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# THE EAST TORONTO **OBSERVER**

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## Board tackles break

**KAYLA KREUTZBERG**  
The Observer

The Toronto District School Board and Toronto Catholic District School Board want this year's Christmas break to start later.

The boards are seeking the provincial government's approval to make Dec. 23 the last day of school for 2011.

Students would return Jan. 9 after a two-week period. Currently, the school boards have Dec. 16 and Jan. 2 as the last and first days.

Proponents say the change would give families more time together.

But some students don't like the deal.

"I'd rather not change it because it gives us time to prepare for Christmas and allows us to get out of school earlier," Marvin Estrada, a Grade 11 student at Senator O'Connor High School, said.



KYLE LARKIN/The Observer

## Over-80s in a curling league of their own

Bill Greer, 81, (left) and Roy Johnson, 82, sweep for Team Scarborough skip Ken Smith, 82. Scarborough won its final match of the season in the Octogenarian Curling League at Donald Club March 4. See story on page 4.

### Parents divided on change

Joanette Fernandes, mother of a student at St. Bede Catholic Elementary School, does not agree with the proposed change.

"My child should have a little bit of a break before Christmas, which is why I believe the current ... schedule is more adaptive to my child and my family's schedule," Fernandes said.

But other parents are ready to embrace the change.

"Christmas time around work is always hectic and busy, so for the kids to end just in time for Christmas allows me to be relaxed and have the opportunity to take some time off to see them," Maria Estrades said.

"I know they [children] will have to wait longer," she said, "[but] it sounds like a good idea and I believe they should try it and see how it goes."

The Ministry of Education says 71 of Ontario's 72 school boards have requested the change.

A verdict on whether or not the proposal goes through will be decided in the spring.

# Get ready, get set, sleep!

## Centenary Hospital's campaign buys 10 new beds

**CHANTELLE HENRIQUES**  
The Observer

The race is on to provide patients with new beds at Centenary Hospital in Scarborough.

The Rouge Valley Health System is set to hold a bed race behind the Scarborough Civic Centre on April 29 to raise funds for new hospital beds.

The Buy a Bed campaign is celebrating a year of fundraising with this event, which will have staff at the hospital competing with corporate teams from around Scarborough.

Campaign director Katherine Craine says new beds are overdue.

"At Centenary here, we haven't had replacement

beds, as a bulk buy, for over 20 years probably," Craine said. "So a lot of the beds are getting to the point where they're past their usefulness and some of them are breaking."

Each new bed costs \$5,000 and up, depending on which ward the bed is for.

So far, donations from staff and the community equal enough money to buy 10 new beds.

Some staff members have money taken directly off their paycheques for the campaign.

They say the main reason for their donations is concern for patient safety.

"Patients who are comfortable recover more quickly," said Dianna Har-

ison, manager of the emergency department.

"They lie on stretchers in the emergency department, so when they get up to a bed, I want that bed to be a good-quality, safe bed for them," she said. "Our beds are in decline over the years and there are newer models out there that are more comfortable and safer."

Janet Roth, a clinical practice leader for the emergency department, says her donations were inspired by her desire to look out for the safety of not only the patients, but the staff as well.

"I would want [the patients] on a bed that they're comfortable on," Roth said. "And also from a nursing perspective, you want a bed



COURTESY OF DAVE STELL/Rouge Valley Health System

Hospital staff and community members race beds last April to raise money for the Buy a Bed Campaign.

that's going to be easy for the nursing staff to care for the patients in.

"If that was my family member, where would I want them?"

Ward 43 councillor Paul

Ainslie is chair of the campaign and was the first person to buy a bed for the hospital.

For more information about donating and the bed race, visit [buyabed.ca](http://buyabed.ca).

# Scarborough couple in court with separate lawyers in negligence case

YEAMROT TADDESE  
The Observer

The Scarborough couple accused of keeping an elderly woman in their frigid garage could end up blaming each other, the wife's lawyer said last Tuesday outside a College Park courtroom.

Kwong Yan, 43, and his wife Qi Tan, 28, both wearing orange prison uniforms, appeared in court via video.

The couple was arrested late last month after police responded to a 911 call from a home near McCowan Road and Finch Avenue East to find Yan's 68-year-old mother unconscious, malnourished and frostbitten.

The accused have different lawyers in case a conflict arises between them, said Haiyun Wang, Tan's defence counsel.

"Potentially, they may point fingers at each other," Wang said. "Just to be safe ... that is why they have different counsels. But at the moment, we don't have that concern."

The couple, charged with



YEAMROT TADDESE/The Observer

Qi Tan and her husband Kwong Yan are facing negligence charges after Yan's 68-year-old mother was found unconscious in their garage last month. Tan's defence counsel Haiyun Wang, pictured above, said the couple have different lawyers because of a possible conflict of interest.

failing to provide necessities of life and criminal negligence causing bodily harm, were ordered to appear in court April 14.

Wang said a bail review is underway and the couple could be released on bail by that date.

"They have more than a 50 per cent chance of get-

ting released," she said. "Both have no [previous] records. They're both law-abiding citizens."

If released, they will appear in court in person instead of by video, Wang said. If Yan and Tan are convicted, she added, they will face jail time.

The couple was previ-

ously denied bail at a hearing on March 1.

Yan's mother, who suffered a stroke, remains in hospital. She had allegedly lived in the garage since November.

Wang declined to say whether the couple knew about the woman's condition in the months leading

up to their arrest.

Yan, a restaurant cook, and Tan, a furniture factory worker, lived with their six-year-old daughter.

Tan's mother, who also lived with the couple, is "very concerned for good reasons," Wang said.

"She's all alone looking after the granddaughter."

