather goodbye and trade it in for warmer, more pleasant weather. (Yes, after the winter we've had, I'd even call sweltering heat more pleasant.)

But with nice weather come diets, diets and more diets.

From exercising to eating healthier, many of us — myself included — are guilty of slavishness to the idea of attaining the perfect body, even if it's just for the summer. And that makes me wonder: Why do we care so much?

Maybe it's seeing swimsuits already being displayed at almost every one of my favourite stores, or hearing about "getting fit" and getting the perfect "bikini body" every time I turn on the television.

The simple answer is it's all of the above. But it's one thing to want to better our physical appearance... and another to obsess over dieting.

Dieting today is glamorized. Seeing celebrities from Jessica Simpson to Beyoncé talking about dieting and the cleansing methods they use has an impact on the way people — especial-

ly young people — feel about themselves.

Almost every year, there's a new diet trend, and this year women of all ages are mesmerized by talk of "the thigh gap" and "the bikini bridge."

The thigh gap trend glorifies thighs that don't touch, while the bikini bridge focuses on the space between a bikini and a person's hipbones that is visible only when they are lying flat on their back.

These trends are prominent on social media, from Tumblr to Instagram, and they're encouraging people to take extreme and dangerous measures to attain a body they aren't predisposed to have.

There's something

capricious about saying that to be attractive, your thighs must not touch, or there has to be a space between your bikini and your hipbones when you're lying down? It seems that in our culture, certain body types hold some arbitrary status over others.

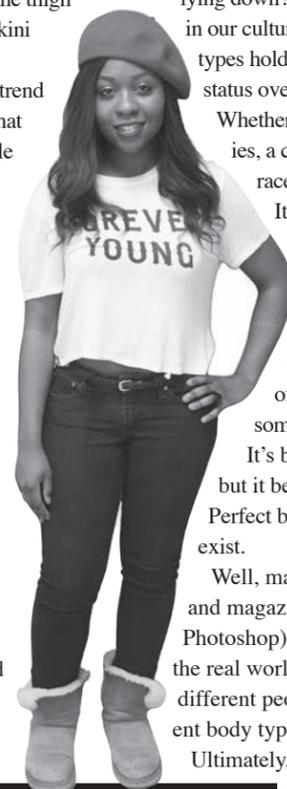
Whether it's thinner bodies, a certain gender or race, it's all wrong.

It's completely normal to want to better ourselves, but it's another thing to diet with the goal of looking like someone else.

It's been said before, but it bears repeating: Perfect bodies don't exist.

Well, maybe in movies and magazines (thank you, Photoshop). But we live in the real world, filled with different people with different body types.

Ultimately, of course, beauty comes from inside — and it is not a certain body or size.



Virginia Mashingaidze

From farm...to park...to hospital



City of Toronto Archives

The Observer continues its look back on East York history through archival photographs with this pair of pictures. Before the Sunnybrook hospital, there was Sunnybrook Park. But before Sunnybrook Park, there was the Sunnybrook Farm. The sprawling agricultural enterprise carried on around what is now the very urban intersection of Bayview and Eglinton avenues at East York's northwest corner. These photos, about a century old and courtesy of the City of Toronto Archives, show both the exterior of the barns and the interior of the cow stables. The owner, Alice Kilgour, donated the farm to the city of Toronto in 1928 for the creation of a park, and in 1943, during the Second World War, the city transferred the land to the federal government for a veterans' hospital — now the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre.



Photo courtesy of Jennifer Schywalsky

Jennifer and Robert Schywalsky are trying to raise \$75,000 to cover the cost of Robert's cancer treatment in Ohio.

Online fundraiser a labour of love

By ERICA CHONG
The Observer

It has been two years since East York resident Robert Schywalsky has picked his two boys up from school, gone grocery shopping or attended his son's baseball game. And he may never do these again.

Schwalsky has Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia (CLL), a type of cancer where the bone marrow produces too many white blood cells, causing swelling of the lymph nodes.

