

Jessica Moy /// Observer

Santa arrives early in Scarborough

Santa and his helper handed out candy canes to those who attended the annual Holly Berry Bazaar at St. Dunstan Anglican Church on Nov. 26.

Ford unveils budget plan

Scarborough residents to see construction of new fire station and library, but at a cost

By JAMES WATTIE
The Observer

After multiple disruptions by hecklers and with a heavy police presence, Mayor Rob Ford unleashed the proposed 2012 operating budget to the public.

The plan calls for a 2.5-per cent hike in property tax, a 10-cent TTC fare increase, as well as the elimination of 2,300 city jobs.

In Scarborough, the budget calls for the construction of a \$4-million fire station to "improve emergency response times" as well as an \$8-million library in the Scarborough Civic Centre area.

Libraries will be saved from closure thanks to what Ford called found "efficiencies", which include cutting hours and jobs.

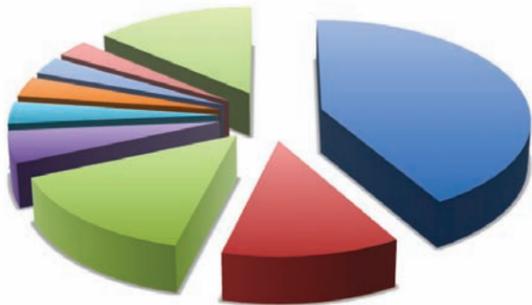
Ford told the media this is a smart budget.

"It slams the door on out-of-control spending," he said.

The proposed TTC fare increase will surely draw criticism from Scarborough residents, who rely on the service for day-to-day living.

Five small wading pools, which have yet to be named, will be closed in the city, due to costly repair costs.

BUDGET 2012



- TTC
- Spadina Subway
- Transportation Services
- Parks, Forestry and Recreation
- Facilities and Real Estate
- Toronto Police Service
- Fleet Services
- Union Station
- Other

Across the city, the budget has allocated an estimated \$263.2 million for upgrades and redevelopments to parks, nursing homes and community centres.

The budget will be up for public discussion on Dec. 7 with a final council vote coming in January.

If passed, the budget will see the city spend less in 2012 than it has in 2011, a first for Toronto.

BUDGET EFFECTS

- 10-cent TTC hike
- Closure of five community pools
- 2.5% property tax increase
- Total budget:** \$14.8 billion

GUILD INN'S PATH TO NOWHERE

The history of Scarborough's Guild Inn and its development with Centennial College:

1914

■ Guild Inn opens. Built for Colonel Harold Bickford on the Scarborough Bluffs

1966

■ Centennial College opens



Oct. 2008

■ Ainslie and Centennial College try to save the Guild Inn

The Guild Inn sits boarded up and abandoned in Guildwood Park, but it may have a future after all.

Negotiations over the next few months between The Guild Park Advisory Committee, and Centennial College will hopefully resurrect the former private residence, public hotel, museum, and art colony, originally built in 1914.

Sep. 2009

■ New Centennial College campus closer to reality



Feb. 2011

■ Centennial and the city to revive Guild Inn



Today

■ Deal between Guild Inn and Centennial College cancelled

Story on page 2

Guild Inn deal collapses

City calls off plans with Centennial

By AAKANKSHA TANGRI and KYLE LARKIN
The Observer

The City of Toronto has rejected Centennial College's proposal to redevelop the historic Guild Inn in Scarborough.

In 2008, the college had proposed to build a 120-room hotel with plans to restore the Bickford residence. The two-phase project also included adding a restaurant, banquet facility and spa.

Earlier this year, Centennial stated they would be unable to carry on with the original plan due to a slowing global economy and presented a new proposal. Centennial's development consultant, Pannell Kerr Foster, suggested a senior-friendly condominium building would allow the college to meet its financial obligations needed to restore the Bickford residence.

The new plan was rejected by the city of Toronto due to conflicting visions.

In 2006, Coun. Paul Ainslie of Ward 43 created the Guild Park Advisory Committee (GPAC) along with executive members from the Guildwood Village Community Association (GVCA) to assist the city in finding a developer for the Bickford residence.

"I will not support con-



Aakanksha Tangri // Observer

The City of Toronto terminated a bid by Centennial College to redevelop Scarborough's historic Guild Inn. The college had originally proposed to build a hotel and later senior-friendly condominiums.

dominiums being built in the middle of a city park," Ainslie stated on his website.

Centennial argues condominiums are the only feasible solution rather than abandoning the residence for demolition.

"During times of economic recession, investors are averse to risk and our industry sur-

veys indicated the [hotel] did not offer an appropriate return on investment to interest the private sector," said Rosanna Cavallaro, associate vice-president of marketing and communications at Centennial College.

Part of the reason Centennial believes the hotel wouldn't be a wise investment

is because the Guild Inn is cut-off from the major transportation hubs.