## Time to tackle those taxes

ALEX KOZOVSKI  
The Observer

It's the most wonderful time of the year.

The snow is melting. The sun is shining. The midpoint of March is behind us, and all these signs lead to one thing: Tax season is upon us.

Filing income returns is a taxing, tedious task, with organizing information in itself a substantial time-eater.

The process can be complicated. Do it wrong and you might be audited and have to justify every line.

The government isn't exactly warm and cuddly when it comes to income tax returns. Dazed from "intoxication," mistakes can become costly to the innocent tax filer.

Thankfully there are places around Scarborough that can help you file your taxes, so it doesn't feel like a do-it-yourself mugging when you see how much the government gets.

### Where to get them done

■ **Softron Tax: Scarborough Town Centre, 300 Borough Dr.**

With more than 30 years in the business, Softron Tax is a close income tax service. It offers various tax-related services, including fast cash refunds, tax adjustments and pre/post assessments.

It also has a gift promotion, which comes free with every tax preparation.

■ **H&R Block: 4500 Kingston Rd. or 799 Milner Ave.**

One of the biggest tax agencies in the GTA, H&R Block can provide year-round service for those seeking it.

Also available from H&R is its online tax program if you take the mission solo.

With reimbursement and penalty coverage guaranteed if there are any errors, it is one of the fastest ways to get the job done.

With May 2 approaching — the final day to file personal income-tax returns for the previous taxation year — there's still plenty of time to get them done.

The final deadline usually falls on April 30, but this year it falls on a Saturday.

# Local residents fight to keep their street in the dark

JANICE YEUNG  
The Observer

Queensgrove Road in Scarborough is the only road left in Toronto where you can look up at the night sky and clearly count the stars.

However, residents of the 29 households on Queensgrove have been subject to Toronto Hydro's installation of streetlights without consultation.

Jim Bridger, a 50-year-old firefighter, put together a petition gathering responses from 26 homes on the road. Out of the responses, 24 were

against the installation project.

"It started last year in July," Bridger recounted. "Trucks were moving into the neighborhood and wires were planted at the back of houses. Toronto Hydro plans to put up five to six streetlights on our road."

Having lived on Queensgrove all his life, Bridger has a strong emotional connection with the small piece of rural-like landscape.

"Toronto Hydro does not have the right to destroy our landscape without taking into account residents' opinions,"

he said.

Bridger planned to lead a group of residents to meet with Toronto Hydro and city councillors on March 22. He also tried reaching Mayor Rob Ford, but never got to talk to him.

All this originated in 2006, when the city signed an agreement with Toronto Hydro guaranteeing lighting on all city streets.

"I am fairly optimistic that with residents voicing out, we would eventually not have streetlights on our road," Bridger said.

Working at the Toronto

Fire Services, he insists that there is no danger posed for drivers at night because of the many porch lights outside houses.

Christopher Miles, a 44-year-old paramedic living across from Bridger's house, echoes his views.

"Toronto Hydro is doing something to the neighbourhood without consulting the neighbourhood itself," he said. He has lived on Queensgrove for nine years and has signed Bridger's petition.

"We have the support of our city councillor Gary Crawford and we have done everything we could to try to stop Toronto Hydro from going ahead with their plans," he said.

However, he said the construction project is inevitable.

"People love the feeling they get when they walk on our road at night," he said. "You feel like you are in the countryside and you can actually see the stars in the sky."

Another house owner who has been on Queensgrove for 13 years objected to the disruptions in aesthetics and noise that would accompany the building of overhead wires and streetlights.

"This is a total waste of money in the budget," said Mary Auchterl-

onie, a 44-year-old business owner. "They are spending money on a project that does not benefit anyone."

At the moment, only Warden Avenue at Kingston Road are under reconstruction. The installation project on Queensgrove Road is slated for completion by October.



JANICE YEUNG/The Observer

Jim Bridger is Queensgrove's leader in sending in a petition to Toronto Hydro to fight against the installation of streetlights on the road.

# Industry minister tours UTSC

**AAKANKSHA TANGRI**  
The Observer

The new Instructional Centre at the University of Toronto Scarborough is about more than a new school building, the federal industry minister says.

"This [centre] is part of a broader context, the broader context is the economy," Tony Clement said while touring the centre March 15. "The economy remains the top priority of the Harper government."

In 2009, UTSC received \$35 million from the federal Knowledge Infrastructure Program (KIP), which was matched by the provincial government.

KIP, a two-year, \$2-billion economic stimulus measure, was launched as part of the Economic Action Plan to help revive the economy during the recession. The program provides funding to universities and colleges to upgrade infrastructure and training facilities.

The Instructional Centre is the first stage of UTSC's expansion of its North



AAKANKSHA TANGRI/The Observer

Tony Clement (left) recalled his days as a U of T student while touring the new Instructional Centre at UTSC. In 2009, UTSC received \$70 million from the federal and provincial governments to build the centre.

Campus and will increase space by 25 per cent.

The new building is great news for the university, students and researchers, said Clement, a former U of T student.

"As Canada continues to emerge from the global recession ... we know as a government that investing in leading-edge research

labs, libraries and learning commons is essential to creating high-paying, highly skilled jobs, both now and in the future," he said.

UTSC Principal Franco Vaccarino thanked the government for its investment.

"With the government's assistance, we are prepar-

ing our young people to meet the global competitive challenges they will face in the future," he said, adding U of T is becoming a "destination of choice" for scholars.

The Economic Action Plan is helping strengthen Canada's position in the world in research and academics, Clement said.

The Instructional Centre is part of UTSC's efforts to upgrade and expand its facilities ahead of the 2015 Pan Am Games. The new building will include a coffee shop and restaurant, high-tech classrooms and labs.