Schwalsky was recently accepted into a drug trial where a newly approved medication called Ibrutinib will be administered. However, getting to the drug trial is a problem. The medication was just approved in February in the United States, but has not yet been given the green light in Canada.

Since discovering this drug trial last month, his wife, Jennifer Schywalsky,

has started an online fundraiser seeking to raise \$75,000 by Sept. 14 (Robert's birthday) next year to cover tests, travel and accommodation.

In its first weeks, the fundraiser has raised over \$8,500, many of the donors left encouraging comments online.

"He's such a warm, gentle, fun person. Earth needs more of such people and we will definitely not let go of him so easily," Fatima Bhagwani, a former colleague of Robert's wrote.

Jennifer said she was "shocked and impressed at how quickly people got online and were making donations."

Meanwhile, she is also organizing a fundraising dinner in May and has turned her crochet-hat hobby into a secondary way of raising money.

Robert has been battling CLL since 2005.

"We had just bought our first home and he was looking to get more life insurance in case anything happened to him," Jen-

nifer said. "Then he got a call from his doctor saying 'Hey, I need you to go see a specialist. Something is odd about your blood test.'"

Since then, Robert has had five different chemotherapy treatments with minimal success because of a 17p depletion, a genetic condition that prevents conventional chemotherapy treatments from working.

The Schwalsky family is hoping the sixth time is the charm.

"It's been absolutely scary the whole time. You wonder if today is going to be the day he gets sick and dies.... You wonder if things are going to be better in a month, a year, six years. You wonder if he's going to be here that long," Jennifer said. "There are highs and there are lows and we're just getting through and moving forward."

People interested in contributing to the cause can visit the website <http://www.youcaring.com/HelpRobFightCancer>

Support group for single dads offers coping strategies

By DILLON HILES
The Observer

For a single mother looking for support, there are hundreds of groups out there. Some of them offer parenting advice, while others help them navigate a divorce. Single dads, on the other hand, have a hard time finding services geared specifically towards them.

But one such group, Fathers Resources International, is available right here in East York.

Every Wednesday evening, men going through divorce, custody battles or struggling with single parenthood gather at Eastminster United Church on Danforth Avenue to support and help each other out.

Executive Director Danny Guspie understands just how hard it can be for single dads to get the support they need, as he found himself in a difficult position himself many years ago.

"A long time ago, I was one of these fathers and there was no place for me to go to get help," he said. "There are thousands of services for women and moms — all are funded by many sources — but there are only a few men's resources, which are all focused on either teaching them how to stop being violent toward their partners or how to transition from prison to being out of prison. Neither of these services addressed what I needed as a single father 25 years ago."

The support group, which he started in 1994, offers all kinds of advice for single dads. Though Guspie is not a lawyer, he does have an extensive knowledge of the legal system and has worked as a law clerk. He uses that knowledge to help people.

"We have been able to help fathers by pointing them in the direction of how to better prepare for mediation, negotiations, communication with their ex and also for self-rep in family court," he said. "Many of the fathers that attend have been self-rep because they cannot afford a lawyer or do not qualify for legal aid, and really have no idea how to prepare for court."

Though Guspie is currently on leave, the support group will continue to meet every Wednesday at 7 p.m. Fathers' Resources International will restart its online support group, which was popular across North America and the U.K. from 2007 to 2012, in April.

For more information, visit www.fathers-resources.com



Nicholas Misketi /// The Observer

Students from William Burgess Elementary School gather around a plot at East York's new community garden. The students will plant and maintain the garden, with a little help from gardening guru Jane Hayes. Some of the vegetables they grow will go to the East York Community Kitchen.

Students learn science through community garden

By NICHOLAS MISKETI
The Observer

Reading, writing and – gardening?

That's certainly part of the equation for students at William Burgess Elementary School, who will start work on East York's new community garden sometime next month.

It will be located at the south end of the East York Community Centre on Torrens Avenue, where city workers have already built the garden's 14 plots. The city of Toronto approved the school's request for the community garden last year.