Ainslie, along with Donna Milovanovic, president of the Guildwood Village Community Association, maintain that if Centennial had originally proposed the condominium project, the city would not have complied. "The commu-

nity would never have supported such a proposal and perhaps we would have a useful structure," Milovanovic said.



● For more on this story, see News at torontoobserver.ca

Scarborough MPPs promoted to parliamentary assistant

By AAKANKSHA TANGRI
The Observer

Scarborough now has full representation in the McGuinty cabinet.

Earlier this month, MPPs Margaret Best of Scarborough-Guildwood and Brad Duguid of Scarborough Centre were appointed Minister of Consumer Services and Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, respectively. Scarborough's remaining four MPPs have been given roles of parliamentary assistants.

Scarborough South-west MPP, Lorenzo Berardinetti, will be Attorney General John

Gerresten's parliamentary assistant while Scarborough-Rouge River's Bas Balkissoon will continue to be Minister of Community and Social Service John Milloy's parliamentary assistant, a position he's held since 2009.

Eric Hoskins, Minister of Children and Youth Services, will get Pickering-Scarborough East MPP Tracy MacCharles, as his parliamentary assistant. Soo Wong of Scarborough-Agincourt has been attached to the Minister of Safety and Correctional Services, Madeleine Meilleur.

In their roles as parliamentary assis-

tants, the MPPs will be responsible for supporting the ministers and representing them inside and outside the legislature when needed.

MacCharles will talk to Hoskins about certain areas in the Ministry of Children and Youth Services portfolio she would like to focus on, she said.

Wong said she hopes to assist Meilleur in any way she can.



● For more on this story, see News at torontoobserver.ca

Elephants to be moved despite group threats

Despite threats of de-accreditation from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the Toronto Zoo board has voted to go ahead with sending its three elephants to a sanctuary in California.

The AZA threatened to remove the zoo's membership because PAWS Sanctuary, where the elephants are headed, is not AZA accredited.

Should the zoo lose its membership, it will be unable to get animals from other zoos on loan. There are currently 175 animals on loan to the Toronto Zoo.

"The quality and standards of the zoo are not dependant on an accreditation by a third party, but rather by the quality of staff, their commitment, dedication and their care of the animals," board member Mark Grimes said in a statement to the Toronto Observer.

The three elephants, Toka, Thika, and Iringa, are being trained for the big move down south, which is slated to happen by the end of April 2012.

An October decision sealed the pachyderms' fate, to much controversy. Proponents say that since the city owns the zoo, council should be free to make executive decisions.

Others, like councillor and board member Gloria Lindsay Luby, say that city council usurped the board's authority.

Losing accreditation could also impact the proposed exchange with China to acquire pandas.

~ James Wattie

NEWS FLASHES

Child falls from sixth storey

Police have charged a 24-year-old mother with attempted murder after her 3-year-old daughter fell from a balcony on the sixth-floor of a Scarborough apartment building on 915 Midland Ave., near Eglinton Ave. East, last Thursday.

The child suffered life-threatening head injuries and is now at the Hospital for Sick Children, police say.

Attempted robbery in east

An attempted robbery took place on Nov. 23 in the area of Sandhurst Circle and McCowan Road in Scarborough.

Two male suspects approached an 18-year-old male.

One of the suspects attempted to grab the victim's phone, but the victim was able to make a safe escape.

The suspects immediately fled the scene. No injuries were reported.

Bank robbery at CIBC branch

A bank robbery was reported at the CIBC branch located at Ellesmere Road on Nov. 24

Police say two male suspects wearing disguises entered the bank with firearms and approached a teller demanding cash. The suspects fled the scene.

Woman testifies in murder trial

A trial of a 2008 fatal stabbing in Scarborough continues after Nathaniel O'Brien, 34, is charged with first-degree murder in the deaths of Saramma Varughese and Susan John along with attempted murder of John's daughter.

Accused killer in court

By JANICE YEUNG
The Observer

Jerome Stephenson appeared in court via video on Nov. 24. He faced nine charges of attempted murder, including aggravated assault, resisting arrest and attempting to disarm a police officer after allegedly throwing his wife and two daughters from his fourth-floor apartment.

The 27-year-old accused appeared in court via video while he was still being held at the Toronto East Detention Centre. He was in an orange prisoner's jumpsuit and appeared to look tired and weary.

He is still held in custody and will appear for a bail hearing again via video on Dec. 1.

Crown attorney Charmaine Wong said the case has simply been put over.

Raising 'Boundless' funds at UTSC

East-end campus students benefit from largest fundraising campaign in Canadian university history

By JANICE YEUNG
The Observer

Upon entering the Academic Advising & Career Centre at the University of Toronto's Scarborough campus (UTSC), a cheerful and chatty girl immediately rises from the reception desk to say, "hello."

Farrah Chanda Aslam, 22, works at UTSC while also pursuing her master's degree in Social Work and Community Development at U of T's St. George campus.

She has been selected by the university to help promote their fundraising program "Boundless," the largest campaign in Canadian university history launched last week with a goal of raising \$2 billion.