The centre is set to open in May for the 2011 summer semester.

## News Briefs

### Man saved after fall

A man is in stable condition after falling into a 10-metre industrial tank last week. The man was working on a construction project Thursday at a water treatment Plant near Morning-side Avenue. Toronto Fire Services rescued the man using a nearby construction crane, lifting him to safety.

### Trustee opens office

Scarborough residents were invited to David Smith's official office opening last night. Smith is the public school trustee for the Scarborough Centre and now has an office at the Scarborough Civic Centre. The opening celebration ran from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

### Robbers sought

Police are seeking two boys wanted in connection with a robbery. Last Friday, the suspects approached a woman demanding cash near Kamwood Drive. They later fled the scene empty-handed after the victim pulled off one of the boy's disguises.

## Tweets tell tales of Toronto trustees

How Scarborough councillors make the most of newest tech

### Norm Kelly (@councillorkelly)



■ **Tweeting since:** July 6, 2010  
 ■ **1st Tweet:** Hello Twitter world. The Kelly is among you  
 ■ **Personal:** Met a beautiful white Alaskan husky. Blue eyes. Sort of a doggie Paul Newman

■ **Sports:** You heard it here first. Leafs make the play-offs!!

■ **Politics:** Today (2/2/11), fascinating debates on 3 TTC issues involving close to 1/2 a billion dollars. Whooooo-eeee!!! Love this job.

■ **Humour:** A student at City Hall asked me how much money I made. I replied "Too much according to my constituents. Too little according to my wife."

### Paul Ainslie (@cllrainslie)

■ **Tweeting since:** Feb 21, 2009

■ **1st Tweet:** Looking after the kids + learning how to use twitter, First time on it!!

■ **Personal:** Just won another donut in #Tim Horton's "Roll Up The Rim"...holding out for the 3D TV Package!

■ **Sports:** 16 days until the Toronto Blue Jays open their season in Toronto! Yea!!!!

■ **Politics:** Chairing the Buy A Bed Campaign meeting in Centenary Hospital Rouge Valley Health System

■ **Humour:** How times change...Just recieved a Facebook "Friend Request" from my Father-in-law?!!



**JAMES WATTIE**  
The Observer

As Twitter marks its fifth year, it seems everyone is hopping aboard the social phenomenon.

Celebrities (and their im-posters), major companies and even fictional characters have joined the 140-character limited micro-blogging site.

A growing trend has taken off on Twitter, stemming from Barack Obama's use of the website during the 2008 American presidential election. Politicians are taking over Twitter. At Toronto City Hall, about 24 councillors and Mayor Rob Ford have Twitter accounts.

Scarborough councillors who are on the site include Paul Ainslie, Mike Del Grande, Michael Thompson and Norm Kelly.

Kelly says it does not come naturally, yet he is giving it his best shot.

"I'm taking a stab at it," he said. "We're so interested in what others have to say, it's almost hive-like."

Most of Kelly's tweets centre around his personal life, a trend echoed by Ward 43 coun. Paul Ainslie.

A tweet from Kelly on March 8 read, "Played a lot of hide-and-go-seek with my granddaughter over the week-

end. My favourite role was tickle lion."

Similarly, a tweet from Ainslie just two days before read, "Build LEGO with our sons or read City of TO Council agenda....hmmmm...boys win!!"

Despite having an account during the election last October, Kelly did not use Twitter during the campaign.

"I didn't want to let the opposition know what I was up to," he said.

Kelly is enjoying his Twitter experience so far. Yet, like so many that have come before him, sometimes the tweets have to end.

"I'm having fun with it right now," he said.

"If the fun goes, I'd probably drop it."

Politics does pop up time to time in councillors' micro blurbs. Kelly calls the experience he had through Twitter with his constituents communal.

"The people who use it collectively have one mind," he said. "We're living like bees."

The buzz around Twitter just five years in, continues to grow. With a new use for the service being discovered almost daily, it was only a matter of time before politicians realized the power it has and the people it can effectively reach with the stroke of a key.



MARYAM SHAH/The Observer

Patricia Roche (left) and Heather Robinson organize meetings every week for the realtors' Breakfast Club.

## Realtors give back

**MARYAM SHAH**  
The Observer

A group of real estate agents and brokers, calling themselves the Scarborough Breakfast Club, meet every Wednesday morning in a church basement.

They don't waste any time or money on breakfast though, jumping straight into wheeling and dealing, sharing listings.

But not just to make realty deals. They're working together to raise funds for charities.

The club was started 25 years ago as a way for agents to check each other's listings. Around 18 years ago, it became involved in charity fundraising.

"We saved \$5,000 but it must've taken us three years to do that," she said. "We gave it to the new wing at the Cen-

tenary Hospital for their MRI [machines]."

The brokerages sponsor different schools with both time and money.

Whenever the club has \$200 in the kitty, they use it to help someone in the community.

Agents combine their work and fundraising efforts as well. Sandra Barnes is a mortgage broker with Scotiabank. At this week's meeting, she let everyone know that for every mortgage referral she gets before June 1, she will donate \$100 to the Sunshine Kids Foundation.

The announcement garnered nods of approval from around the room.

"We're the envy of quite a few agents that come in from other areas," Robinson said, smiling.

"They just can't believe what we've got going here."

See more at [torontoobserver.ca](http://torontoobserver.ca)

# FEATURE

# Octogenarians rule this house

## *Invention of new stick extends careers of local senior curlers*

**KYLE LARKIN**  
The Observer

Roy Johnson straps on his helmet, slips on a knee brace, grabs his broom and heads out onto the sheet.

At 82, he doesn't plan on quitting curling any time soon, thanks, he says, to a key invention.

