



'We are humbled and beyond grateful'

TEGH becomes Michael Garron Hospital after historic donation

By **MARWA MOHKAM SHEIKH**
The Observer

In 1975, when Michael Garron was 13 years old and dying of a rare form of soft tissue cancer, his final wish was that he not be forgotten.

His parents, Myron and Berna Garron, promised him that wouldn't happen. On Dec. 2, they donated \$50 million to Toronto East General Hospital (TEGH) in his memory, and made Michael's wish come true.

In honour of this gift, TEGH has been renamed the Michael Garron Hospital, and is now part of the Toronto East Health Network. In a press release, TEGH said the Garrons' gift was the largest charitable donation ever made to a community teaching hospital in Canada. Michael Burns, chair of the TEGH Foundation board of directors, spoke at a press conference last Wednesday.

"If you're lucky, once in lifetime a truly extraordinary philanthropic gesture transforms an institution and care for thousands of people," he said. "We are humbled and beyond grateful that our hospital is in receipt of such a remarkable and historic gesture."

Myron and Berna Garron



Marwa Mohkam Sheikh /// The Observer

Michael Garron's father, Myron Garron (left), is enveloped in a hug by Michael Burns, chair of the TEGH Foundation board of directors, after Burns announced the historic \$50-million donation made by Garron. In honour of this gift, TEGH changed its name to the Michael Garron Hospital.

first became acquainted with the services at TEGH in 1962, as residents of East York; that's when their first child, Michael, was born at the hospital. At last week's donation announcement, Myron Garron recalled that he'd missed his

son's actual birth because he was busy filling out paperwork elsewhere in the hospital. By the time he made it upstairs, the doctor was waiting for him.

"He had a little bundle in his arms," Myron Garron re-

membered. "That was the first appearance of Michael Albert Garron."

Having lived through the experience of losing their son to cancer at such a young age, Myron and Berna Garron came to know the range of

health services at TEGH and the hospital's diverse patient community.

The Garrons' relationship with TEGH as donors began almost three and a half years ago, when they met Dr. Rajiv Singal, a urologist and mem-

ber of the TEGH Foundation board; they were also then introduced to the doctor's work in robot technology. They invested \$250,000 in this technology and formed a strong

■ See **DONATION**, page 4

Angela Kennedy's portfolio even thicker than before

By **DANNIKA RUSSELL**
The Observer

Life has just gotten a bit busier for East York's Catholic school trustee, Angela Kennedy.

Besides sitting on the school board since 2000, she's a registered nurse and certified diabetes educator at Michael Garron Hospital, formerly Toronto East General. And to that thick portfolio, she now adds the role of school board chair.

The other members of the Toronto Catholic District School Board chose four-term trustee Kennedy as their chair at their Nov. 30 meeting.

"It's an important job with a huge responsibility," she told the Observer in an interview on Wednesday.

Her first task after being elected

chair was to conduct the annual "caucus" meeting, when the board members elected a new vice-chair and filled the outstanding positions on its committees. She'll be running these board meetings every month.

To better serve as chair for the TCDSB, Kennedy said that she has requested to have her hospital work week decreased from 40 hours to 30 hours over four days. That would clear a day — on top of the evenings and weekends that she already devotes to board work — for her new responsibilities. She said that her request has yet to be approved, but she is hopeful that it will be soon.

She said that it won't be too much of a challenge adapting to her new role because she was already very involved with the board when

she was a trustee.

"I feel a little more serious that I was before," she said. Now, given more responsibility, her only concern timewise is that she won't be able to get her daily workout in.

Kennedy said the most pressing issue that the board is facing right now is the budget.

"We have a four-year deficit budget plan," she said. "We have to keep the ministry up to date on how we're managing our finances, because they are the ones who provide the funding for us."

Ultimately, Kennedy said, the most important thing is that students have an acceptable environment that they will be able to work in.

"We're making sure students get what they need, even though we've

had funding cuts," she said.

The new health and physical education curriculum — and especially its sex education component — has been controversial, but it will still be implemented in Catholic schools in the spring, and Kennedy said she supports that implementation.

But she added that she hopes the implementation will be improved for Catholic schools through the adoption of Catholic resources being developed by the Institute of Catholic Education.

Kennedy said that her ascension to the role of chair doesn't confer much practical power. There are still a dozen trustees who jointly make the big decisions, and her new role is to help facilitate and lead that process.



Dannika Russell /// The Observer

Angela Kennedy is the new chair of the TCDSB.

POLICE & FIRE

Missing methadone

Toronto police have issued a statement to make the public aware of “a quantity of lost medication” in East York. According to police, 10 containers of methadone were lost on Dec. 3 in the Danforth and Woodbine avenues area. Police say that the pills could be harmful, even potentially fatal if ingested — especially by children.