"I have benefited from various scholarships," she said. "It has alleviated my financial burden because OSAP wasn't enough."

"I think it's very important for people to donate to U of T," Aslam said. "because it provides excellent support for stu-



Janice Yeung // Observer

Farrah Chanda Aslam has been selected by U of T to help promote their fundraising program 'Boundless', the largest campaign in Canadian university history.

dents in need. It relieves stress and anxiety for many students who experience a lot of financial stress."

UTSC's vice-dean of graduate education, Bill Gough, agreed that the \$2-billion target is not too ambitious for U of T.

"We raised a billion dollars 10 years ago," he said. "This time around I'm sure there will be substantial progress."

He pointed out that the

funding would go to certain aspects of the university's budget: to create scholarships in certain disciplines at UTSC, such as environmental studies and mental health, fund research, and pay for professionals hired at the university.

Gough is also optimistic about UTSC's financial outlook, mentioning that it is not running a deficit.

The executive-director of development and alumni re-

lations at UTSC, Georgette Zinaty, is one of the forerunners in this fundraising effort, which is one of the largest in Canadian university history.

"I can tell you we have an exciting fundraising campaign for UTSC!" she exclaimed. "The campus is at an exciting juncture in its history and the academic areas for which we are seeking support include student scholarships, experiential learning opportunities

and initiatives that will truly enhance the student experience at UTSC."

Aslam wants to continue pursuing her PhD, even though she is not sure of which subject to take just yet.

She is sure of one thing though, "I want to make positive differences to individuals and groups, improving the quality of life for them in so many different ways."

Bus back on Kingston Rd.

By JESSICA LEE
The Observer

Last Sunday, the 12B bus made a triumphant return back to Kingston Rd.

The bus was taken away last May when Variety Village got its own bus stop and the 12A route was added. The new route, however, removed some stops along Kingston Road, which aggravated many riders—some of whom are senior citizens and or have disabilities.

A petition was started and 350 names were collected to have the bus restored.

On the weekends when the 12 bus no longer runs, there will be a bus called the 12B that will serve the missing portion on Kingston Road.

"One bus will go along Kingston Rd. and the other one will go along Birchmount and Danforth," said Isaac Ransom, the executive assistant to Crawford.

The 12B runs every 36 minutes in the day and every 40 minutes at night.

● For more on the story and a photo gallery, check out torontoobserver.ca

Ethnic deal-buying site founded by two brothers

Local business grads hope to take on Groupon

By MARYAM SHAH
The Observer

Scarborough has its fair share of small businesses and a thriving immigrant population. An entrepreneurial pair of brothers managed to connect the dots and came out with an ethnic deal-buying website a few months ago called GoBabu.

Aimed at the vast South Asian community in the Greater Toronto Area, GoBabu is the brainchild of Khurram and Kassim Shroff. It is the first of its kind, offering deals on Indian food, South Asian events and the classic manicure-pedicure deals that no coupon-deal-buying site



Courtesy of GoBabu.com

Khurram and Kassim Shroff, freshly graduated from university, started GoBabu.com with corporate giants as their competition.

can live without.

Originally from Pakistan, the brothers moved to Canada, with one of them attending the University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC). They shared their business ideas and decided to open a Groupon-style website.

"It was a bit difficult in the beginning, we didn't have a pitch and I didn't know how to run a business," Kassim explained. "It was a learning process."

Zahra is an avid fan of deal-buying websites. She found GoBabu useful in keeping in touch with events in the Indian community, buying herself and her friends tickets through GoBabu for a major celebrity-studded event in June featuring Bollywood actor Shahrukh Khan.

"I just wish GoBabu would branch outside the ethnic community so I can get deals on sushi, I buy those all the time!" she said.

"What we were doing is we were going after restaurants, spas, salons, those are companies that have already got deals," he explained. "We told them we're an ethnic group-buying business."

"It's just one thing led to another," Kassim said. "Now we're selling deals."

Kassim now hopes that one day they'll be big enough to buy out Groupon.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

■ GoBabu has become a national company with deals found in Vancouver, Calgary and Montreal.

■ Examples of recent deals:

■ \$18 for one ticket to Desi Dreams speed dating event. Includes free appetizers (value \$35)

■ \$10 for a 10-Class Pass at Effective Kickboxing (\$160 Value)

■ \$2.99 for a plate of Chicken Biryani from Pakwanchi Restaurant (value \$5)

Deck the halls and raise some dough

Annual competition held for most funds raised by selling baked goods

By JESSICA MOY
The Observer

The men of St. Dunstan Anglican Church won a year ago, beating the women by \$5.

"We think they just put the \$5 in," Norma Campbell said with a laugh.

Each year at the church's Holly Berry Bazaar, the men and women of St. Dunstan compete against each other to see who can raise the most money by selling their baking.

Norma's confident the ladies will win this year, as they've done seven times in the last 12 years, she said on Nov. 26 at this year's bazaar, which kicked off the holiday season.