"The reason that I can curl now is the development of the stick," said Johnson, a member of the Scarborough Golf and Country Club.

"Rather than having to come out of the hack on my knee, I can now just walk out and use the stick without bending over," he said.

As decades pass, bones start to ache, balance isn't what it used to be and the likelihood of needing surgery increases. Obstacles like these make crouching into the hack and balancing on one leg tougher.

This is exactly what Eric Downer, an over-80 curler, had in mind when he helped invent what is now dubbed "the stick." Also known as a "cue," the five-foot long shaft has a bendable



Ken Smith mentally prepares for his last shot in the seventh end at the Donalda Club.

KYLE LARKIN/The Observer

plastic tube at the bottom that slips over the handle of a rock.

Johnson began curling in 1995 when he was 67. Recently retired at the time, Johnson was fascinated by the sport and began playing every year.

But as the years passed, competing against younger men grew tedious, he said.

Fellow curlers Bob Caunt, Walter Mckowan and Arthur Burford also experienced the challenges of the wide age gaps. Together they pioneered the Octogenarian Curling League at Donalda Club in Don Mills seven years ago.

"As we started getting into our 70s it got a little tough for us," Burford said. "So we set up the over-70 curling league. A few of us in that league got older again and said, 'We're 80, this is getting a little tough.'"

The league features eight teams from across the GTA, each composed of six or seven players.

Even though the league has no playoff, an end-of-season cash prize gives the teams some competitive incentive.

The final matches of this season took place March 4. Team Scarborough finished fourth.

Throwing lead for Scarborough is Bill Greer, 81, followed by Roy Johnson. Harold Jamieson, 85, is the team's vice. Ken Smith, 82, is Scarborough's skip.

And while fourth place falls short of a medal, the team closed out the season with a solid 10-2 victory over eight ends.



KYLE LARKIN/The Observer

From left to right: Harold Jamieson, 85, Roy Johnson, 82, Ken Smith, 82, Bill Greer, 81 make up Team Scarborough, which closed out the season with a 10-2 victory and finished fourth overall.

Scarboro's over-80 team also plays pick-up games twice a week in Scarborough, as well as several bonspiels a year.

Using the stick, all four members make the transition from throwing the rock look easy. But the stick does come with its drawbacks, Johnson said.

"It's difficult to get the proper weight of the stone and that's very important when you're drawing," he said. "There is a certain method. You have to take the right amount of steps each time as well as remembering how much strength to use and how much to twist the stick when releasing."

The drawbacks are a small price to pay, though, for what the stick has done for the careers of many elders, Johnson added.

"The stick has resurrected my career in curling and it's done wonders for some of my friends," he said.

The stick has helped older curlers, but dangers remain. Three years ago, Downer died after slipping and smacking his head on a sheet of ice.

Several octogenarians now wear helmets or thick protective bands around their heads in case the grip on their special shoes falter.

Knee braces are also standard, providing much-needed support while shuffling down the sheet. For those whose vision isn't what it used to be, monoculars that hang around the neck are used to see the house from the other side of the

will benefit in the long run.

On the other hand, the foremen of the league believe otherwise. Burford worries about the gap in age groups, noting the 55-60 range has far fewer participants.

"I think [the league] will go on for a few more years," Burford said. "It is a struggle because you need six or seven players for each team."

If Team Scarborough is right, Donalda won't have to worry about gaps in age groups, but will instead experience a surge in participants.

sheet before throwing.

With Donalda's growing support and advances in equipment, the future of the league is uncertain. Team Scarborough's members said they believe the stick will attract more people to the sport and that the careers of curlers



KYLE LARKIN/The Observer

Roy Johnson seen here using the "stick," walking out from the hack in the third end.

### Rules for Stick Curling

- Two teams of four.
- Teams alternate, taking 8 shots each.
- Team whose rock(s) are closest to centre get the point(s)
- Most points after 8 ends wins

“  
The stick has resurrected my career — Roy Johnson

# Offbeat meditations on love

Students create original theatre production

## PREVIEW

ANDRE THURAIRATNAM  
The Observer

Opening night is quickly approaching as University of Toronto theatre students rehearse for their original production of *The Jewel in the Lotus*.

The play is not your typical piece of theatre. With no plot, characters or story, the production gives the audience an opportunity to experience a type of show they wouldn't normally be exposed to.

Cast member Anya-Kay Dixon is aware people may not be used to different types of non-traditional theatre.

She gave insight into how a central theme helped bring the play together.

"It's a devised piece that surrounds the topic of love — it's symbolic, literal — it's about everything and nothing at the same time," Dixon said.

When asked how she



ANDRE THURAIRATNAM/The Observer

The cast of *The Jewel in the Lotus* has been hard at work on this production since September. The play premieres its four-show run this Wednesday at University of Toronto Scarborough.

would describe the play's structure, Dixon said it was not something that has a concrete definition.

"I would say it's like life — it's random.

You think you know what's coming and you think you have an idea of what life is and you say, 'I've got it down! This makes sense I'm in control!' Then you lose it."

Artistic director Trisha Lamie described the production as being a collage of dif-

ferent theatrical elements.

"It doesn't flow," she said. "Some parts are very improvisational in nature.

Some parts are very meticulously choreo-

graphed. Some parts are very meditative. Some parts are very silly and fun.

"We have everything — it's sort of a real radical juxtaposition of all kinds of

performance styles, dance, movement, sound — that uses 'love' as a thematic focus to hold the piece together."

Development on this show started in September of last year.

Being a collective creation, all the cast members had a big hand in the creative process.

Being part of the creative process, actor Ebony Gittens explained that the road to opening

night is not always a smooth one and problems are encountered along the way.

"It's a difficult process because things change every day," she said.