Anyone who finds the medication is asked not to handle it. They should also contact Toronto police or Crime Stoppers at 416-222-8477.

Dog-owners warned about tainted treats

Police advise residents to be careful after tainted dog treats were found at a park in the Thorncliffe Park Drive and Overlea Boulevard area. A man walking his dog on Nov. 27 told police his pet became ill after partially consuming a “green stick-like” treat found at the park. The treats are described as 13 centimeters in length with “a strong chemical smell.” Const. Allyson Douglas-Cook advised residents to call police “to try to make the area safe” if they encounter this. She said people should report similar incidents to Toronto police’s non-emergency hotline at 416-808-2222 or Crime Stoppers.

~ Ben Rappaport and Kei Lam



Sayada Nabi // The Observer

Event organizer Elizabeth Dove and her daughter Leila, 8, sit in their tent as they prepare to spend a night sleeping outdoors to raise money for Syrian refugees.

Sleeping out for Syria

Local organizers pitch tents to raise awareness and money for Syrian refugees

By SAYADA NABI
The Observer

When the image of Alan Kurdi, the three-year-old Syrian boy whose body washed up on a beach in Turkey, was published, it hit Elizabeth Dove hard.

“There was a burning local need to help, and (there were) people who wanted to do something, but had no idea where to start,” she said. “We have the space; we have the ability and frankly there is a moral imperative.”

Determined to help, the East York resident joined forces with Corey Diamond and organized the Danforth East Community Association’s Sleep Out for Syrians fundraising event.

For DECA the idea was a bit of a departure; since its inception in 2007, it has staged weekly farmers’ markets in the

summer and annual art fairs.

During the Dec. 5 event, which was held on the lawn of the Church of Resurrection on Woodbine Avenue, sponsors were encouraged to donate \$250 per tent, and then sleep in one to approximate the experience of refugees.

“It makes a connection to what it’s really like for a lot of people who are refugees, potentially sleeping in tents at the same time,” Diamond said.

As Diamond and Dove organized the event, they noticed positive things began to happen. Hours before the sleep-out, former Afghan refugees arrived and provided campers with dinner. Meanwhile, Outward Bound, an outdoor education organization, provided winter camping equipment.

“I learned that the community has an enormous heart,” Dove said. “I think I’ve fallen in love with our community many times over in this process.”

Dove wanted the community’s response to include families, so she brought along her daughter Leila, 8, to

teach her the importance of giving back.

“It’s a great opportunity to (teach our children) about things beyond their immediate reach and about the privilege that we have,” she said.

“And in that privilege we have the power to make a difference.”

Sleep Out organizers said the money raised will go to the Neighbourhood Link, one of the groups helping to settle some Syrian refugees arriving in Toronto.

Lorrie Fairburn, the development and marketing manager with Neighbourhood Link, said the original financial goal was \$80,000 to support two families. However, the campaign has already raised \$91,000. The new goal is to raise \$120,000 to possibly help a third family.

Diamond says she has high hopes for this community initiative, and by extension, the refugees that will be receiving support through it.

“I would love to see that after a year that family was given the support that they need (that they’ve) become great citizens of Canada.”

WHAT’S UP IN E.Y.

Students make beautiful music at MIAPalooza

Some college music students will be holding their year-end concert this Sunday, Dec. 13. “MIAPalooza” will feature ensembles from students in the Music Industry Arts and Performance program at Centennial College’s East York campus. The event begins at 5:30 p.m. and will be held on the second floor of the Toronto Centre for the Arts, 5040 Yonge St.

Hailing civic contributors

The East York Agnes Macphail Recognition Committee is looking for nominees for the 23rd annual Agnes Macphail Award. The award is presented to someone who is an outstanding contributor to the overall life in a community — especially around the social issues that East York’s most famous politician embraced. Nomination forms can be found online at www.toronto.ca/macphail_award. Nominees must be residents of East York. The deadline to submit nominations is midnight on Jan. 28.

~ Sidra Sheikh

Fire damages local funeral home

By JON LAMONT
The Observer

A fire broke out on the second floor of a funeral home on Danforth Avenue east of Main Street on Nov. 26.

The two-alarm blaze erupted at around 10:45 a.m. in the Giffen-Mack Funeral Home and Cremation Centre, 2570 Danforth Ave. Traffic along the Danforth was disrupted when police shut down a section east of Main. TTC service was also affected for about two hours.

“There were no injuries,” said Toronto police Sgt. Ajay Sidhu. “We believe the fire was related to the construction and renovations inside.”

Smoke billowed out of the building onto the street and into the TTC station behind the funeral home. Bystanders gathered around, watching as fire crews battled the blaze.

“I thought I smelled smoke when I got



Jon Lamont // The Observer

Toronto Fire responds to a fire at the Giffen-Mack Funeral Home and Cremation Centre, at 2570 Danforth Ave.

off the subway about an hour ago,” said passerby Maeve McCarthy as she watched the commotion. “I looked around, didn’t see any smoke. Then I came back, and saw all the fire trucks.”