"[Women] bake, we bake,

and then we fight," joked Malcolm Campbell, who sported a Santa hat.

He and his team baked muffins, date squares, oatmeal cookies and English spice cakes. Raffle tickets to win a cake with \$100 baked inside were also up for sale.

"All money goes to the church and we are all volunteers here," Malcolm said. "The bazaar is good for helping us to keep the church going."

Santa passed out candy canes and friendly greetings to visitors to the bazaar. In addition to the homemade baked goods, wreaths, painted porcelain and jams lined tables, on display for those looking for that perfect



Jessica Moy // Observer

Indra Vivekanandan is one of the "craftsies" at the bazaar. She, along with 20 women in the church, made wreaths for the event.

Christmas gift.

A group of women known as "craftsies" meet every Monday and make some of the items that go up for sale at the

bazaar, convener Margret Joseph says.

The group consists of 20 ladies from the church, said Norma, a crafty herself.

"Knitting, sewing — you name it, we can do it," she said, adding her favourite items to make are knitted sweaters and hats. "Some ladies make jew-

ellery, some knit, some sew — we have all talents."

"Everyone works really hard so [the bazaar] is always a success," Joseph said.

HOLIDAY EVENTS

Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra
presents:

Howard Cable's

COWBOY CHRISTMAS

Saturday, Dec. 3, 2011 8:00pm

Birchmount Park C.I., 3663 Danforth Ave.

Festive Christmas Weekends

Dec. 3, 4, 10, 11, 17, 18, and 24, 12 to 4 p.m.

Visit another era this holiday season. Tour the festively decorated McCowan Log House and Cornell House and enjoy the aroma of traditional hearth baking. Admission is by donation.

The 36th Annual Christmas Treats Walk

When: Dec. 26, 2011

Where: Polar Bear Exhibit, Tundra Trek Walk 10:00 a.m.

Admission: Half price



Choir puts spin on classics

Students at the University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC) showed off their musical talent at their end-of-semester annual concert, Sounds of the Season held at the university on Nov. 26. The day-long concert was divided into two two-hour parts.

"We wanted to do two separate concerts because of the number of students performing. Our concert choir is about 60 big and each of our bands is about 60 big and our string ensemble is about 20 roughly," said Andrew Hercules, communications coordinator for Arts and Events Programming.

The first performance featured the school's concert choir and the string ensemble which featured a variety of violinists, cellists and bass players. A capella and jazz singing group, Vocomotive, also hit the stage. The group, known as the university's version of a glee club, consists of avid music lovers who sing a wide range of popular songs.

"[...] Thematically it made sense because the concert choir is doing a duet with the strings of Antonio Vivaldi's Gloria and also at the later concert, there are a lot of collaborations as well."

The second concert, later in the evening, featured performances from the concert band,

jazz orchestra and the Alumni and Community Concert Band. Some of the performances included favourite renditions of movie theme songs including an ode to Pirates of the Caribbean.

The first concert featured holiday favourites and a tribute to Antonio Vivaldi's, Gloria. Both the concert choir and string ensemble collaborated on a 12-song tribute to Vivaldi.

The UTSC Concert Choir and String Ensemble performed their rendition of the Christmas classic, "O Come All Ye Faithful"

during the first of the two-part concert on Nov. 26.

Some of the Christmas favourites included "O Come All Ye Faithful," "Gloria" and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" in which guests were invited along to sing.

"Because tonight's theme is all about Christmas, we wanted to perform these songs to celebrate the season," said Kyle Liu, a first-year international student who performed in the concert choir's bass I section.

— Erica Tiangco



Erica Tiangco // Observer

Members of UTSC's Concert Choir and String Ensemble perform their own rendition of Christmas classics.

MEET SCARBOROUGH'S FUTURE STARS

By NATALIE SEQUEIRA



**NATHANEAL
CAMERON**

Nathaneal Cameron has played baseball since he was five, but his heart lies in the speed and agility he brings to rugby. Unlike football and baseball—where he plays outside linebacker and punter, and centre field and second base respectively—with rugby, he revels in the freedom that comes with no equipment besides the ball. Cameron, 18, plays as fullback and winger on the Sir Wilfrid Laurier Collegiate rugby team. He plans to show off his skills in university, where he aims to get a shot at playing professionally. Cameron is in his final year of high school and is looking at universities in Ontario with the best rugby programs.

Jeff Miller easily admits shedding a few tears over losing a very special game. It was the last football game he would ever play at his high school, and his team lost in the championship game against Agincourt C.I. It's one of the saddest moments for Miller, 18. A senior at Sir John A. Macdonald Collegiate, Miller is a great fan of football, loving it for the hard-hitting, fast-paced way he plays starting quarterback. He's had several concussions from the game and shattered his little finger in grade 9 when he was a linebacker, but he hasn't been turned off the game one bit. And although he delights in the fun of football, his athletic passions also lie in baseball.