"There are so many different creative minds behind it, that it can get difficult when they clash.

"People have different ideas and we need to learn how to work together to get that idea to come across the best to make everybody happy."

“

*I'd say it's like life — it's random — Anya-Kay Dixon*

## Ladies and gentlemen, this is Route 86 Scarborough

TTC driver uses airline-style announcements for passengers

AAKANKSHA TANGRI  
The Observer

TTC riders on Mike Marges's bus usually break out into applause and laughter when he does announcements.

Marges adds a personal touch to his job. He does airplane-style commentary on his bus.

"Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen and welcome aboard the air-red rocket. Today's destination is to StarSpray. Our approximate arrival time is set to 2:45, however, due to traffic and weather, we'll be there a few minutes early," he announces as he

leaves a subway station.

The time and destination is changed with each commute.

As a child, he was fascinated by a TTC driver

who used to sing on the job. The driver's enthusiasm and personable nature inspired him to join the TTC, Marges said.

"I incorporated small little things I saw as a kid and it just started snow-balling into this spiel."

The 26-year-old also uses pop-culture icons and movie characters in his commentary, depending on the average age of the riders.

"I change it up everyday. If it's mostly kids on the bus, it'll be a kids movie and if it's mostly adults on the bus, it'll be an adult movie like *Ghost*," Marges said.

Since joining the TTC two years ago, Marges drives the 86 and 54 routes in Scarborough.

"I love Scarborough. The route is really nice



AAKANKSHA TANGRI/The Observer

TTC driver Mike Marges adds a personal touch by using pilot-like commentary for announcements. Marges drives the 54, 86 and 116 routes in Scarborough.

and it's relatively long which makes the day go by quick."

Alison McKenna, a regular TTC customer, said Marges is one of the friendliest drivers she's come across.

"I wasn't sure if this bus went past the stop I was looking for and he was like absolutely and then

cracked a joke."

Airplane-style commentary isn't the only unique thing Marges does.

He sings happy birthday for his riders, jokes with them and plays games with children.

"If a kid sitting on a bus for a half-hour or 45 minutes that can be a little long for their attention span

so I'll get on the speaker and ask, 'Do you want to play a game of I Spy with objects inside the bus like a non-smoking sign?'"

Marges hopes to eventually train new TTC employees to help improve the company.

"If I can put a smile on someone's face then my goal is achieved."

*If I can put a smile on someone's face, then my goal is achieved.*

—Mike Marges

# Elder care is crucial

As communities focus on preparing younger generations to be the leaders of the future, not enough attention is being paid to the people that got them here in the first place.

The alleged mistreatment of a 68-year-old woman found in her son's garage with one piece of bread and a box of diapers suggested a devastating case of elder abuse.

It is a pity that it takes alleged incidents like this to alert communities to a growing problem, and even sadder that this community may have let it happen.

Media reports indicate that people living on the same street or even the family could have known what was going on, but did not step forward.

Too often, people know there is a problem going on, but do not want to get involved at the risk of sounding like a nosy neighbour. And while there is some truth to that, those abused will reach out to someone around them. Neighbours should at least be willing to listen.

Statistics Canada reported that between 1998 and 2005, police-reported violence against seniors had gone up by 20 per cent. And in several cases, it was abuse at the hand of family members.

So far, proposed solutions are not cutting it. The province has the Aging at Home strategy, but most of the funding is going to those in hospitals instead.

And for those who prefer institutional care, the *Toronto Star's* exposé late last year on a retirement home, showed a reality that needs to be fixed.

When Ontario Health Minister Deborah Matthews heard about the retirement home, she said she was consumed by the problem of elder abuse.

And we need to be too.

So take a look at the elderly around you and remember to appreciate them.

Remember that one day you will be old enough to need the same care. Do not wait until that day to recognize the problem.

—Natalie Sequeira

# Keep lights out on Queensgrove

Queensgrove Road in Scarborough does not have streetlights, and most residents want to keep it that way.

About \$2 million is going into an electrical upgrade in the area, which means streetlights for the neighbourhood.

Although Toronto Hydro says it has a responsibility to install streetlights on every city street for safety reasons, Queensgrove residents' choice should be respected. After all, they have lived this way for years and there is romance to the darkness.

About 29 small bungalows house longtime residents who enjoy the rural feel of their neighbourhood near Kingston Road and Warden Avenue. People who live there have a strong sense of community. They leave their front doors open and know all their neighbours.

According to reports, of the 29 households on Queensgrove Road, 24 do not want streetlights, two want them, while the rest are impartial.

The Distillery District in Old Town Toronto is dim compared to Yonge Street at night. But that's partly what makes the area so great.

Queensgrove is asking the city to recognize its uniqueness.