The fire was out in about half an hour.

They had to pull siding off of the second-floor apartment walls and tear down some of the ceiling to extinguish the blaze.

Toronto Fire Services estimates that there was about \$200,000 in damage.

Correction

A story on page 8 of the Nov. 27 edition of the Observer misstated the word “underserved” as “undeserved” in talking about people in Thorncliffe Park when it comes to health care. The article should have said that those “residents are still underserved in the area of primary health care.” The Observer regrets the error.

Hungry? Try new healthier option

By **ASHLEEN GRANGE**
The Observer

East York is a community with its own entertainment district: the Danforth, chock full of restaurants, cafes and fast-food counters. And then there are the other eateries scattered in neighbourhoods across this section of the city — not to mention the vast array of restaurants in the rest of Toronto.

And a cursory look across the landscape suggests that East York has its share of grocery stores too — offering residents a reasonable range of food to eat at home.

But how does East York measure up when healthy food options become a factor? Not too well, according to Toronto Public Health.

That's the bad news. The good news is that the city's public health division, through its "Toronto Food Strategy," is taking tangible steps in East York to address the issue.

It's called the Healthy Corner Store Project. The city is partnering with Four Seasons Farms at 1095 O'Connor Dr. to create a storefront that profitably sells healthy and diverse foods at affordable prices. And that brings the promise of one more healthy food option for East Yorkers looking for fresh and nutritious foods.

"A big push is how do we figure out ways to make it easy for small and big retailers in the low-income areas to sell healthier things profitably. That comes down to looking at the whole business model," said Brian Cook, a health research specialist at Toronto Food Strategy. And that model, he added, includes "better access to distribution... help in connecting with the community, rebranding the store, getting access to capital."

The O'Connor project is the second "Healthy Corner Store." The pilot store is located in Scarborough, at Morningside and Lawrence avenues.

Cook noticed an improvement in the sales of healthier foods in Scarborough.

"There was overall a small increase in overall revenue," he said. "But we saw a big increase in sale of fresh produce."

Health officials have mapped the entire city to identify which neighbourhoods are located in "food swamps." The term refers to areas that



Photo by Fotolia

The city is partnering with Four Seasons Farms on O'Connor Drive to create a storefront that will offer an array of healthy and diverse foods at affordable prices. That means East Yorkers will have another option in their search for fresh and nutritious food.

are literally swamped with places that sell more unhealthy, processed foods, and less fresh produce.

The purpose of the mapping, according to Cook, is "to get a better understanding of food retail quality. Staff adapted an existing index that characterizes the 'healthfulness' of food retail environments and applied it to Toronto. A lower score signifies a high proportion of less healthy food retail relative to healthier food outlets. Healthier food outlets were defined broadly — for example supermarkets, most butcher shops and fish shops, some bakeries and any smaller food stores that sell a significant quantity and diversity of produce. Scores were calculated for a one-kilometre walking distance from the centre of every city block."

Cook said the mapping did not find any specific trends or patterns from its results.

"That's one of the interesting things, because in Toronto, if you look at the maps around pov-

erty, or walkability, you always have that horse-shoe pattern, where downtown does quite well and the outer suburbs do not do well. We did not see this with this mapping. There wasn't any correlation in this particular index. Some Toronto areas are doing OK, and many are not."

The mapping shows East York's Ward 31/Beaches-East York area — the southeastern third of the community — scoring noticeably below average. Just to its west, Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth scores a bit better, but only a bit. Ward 26/Don Valley West — the northwestern third of East York — isn't meaningfully ranked, because much of the land is designated as "non-residential."

But while the index does provide some general idea of which locations lack access to fresher foods, there are also other factors that should be considered.

"This is one analysis that looks at the food environment of food desert mapping. So it doesn't

tell us anything about the different types of food stores," Cook said. "A 50,000-square-foot food store could also count as one establishment, as would a small convenience store. It also doesn't tell us anything about the pricing, or the diversity of the food available."

"Even when including supermarkets as a healthier food establishment, we know that there is lots of stuff in the middle aisles that are not as healthy, so it might even be skewed more than what the analysis shows."

Changes are being made within the food retail industry. However, most of these changes are introduced to wealthier neighbourhoods.

"What we have seen from food retail is that there is a lot of innovation happening, but only in areas where people have disposable income," Cook said. "There's more happening downtown — for example, Shoppers Drug Mart having big food sections — but not in lower-income areas."

FINANCE

Put your money where your mouth is, councillor says

Minister asked to put more women on Canadian bank notes

By **MARCUS MEDFORD**
The Observer

East York city councillor Mary Fragedakis has joined forces with a Montreal city councillor to ask Canada's finance minister for more women to be pictured on Canadian bank notes.