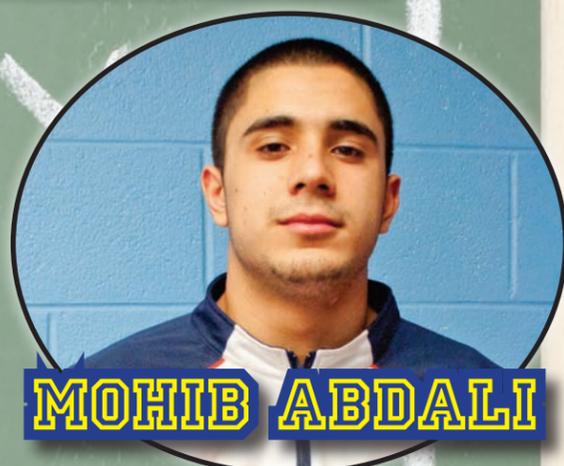
JEFF MILLER



**CASSANDRA
JONES**

Cassandra Jones' fondest memory is having Team South Africa, Team New Zealand and her fellow Canadians sing her Happy Birthday at the Commonwealth Youth Games in the Isle of Man in September. The 17-year-old track and field fan has been running only for about a year and a half, but she has gone from being a speedy soccer-player to an adrenaline-loving 400-metre runner. Jones runs track and field for Stephen Leacock Collegiate and is also a member of the University of Toronto Junior Blues athletics club. Jones will be graduating next summer and has already received scholarships from universities in the U.S. for her speed.

Mohib Abdali is hesitant to say it, but with a sly smile he admits he's sure he's achieved his childhood goal of beating his brother at basketball. Abdali, 17, is a shooting guard for the Stephen Leacock Collegiate basketball team, keeping up a sport he's loved since he first dribbled a ball in first grade. Abdali isn't too focused on playing professionally. It's something he'll take in stride if it happens, but for now he's hoping to get into Ryerson University or the University of Toronto for criminology and make it onto a university basketball or volleyball team.



MOHIB ABDALI



**NICOLE
CRAWFORD**

Nicole Crawford grew up at a hockey rink, watching her two older brothers play and dreaming about being out on the ice. Her sporty parents supported her and enrolled her in hockey programs. She also picked up soccer, another sport her brothers played. Now Crawford, 17 and in her final year at Sir Wilfrid Laurier Collegiate, plays field hockey (defence), rugby 7s and 15s (scrum half), and she is on the swim team. She is currently deciding on a career path beyond high school, and is looking at degrees in special education or social sciences at the University of Guelph or University of Toronto.

EDITORIALS

Ford's TTC service cuts outrageous

Mayor breaks his promise of giving Scarborough better transportation

Every time Mayor Rob Ford decides to enact one of his ingenious plans, ordinary Torontonians take a kick in the stomach. Last week, Toronto Environmental Alliance leaked a memo that revealed the city's plan to cut service from 56 of Toronto's busiest bus and streetcar routes starting Jan. 8.

We can all expect longer and more cramped commutes in the New Year. In Scarborough, the city's plan will mean even longer lines for the Kennedy station bus bay for routes including 116 Morningside and 21A Brimley-Kennedy to Scarborough Town Centre.

As a world-class city, Toronto has an existing transportation system that falls awfully short of meeting high standards. Instead of bettering one of the city's most inefficient and frustrating public services, our mayor wants to degrade it even further.

Hope for better transportation is the reason most of Scarborough voted for Ford. By cutting transportation services, Ford will not only keep residents waiting longer in the cold this winter but he will also break the one campaign promise that convinced Scarborough to choose him.

The TTC is the only form of transportation for many of us and the mayor could not have chosen a better way to tell us how little he understands the needs of Torontonians.

His plans to cut bus and streetcar services also demonstrates Ford's short-sighted agenda. Instead of promoting public transportation to reduce air pollution, the mayor's penny-pinching scheme punishes those who are doing good for the environment.

The TTC is an area where the city can make huge profits if it makes slight improvements. With 500 million riders a year and growing the TTC could draw more people and increase its revenue by enhancing service.

Why does our mayor resort to cutting services as the answer to all of the city's problems? He thinks he is saving cash, but what happened to creativity and making money instead?

~ Yeamrot Taddese

College's Guild Inn withdrawal wise

An ancient Chinese proverb says, "of all the stratagems, to know when to quit is the best."

Centennial College announced last week it is pulling out of the Guild Inn revitalization project that had been in the planning stages for over two years. The project fell through when the city and the college could not come to an agreement on what it should do with the park property.