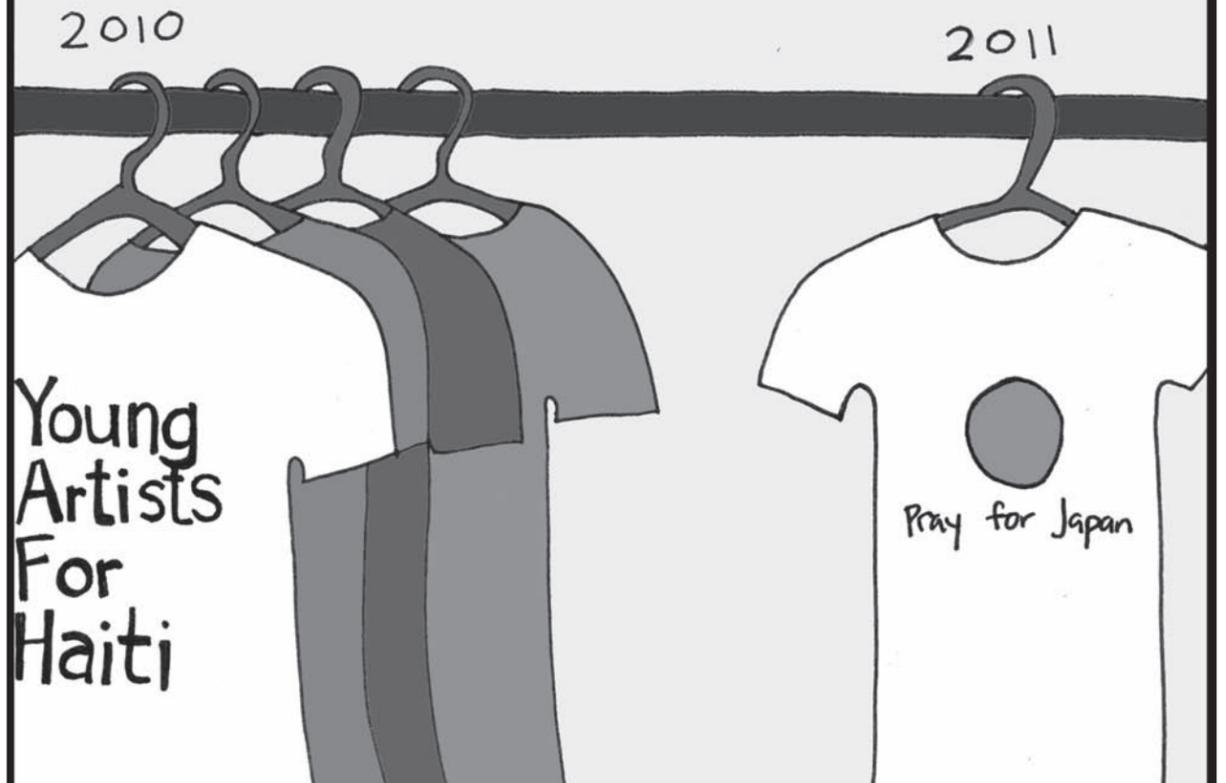
Residents are trying to keep what they believe is the character of their area. And Scarborough can use more areas with character its occupants love.

This quaint suburban neighbourhood is not the only one refusing lights. This month, Earl Brazeal, a resident of Woodstock, Conn., is also pushing for dark skies in his town for environmental reasons.

The way neighbourhoods look is about how its residents see themselves and what they're comfortable with. Queensgrove residents want to see the stars at night and the city should let them.

—Yeamrot Taddese

Every time a major disaster occurs, the world runs out and buys more T-shirts.



JESSICA LEE/The Observer

# Five years and 140 characters later: How Twitter is changing your news

Where do you get your news from? It's a simple question with a simple answer. Perhaps you read a daily newspaper.

Maybe you watch the evening news every night at six. You might even listen to an all-news radio station on the way to work.

Now here's the follow-up question: in five years, where will you be getting your news from? Will you still be reading that daily newspaper? You might be ... for the crossword.

Judging by recent trends, you are probably going to be getting all your breaking news online, and it is going to be coming from Twitter and similar applications.

Since its launch in 2006, the online microblogging social network has skyrocketed in popularity — now with an estimated 190 million registered users across the globe according to the website's statistics profile.

Picture yourself in Japan during the recent earthquake. The ground is shaking, the buildings are swaying — but you don't run to safety. Your first instinct is to pull out your phone and get on Twitter to find out what's going on.

This is exactly what a group of people on a subway platform in Japan did just a few weeks ago.

Lawrence Morton, a story editor at the



Andre Thurairatnam

CBC, completely agrees with society's need for immediate news.

"Sometimes you'll get a tweet from someone that could be useful, like an eye witness account," he said.

"I know where there have been some cases where planes are going down, and people are tweeting as it is happening. It can be a really good source to contact people in breaking news situations where the only way to get to them is through their twitter account."

Why is Twitter so valuable in terms of breaking news? The service is giving users the opportunity to follow verified media outlets, which are updated as soon as any news breaks.

680 News may see an accident on Hwy. 401 from their helicopter, and 'tweet' the information in a matter of seconds. No waiting for the traffic report.

Users can even follow politicians, celebrities, athletes, friends — anyone who

has an account set up. The advantage here is that users are getting real-time information straight from the source.

Granted, Twitter is not without its flaws. However, even with gaps in the system, Twitter's influence in major events cannot go unnoticed: One such instance occurring in Toronto's 2010 mayoral election.

There was a lot of controversy surrounding Rob Ford, where his team set up a fake Twitter account as a way to further his campaign. Whether or not the account had a positive impact in his victory as mayor is debatable, but it made its mark in the election.

As with any form of media, Twitter will only be as reliable as the people using it. Morton urges using Twitter effectively requires a balance in accuracy and timeliness.

Over time, Twitter's developers will undoubtedly find ways to curb any malicious use for their product.

If the website continues to grow at the rate it has been growing, I believe in five years a newly refined Twitter will be the number one source for the world's breaking news.

As for now, however, it's still a relatively new concept, especially for older generations. To them, it still takes a back seat to that daily crossword.

## The East Toronto OBSERVER

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Sports  
BriefsLocal sniper tops  
in OHL scoring

Scarborough native Tyler Toffoli of the injury-plagued Ottawa 67's tied for the OHL's point lead with 108 — a league-high 57 goals to go along with 51 assists. Toffoli got his start in the Scarborough Hockey Association.

Rec centre hosts  
Family Skate Day

A free Family Skate Day was held Friday, March 18, at Don Montgomery Community Centre. The event was sponsored by 41 Division police officers. Clowns and Toronto Maple Leafs' mascot Carlton the Bear were also on hand.