The William Burgess students have been hon-

ing their gardening skills as part of the curriculum for the last three years. They will maintain and care for the garden, under the supervision of teachers and parents.

Teacher Brad Niven oversees the garden for William Burgess. He says the new garden has really inspired the students.

"It makes such an impact on the students," he said. "They love being out there."

The city will deliver soil to fill the plots before the end of spring. At that time, each class will choose a plot and decide what will be planted there.

Students will work with garden expert Jane Hayes, who will guide them on how to plant

and maintain the garden. Teachers will evaluate the students' work in the garden this spring and again during the fall harvest.

According to principal Jennifer Zurba, the students learn more about science from hands-on work.

"They learn about the diversity of living things. They learn about rocks and minerals. They learn about habitat. They learn about seasons," she said. "All of that, directly from our garden."

The school also wants the students to learn through their own curiosity and wonder. By working in the garden, they'll have the opportunity to learn by finding answers to their own

questions.

"It's really about what they're able to discover on their own and testing their own hypothesis and ideas," Zurba said, adding that the garden will serve the local community.

For instance, the East York Community Kitchen, which provides low-cost, healthy meals at their community cooking sessions, will use vegetables from the garden as ingredients for the meals.

Jennifer Kim, one of the kitchen's co-facilitators, looks forward to garden's opening.

"It's a great opportunity for the Community Kitchen and William Burgess to work together for the local community," she said.



Photo courtesy of Susan Howard

A silver lining

Neil Ward poses with the Ontario Community Newspapers Association award for the Observer at the OCNA's Better Newspapers Competition gala, held in Vaughan on April 4. Ward is the co-ordinator of imaging courses at Centennial College's East York campus, and he helped supervise the journalism students who produced the paper's companion website in 2013 — the award year. The website, torontoobserver.ca, took second-place in the province-wide competition for student-run news websites.

Future of Thomas G. Elgie House uncertain

Cont'd. from page 1

Nancy Elgie stressed the importance of protecting not only the historic buildings, but also the surrounding landscapes, because they're both precious.

"In each city and town, it is those treasured buildings with their landscapes that connect us with our past," she said.

Kae Elgie said her family might not be very famous people, but protecting their home is an important contribution to remembrance of the ordinary citizens who built Leaside.

Geoff Kettel, the co-president of the Leaside Property Owners' Association (LPOA) and chair of the Heritage Committee for North York, has been advocating for the protection of historic sites in Leaside for a long time. He expressed his concerns about what he sees as a destructive trend.

Garnet, the developer, made his first application in the summer of 2013. He proposed to split the two wings of the house, which were added in the 1970s and 1990s, from the original building, and move the building to the front lot. This meant that not only would the house be altered, but the existing landscape in front of the house would also be changed.

The North York Committee of Adjustment turned down the relocation proposal on Jan. 8. Since then, Garnet has appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) to demolish the house.

During the council meeting, Andrew Pruss, principal of E.R.A. Architect Inc. and designer



Observer file photo by Alissa Heidman

The 19th-century Thomas G. Elgie house at 262 Bessborough Dr. is the oldest home in Leaside.

and architect of the developer's proposal, argued that the disputes between the community and the developer stem from their different interpretations of the word "demolish." He said the company is proposing to relocate the two additions and restore the porch.

"The reality is though, to be able to do so, we have to call it a demolition," Pruss said. "Our intention is not to take down the house but to relocate it on its existing location."

Following North York Community Council's endorsement of the home in its current state, the case of the Elgie House is now moving to its next phase — to city council and the

OMB. It's at the Ontario Municipal Board — a tribunal that many preservationists consider friendly to developers — where the future of the Elgie House really becomes uncertain.

So John Parker, the councillor for Ward 26/Don Valley West, asked community council to authorize city staff to prepare a defence of its decision in favour of the Elgie House as it stands.

"We will be there, protecting that house, our heritage and our community," vowed Renee Jacoby, a long-time Leaside resident who has been living behind the building for over 30 years.