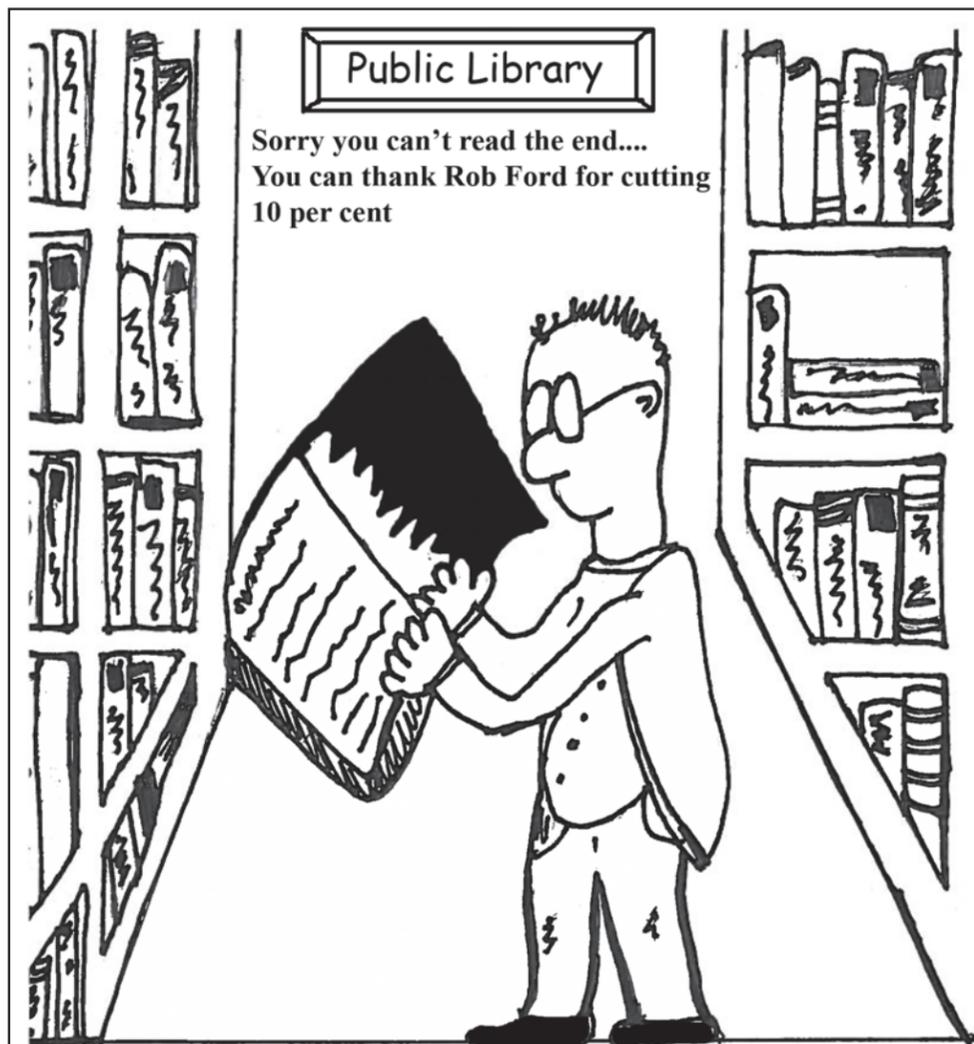
Despite many attempts to gain approval of the city planners, all of the proposals submitted by the college were rejected.

In today's society, children are encouraged to never give up. Stories they grow up on include *The Little Engine That Could* — a tale about a small freight engine that managed to pull a large train over a mountain because of perseverance — and *Aesop's Tortoise and the Hare*. Both stories are the epitome of what hard work can accomplish. They show children that they can accomplish anything they set their mind to. However, in reality, not everything is so black and white. Continuing to fight for something one wants does not always bring about a solution. Business deals end, couples get divorced, and people quit jobs they don't like. Centennial College was wise to withdraw funding from the project before the school lost any more money from a dream that may never come to fruition.

It would have been nice to see a restored Guild Inn, but sometimes negotiations just don't work out. Continuing to spend money on research and new proposals was not beneficial to the school when the possibility of a restored park with a hotel was low.

It's better to minimize damages than to go "all in" with resources that could be used somewhere else with a more promising outcome.

~Jessica Lee



Kayla Kreutzberg // Observer

COLUMN

Councillor, you're not an environmental expert

Councillor Norm Kelly of Ward 40 (Scarborough-Agincourt) found himself the butt of jokes this past week, after sharing his thoughts on global warming. Kelly informed fellow councillors during a meeting that, "global warming will bring more trees." Kelly made the comments in response to Councillor Ray-

mond Cho arguing that climate change would reduce the city's forest canopy.

One of the reasons Kelly's remarks have picked up so much momentum is because he's the parks and environment chairman. Here's an idea: why don't these politicians take advantage of the slew of scientific professionals that are located right here in this city, instead of wasting our tax dollars on arguing about environmental issues.

Of course reporters jumped on his remarks afterwards, where Kelly shared more environmental wisdom gems such as, "If you go back in time, millions of years, when the earth was really warm, you found trees in the Arctic. So, more warmth, more trees, it's as simple as that."

Kelly also took flak from the source of the information he was spouting, Danish writer Bjorn Lomborg's book, *The Skeptical Environmentalist: The Real State of the World*. Kelly stated, "His information showed the air's never been cleaner, the water's never been cleaner, we've never had more forest than we have today."