Wheelchair  
court opens

Variety Village got a new FIBA-regulated hardwood centre court was unveiled at the Scarborough complex on Thursday, March 17. The court will be used by competitive wheelchair basketball athletes. The Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment Team Up Foundation, with support from Rogers Communications, invested \$120,000, which covered the costs of the court.

## Swords clash in Scarborough

JANICE YEUNG  
The Observer

When dusk falls Monday and Wednesday nights, the unmistakable clashing and banging sounds of sword fighting ring out in Knob Hill United Church.

The church, at 23 Gage Ave., opened its doors to the Scarborough Fencing Club eight years ago.

It's just the latest chapter in the club's long history, head coach Gordon Fong explained.

"The Scarborough Fencing Club started in the late '50s," he said. "Over the years, we have rallied a large number of members."

Fencing requires a lot of discipline, Fong said.

It is as much about exerting physical energy as it is about using mental power, he said.

"There are basically six levels to fencing," he said. "Members improve in their skills and precision in movement gradually."

Supervising lessons and organizing sessions is a labour of love for Fong.

The broadcast technician moonlights as a volunteer for the club.

"If I can still walk and move," Fong said, "I would fence for as long as I can."

Allan Spears, a volunteer coach like Fong, shares his passion for the sport.

"I started fencing at the Scarborough Fencing Club and knew that I liked the art



JANICE YEUNG/The Observer

Tom Partington (left) and Allan Spears are now coaches at the Scarborough Fencing Club after fencing as members for a few years. The club holds classes on Mondays and Wednesdays at Knob Hill United Church.

of swordplay shortly after I took lessons," Spears said.

"The ethics behind the sports appeals to me. Through fencing we learn to be respectful to others and also to yourself."

Tom Partington, a longtime coach at the club, first learned fencing from Bob Anderson, a sword-fighting trainer for many movies and Darth Vader stunt double in the original Star Wars trilogy.

"I have been fencing for 38 years," the 64-year-old said. "I think many seniors still play the sport because it is ex-

**"If I can still walk and move, I would fence for as long as I can."**

— Gordon Fong

cellent mental training.

People have said that fencing is like chess played at the speed of light."

Partington's student, 32-year-old painter Josue Castro, became interested in fencing after he saw Bruce Dickinson,

lead singer of his favourite band Iron Maiden, fence in a concert documentary.

"The sport looks very regal," Castro said. "It is as if the players have ballet costumes on. This deceives people into thinking fencing is

easy."

His tip for learners new to the sport was, "You just have to practice regularly."

The Scarborough Fencing Club holds beginner and intermediate lessons open to all ages every Monday and Wednesday from 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Members of all levels are then free to join the individual and group open fencing sessions from 9 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.

Anyone is welcome to try their hand at the sport with the experts during open sessions on Wednesday nights.

## Oliver Mowat and Hillcrest deadlocked

KAYLA KREUTZBERG  
The Observer

Scarborough's Sir Oliver Mowat Mustangs fought back to a 2-2 tie in their first game of the week-long OFSAA

tournament on March 22.

It was a back-and-forth battle between Scarborough's Mustangs and Ottawa's Hillcrest Hawks, and was the first of their two games at the MasterCard Centre in Etobicoke.

The third-ranked Mustangs trailed by one with under three minutes left in the second period until Jackson Howe tied the game on a rebound.

The Hawks had gained the lead at 14:13 of the second when Hawks captain Benjamin Robillard beat sprawling Mustang goaltender Eric Wright with help from Jeffrey Clarke.

The 18th-ranked Hawks had opened the scoring late in the first with a solid pass in front of the net, scoring with a rooftop goal.

Mustangs Korey Brand saw an opportunity to tie up the game with a scramble in front of the net with two minutes left in the first.

Brand maintained the rebound and put it in the corner past the Hawk's goaltender to end the first period with a 1-1 tie.

With 23 seconds left in the third period, a timeout was called. Robin Kerr, coach of the Hawks, told his team to rest.

"We told them we were the



KAYLA KREUTZBERG/The Observer

Hillcrest Hawks captain Benjamin Robillard, who added a point for his team, battles for the puck against Sir Oliver Mowat's Jackson Howe, who tied the game up for his team.

better team, and [to] go for the gold," he said.

The final buzzer broke the silence in the arena, ending the game in a 2-2 draw.

Coach John Lyttle of the Mustangs said the game was not their best effort, and the team looked disjointed on the ice.

Mustang defenceman Alex-

Campbell was also unimpressed with his team's performance.

"I felt that our team could have just stepped it up a little bit towards the end," he said.

## LINGUISTIC LARKS

## Category

One word  
best picture  
winners.

P O T O

H N

R O E O A T

I G

With the letters  
given,  
guess the  
horizontal clues.  
Work your way to  
the vertical clue.

Unscramble the  
circled letters to  
form the final  
answer.

An adaptation of a  
Charles Dickens Novel

By Kyle Larkin

# Art lovers tune into new sound

Gallery showcases audio-visual installations

**CHANTELLE HENRIQUES**  
The Observer

Visitors at Doris McCarthy Gallery can take their senses through an exhibit unlike no other until April 13.

Located at the University of Toronto Scarborough campus, it allows the public to explore the works of artist and musician Gordon Monahan for free.

Experimental music and sound art is displayed, creating both a visual and an auditory masterpiece.

Erin Peck, a coordinator, says Monahan's works bring something new to the gallery.

"This is the noisiest exhibition we've ever had and it's interesting to think of the gallery as an acoustic environment, not just a visual space," Peck said.

In *Piano Airlift*, visitors enter a dark room with a piano playing an eerie tune. Projected on a screen in front of the piano is a helicopter with a piano attached underneath.