So let's backtrack for a moment to see the two main points that put Kelly in the spotlight.

Millions of years ago it was really warm and there were trees in the Arctic. And his source claims our water and air is cleaner than ever.

First of all, I don't give a flying fig at a rolling doughnut what was going on a million years ago in the Arctic. I care about what is happening right now. And right now, you could plant a million trees in the Greater Toronto Area and you would still be hit with that perpetual sewage smell, that wafts up every block or two and hits you in the face when you're walking.

Also, our water and air are cleaner than ever? I wouldn't go into Lake Ontario if my life depended on it. If you want to know how I feel about the GTA's air quality, just look above.

We have many informed and educated specialists who have careers based on global warming. Mr. Kelly, please pick up a phone and give one of them a dingle instead of spouting decade-old controversial Danish offerings. Quit wasting out tax dollars!

Cole Carruthers





Maryam Shah // Observer

Blind powerlifter Stephen Jesso trains four times a week at the Variety Village on Danforth Avenue and Birchmount Road.

Weight on his shoulders

Blind athlete aims for gold in Swedish championships

By MARYAM SHAH
Toronto Observer

Stephen Jesso has one goal: to win gold at the world powerlifting championship next year in Sweden. Two weeks after competing there, he'll fly to the world blind powerlifting championship in Florida and do the same thing.

"I'm going there to win," he said confidently. "I'm not going just to be happy to be there."

Jesso is a record-holding champion in the 120-kilogram-plus weight class who lives and trains in Scarborough. He lost his eyesight when he was 13

years old. Powerlifting is his whole life. He even makes a small living off it through his quest for gold funding.

"This is what I do fulltime," he said. "I don't have any major sponsorships yet."

Winning in Sweden at the world able-bodied championship is his dream. He won't settle for anything less.

"I will probably get my ass whooped," he laughed. "These guys are phenomenally strong athletes, and powerlifting is big over there. It's how Canadians treat hockey over here."

Just two weeks ago Jes-

so nailed nine perfect lifts in St. Johns, a rarity in the sport.

"I had a perfect flawless clinical day," he recalled.

It's not a big sport in Canada but at 180.9 kilos, Jesso is one of the best powerlifters in the world. He admits it's not glamorous but it has its advantages.

"It's just a bunch of guys getting together

and competing against each other," he explained. "There's no animosity amongst lifters."

He was heavily involved in wrestling until his late teens, when he realized powerlifting was his main forte. He hasn't looked back since.

"All you do is live and breathe and eat and sleep this sport," he said.

His biggest fan is his wife Olivia, who is a

professional chef and his best spotter. As high school sweethearts, they've been together for 18 years.

"There are days that this is just unbelievably tough for me," he said. "I'm sitting up in the middle of the night ready to lose my mind. Having her around keeps me calm before a competition."

He works out at the Variety Village at Danforth Avenue and Birchmount Road with a few other men but said that Olivia is his favourite training partner.

"My wife slings more plates than these guys do!" he said. "She has a particular eye for technique."

As a blind athlete, he finds it annoying when people focus on his blindness instead of his achievements.



LINGUISTIC LARKS

Category

Greek Gods

HE A SOUS

D TEO

ON OUS

S IA

Mistress of animals

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

Unscramble the circled letters to form the final answer.

By Kyle Larkin

Paralympian Adam Lancia to compete in London 2012

By KYLE LARKIN
Toronto Observer

Scarborough native Adam Lancia has competed in wheelchair basketball for more than 20 years. Here's how he does it:

Q. How did you get started?

A. Archie Allison from Variety Village approached my Mom and I at a CHAMPS seminar when I was nine. I went in a month later and I've loved the sport since!

Q. What/who has been your inspiration?

A. I love the game itself, period. And I really enjoy the team aspect of basketball. I've been very lucky to have been on teams that

were not only great on the court but also like family off the court. My entire family inspires me.

Q. Where does your passion come from?

A. Part of being on a national team is constantly improving your skills. The constant challenge is a big factor in my drive to keep playing at this level.

Q. How does it feel to represent Scarborough at a national level?

A. There's no feeling like it! Putting on a jersey that says "Canada" is something that not many people have the chance to do and I relish it every time I have the opportunity.

Q. Have you faced any difficulties/trials over the years?

A. Well, now that I'm in my 30's, life and work are coming to the forefront more and more. I've been trying to do both the last few years but that was getting tougher as I took on more responsibility at work.

Q. Is there any special kind of training?

A. Upper body strength is obviously key to the sport, but just being strong doesn't make a good basketball player. There's the endurance aspect that must be taken into consideration as well.

SPORTS ROUNDUP

Three-peat

West Hill's Minor Atom AA hockey team has won three consecutive tournaments. The Minor Atoms are 16-0-0 in GTHL regular season and 14-1-1 in tournament play.

The team beat Humber Valley in the finals, 9-3 in London last weekend.

Tektonics bronze

The Scarborough Titans Tektonics U12 girls volleyball team took home bronze after competing in their first Ontario Volleyball Association tournament Nov. 12.

The team beat out Etobicoke in straight sets for bronze.

Scarborough Titans SuperNova U13 took home silver, beating the Tektonics.

NFL coach award

Scarborough Minor Football Association coach Roberto Allen was named runner up for the 2011 NFL Youth Coach of the Year Award.

Allen will receive \$2,000 in equipment.

NFL Denver Bronco player Orlando Franklin nominated Allen for the award



● For more on these stories, please visit sports online at torontoobserver.ca

REVIEW

Story line tough to follow

Opera by Request's latest show lost in vibrato translation

By ALEX KOZOVSKI
The Observer

William Shookhoff, director of Toronto's Opera by Request, made his own request before presenting the company's latest show.

Pass around the limited programs, Shookhoff warned, before taking his place as pianist for the company's adaptation of Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Saint of Bleeker Street*.

The request was ignored by most of the audience at the Trinity Presbyterian Church last Saturday night, with program owners keeping their grip tight.

This was unfortunate, as the opera's story was impossible to follow, starting from the first few minutes.

Musically, the performers were strong. The two choirs provided tremendous, lush chorus in the backdrop of the show, supporting the eight



Alex Kozovski /// Observer

Maria Corona, left, Carmela, center, and Annina get hysterical in the first act of the performance.

main performers.

Shookhoff's amazing arpeggios and little runs on the piano were the perfect landscape for the powerful vocalists.

But for the casual, glassy-eyed audience members, it seemed as if they had stepped into the wrong theatre.

From the moment the University of Toronto's Scarborough Concert Choir and the Ensemble

TrypTych Chamber Choir took stage, the story was lost in high-pitched, vibrato translation.

The Saint of Bleeker Street, first performed in New York City in 1954, felt really dated. The story line, filled with religious anecdotes and biblical references, simply didn't relate to the young audience. It was confusing; no one knew what religious blasphemies were happening

throughout the story, and why certain characters would yell or be dragged off stage.

The idea of a brother competing for his sister's love with God is an odd, old, and unsettling idea.

To cloud the storyline further, the show was presented in concert format. It's an older, stoic form of opera in which none of the performers act,

only sing. Without the dramatic effect of body language, no one knew what was happening in any scene.

One moment the characters would be celebrating at a wedding, the next conversing in a subway station (according to the

program— most didn't get it as it happened). Also a bit irritating was the characters' dialogue among themselves.

A pseudo mix of talking and singsong conversation was awkward, as if the show was a William Shatner production.



For more on this story visit torontoobserver.ca



Stephanie Song enrolled sons Alex (left) and Edward in new Leacock preschool program.

Chantelle Henriques /// Observer

Leacock Centre reopens

Near the corner of Birchmount Road and Sheppard Avenue, the newly renovated Stephen

Leacock Community Centre towers over the rest of the nearby buildings.

But it is not just its outside appearance that makes it such an exciting addition to the community. Coun. Norm Kelly said he is pleased with the success of the renovations in Ward 40.

"I am thrilled to have this renewed and revitalized facility in our community," Kelly said in a press release issued by the City of Toronto.

Stephanie Song, a

mother of two who frequently uses the preschool centre, says she is excited for her children to have a new place to learn and play.

"[The centre] is a good place to share information and experiences and also for the kids to develop social skills with other kids," Song said.

~ Chantelle Henriques

For more, see torontoobserver.ca

WHAT'S NEW

- A suspended oval track
- Two sports pads
- A preschool centre
- A dance studio
- Several multi-purpose rooms

Youth compete in French contest

By ANDRE THURAIRATNAM
The Observer

Children and their parents were both exposed to the importance of speaking French on Saturday afternoon at the Woodside Square Public Library as students from Grades 6 to 9 competed in a fun, challenging French vocabulary contest.

The event, organized by a group called Tutor on Wheels, was done to boost the active use of one of Canada's official languages among students.

"I think that learning a language — any language — is a good thing because it opens up your mind and the way you look at things," Anju Rajkoomar, a judge at the day's competition and teacher for 25 years said.

"It encourages you to understand other cultures, other countries and other traditions, especially in Canada since we're a multicultural country. When it comes to French, I think the Government of Canada is investing a lot of money to encourage people to learn the language. So why not seize

this opportunity?"

In addition to organizing public events, Tutor on Wheels also provides services in which kids can have experts in school subjects come into their homes and help them wherever they may have difficulties.

Sarma Donepudi, founder and executive director in charge of the organization, has made partnerships with all the major school boards including the Toronto District, York Region, Toronto Catholic and

Peel. One of the mandates he has set out is to improve community literacy among GTA children.

Donepudi insists the best learning happens outside the classroom.

"Events like this encourage participation," he said.

"What they do in school is in an academic environment."

For more, see torontoobserver.ca



Andre Thurairatnam /// Observer

Contest participants Anant (left) and Akchayaa (right) get some last minute tips from a judge at the Woodside Square Library.