COURTESY OF TONI HAFKENSCHIED/Doris McCarthy Gallery

*Piano Airlift* is one of the five works by Gordon Monahan on display at the Doris McCarthy gallery. The piano sits in an empty room and emits music from seemingly nowhere.

The piano is dropped over the cliff as the song played on the piano in the room reaches a new height.

Monahan has often heard interpretations that have never crossed his mind.

"Some people were angry that I destroyed the piano. I knew the piano was already destroyed [before it was dropped] but I guess that is

not obvious to the average person," Monahan said.

Monahan did not showcase that piece for quite some time after first making the video.

"For 18 years I did nothing with it. Then in Austria, I was asked to create a piece using video and I dug up that old video," he said.

Other pieces include *Theremin Pendulum*, *Music from*

Nowhere, and the most recent, *A Piano Listening to Itself*, which is the gallery's first outdoor installation.

The pieces create different experiences for everyone. Whether it is swinging lights and sound coming at you in a dark room, or a piano that is played by it, visitors will leave with a new insight of the artist's mind.

Peck says the gallery allows visitors to explore unfamiliar types of art.

"He [Monahan] is also interested in the social and cultural impact of sound, which is something we can all relate to," Peck said.

"We are surrounded by it all the time, sometimes we just need to take the opportunity to listen."

## Money not a concern for Scratch Lab

**ALEX KOZOVSKI**  
The Observer

Thanks, Dragons, but no thanks.

That's the message Scratch Labs DJ Institute sent to the moguls of the CBC's *Dragon's Den* when the school turned down the show's offer to train and then make money off its students.

Instead, Scratch Labs offers free sessions, including one at Malvern Public Library on March 16, because it says it puts education and opportunity ahead of financial gain.

"Our vision for our school was completely different," said Scratch Lab graduate Craig Brooklyn, who hosted the hour-long library session.

Brooklyn's program taught local youth how to scratch and mix, as well as some timing exercises.

### Scratch and mix

Using four turntables and a few small mixing boards, students took turns getting first-hand experience in music manipulation.

"Blending techniques. Execution techniques. Scratching, which is a big deal. Beat juggling," Brooklyn said, listing what he typically teaches. "There's a lot of coordination, you're always doing multiple things at multiple times. I always say DJs are the multi-task kings."

The majority of participants at the Malvern library session were children from Skills Training for Youth Through Learning and Education (STYLE), an organization that provides services to youth living with learning disabilities in high-priority neighbourhoods.

"The DJ program is actually pretty unique. The libraries do a lot of cool stuff like this," said Adeel Mulla, STYLE program coordinator.

"And [the kids] are totally focused, they are really enjoying it."

Engaging the students through some masterful scratching, Brooklyn kept everyone's attention, teaching the beginners basic scratching. He also took questions, telling the attendees to work hard at whatever they do.

"Having programs like this in high-priority neighbourhoods — low-cost programs — [are a] good idea," Mulla said. "We're getting them to do other stuff, learn new stuff during the [March] break." This was the first time Scratch Labs held a session at the library. If they return to do it again, they can expect a bigger crowd.

"If [Scratch Labs] came back, I'd probably bring more kids," Mulla said.

# Cliffcrest welcomes creepy-crawlers

Children get up close and personal with exotic creatures over March Break

**JESSICA MOY**  
The Observer

Which cold-blooded critter has scales like a snake, legs like a lizard and has a long blue tongue?

The blue-tongue lizard of course.

Questions like these were answered last Thursday at the Cliffcrest Library as elementary school children were given an interactive presentation on warm and cold-blooded creatures.

"Do you guys know why his tongue is blue?" Alda Metallo, *Creepy Crawlers Express* presenter, asked the children.

"It's poisonous" or "to make it look prettier," the children yelled.

"It's not poisonous," Metallo said. "He pretends like he's poisonous so he can protect himself, he actually has no venom inside of him."

The library hosted a variety of reptiles and amphibians for children to have a hands-on experience.

Children oohed and aahed as Metallo took each animal out, letting the children feel the slippery or scaly skin of



JESSICA MOY/The Observer

Presenter of *Creepy Crawlers Express*, Alda Metallo, gives kids a hands-on experience at Cliffcrest library with a bearded dragon and other reptiles during March Break.

the reptiles.

"Kids like the chameleon and the chinchilla the most," Metallo said.

Nine-year-old Jacob Peace was one of many looking forward to the chameleon.

"I haven't held a chameleon, but I have held a snake!"

Peace said "which is similar to a chameleon."

Metallo took the colour-changing reptile out of its cage, as it sat on a small branch.

The kids sat up in excitement.

The animal from Madagas-

car cannot change into all the colours, according to Metallo.

"This one can change yellow, green or brown" Metallo said, "they only change colours depending on their mood. When he's happy he can be a really light colour, when he's upset he can be

dark brown."

Other animals included leopard geckos, frogs, corn snakes and a Russian tortoise that got its name for being the first tortoise to be taken to the Russian space station.

Metallo fed the critters mealworms as she taught the children what the critters ate and where they came from.

One of the last animals shown was the bearded-dragon lizard from Australia.

"Want to know why his throat very puffy?" Metallo asked, "cause when he gets scared he puffs it out really large so his predators are scared of him."

The kids suddenly yelled, "Can he puff it now?"

"I don't really want to do that," Metallo said, "cause that means I have to scare him."

She admits the chinchilla from South America is her favorite animal to present.

"He's really soft...I'm more into the softer animals."

Growing up with pet reptiles, Metallo is familiar with all the critters, but admits she would not bring the tarantula.

"I'm terrified of spiders. I can hold them in a cage but can't hold it in my hand."