Fragedakis, who represents Ward 29/Toronto-Danforth at city hall, has co-written a letter with Montreal council member Marvin Rotrand to Finance Minister William Francis Moreneau with the request.

They're following up on a statement from Stephen Poloz, the governor of the Bank of Canada, indicating that more women may feature on the next series of bank notes. The councillors say they're

hoping for a more "proactive" response from the government.

Last month, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau reminded Canadians that "it's 2015" when he announced that his cabinet is gender-balanced.

But Fragedakis and Rotrand are saying, in effect, that Canada should put its money where its mouth is.

"It's 2015," Fragedakis said — echoing the prime minister's now-famous one-liner.

She said that she thinks Trudeau's decision to have a gender-balanced cabinet will affect how both men and women think of women's role in the political sphere.

"I think it's a signal to men in society that we're all equal," she said.

When it comes to making decisions that affect everyone, Fragedakis said it's important to have multiple perspectives.

She also said that a more ethnically balanced representation is



■ **MARY FRAGEDAKIS**

desirable too.

"Gender is one aspect of diversity in our society and we have to reflect our society in its truest form," she said.

Fragedakis suggested that there be a poll or some kind of vote to decide on which women will be depicted on currency.

"Queen Elizabeth II is depicted as head of state, but when she is no longer, Canada may have no

women honoured on the country's currency," she said.

"We ask that the new government let the Bank of Canada and the Royal Mint know that promoting equality is a fundamental Canadian value," says the letter from Fragedakis and Rotrand to Moreneau.

No women have been featured on Canadian bank notes since the \$50 bill from the 2001 "Journey Series," which honoured Thérèse Casgrain and the "Famous Five."

Jean Augustine, former minister of multiculturalism and women's status, was involved with the motion that got Casgrain and the Famous Five on the old \$50 bill.

Augustine said that she also thinks it's important to honour the women who have contributed to Canada's history.

"It gives credence that women are respected and acknowledged for their contributions," she said.

Augustine remarked that Tru-

deau's decision to have a gender-balanced cabinet sends a "great message" and creates role models for women.

She said it's important that Canada's diversity be represented in our everyday lives.

"If you can't see yourself there, it becomes harder to get there," she said.

Other countries that have chosen women to be the face of their currency include England, which is introducing a 10-pound note that will feature legendary novelist Jane Austen, and Australia and New Zealand regularly feature women on their currency.

Fragedakis and Rotrand have also started a petition urging that the Bank of Canada and the Royal Mint pay homage to women who have made significant contributions by featuring them on bank notes and coins. At last count, the petition had over 64,000 signatures.

Bieber fever spreads across East York

By **SIDRA SHEIKH**
and **RIDA TALPUR**
The Observer

There was a lot of screaming. On Monday night, Justin Bieber performed a sold-out acoustic benefit show at the Danforth Music Hall, located near Broadview and Danforth avenues.

The concert was expected to begin at 8 p.m., but some ticket-holders lined up way before show time. Tickets for the show were primarily sold as general admission, meaning seating would be on a first-come, first-served basis. For this reason, some fans, like 16-year-old Sirsly Etrue, began lining up as early as 24 hours before the concert began.

"I started waiting since 5:30 p.m. yesterday. I left in the morning because I had to go to (class) for a presentation — but I came back at 1 o'clock," she said. "My two friends held my spot while I was gone."

By 1 p.m., lines stretched

from the Music Hall to steps away from the Broadview and Danforth intersection. Doors opened at 6:30 p.m.

During the concert, Bieber performed songs from his latest album, *Purpose*, as well as older hits, including *Baby*, *One Time* and *One Less Lonely Girl*. Other performances included a cover of fellow Canadian artist Drake, and his song *Hotline Bling*.

Bieber went on to thank all those who made the concert possible. He added that he hoped to inspire everyone listening.

This included the fans in the venue as well as those watching the live stream that was made available on the singer's website.

"I want you coming with whatever you walked in here with and leaving with something amazing," he said to the crowd.

He went on to admit to attendees that he is aware that he's made mistakes, but thinks



Rida Talpur /// The Observer

Fans line the streets outside the Danforth Music Hall on Monday awaiting Justin Bieber's arrival.

that's something that is normal.

"I keep falling, but I'm gonna keep getting up," he said. "It's important to be yourself."

All proceeds from the concert will go to the Stratford House of Blessing, a charity in Stratford, Ont. that supported Bieber's mother in the past.

This act of giving back has become one of the many reasons fans love Bieber.

"I love Justin. He is an amazing artist," Etrue said. "I

think he's always giving back. It's kind of what his motto is. It's amazing."

Bieber is expected to return to Toronto on May 18.

Centennial grad mentored, cared, gave back

By **PATRICK RAIL**
The Observer

Mike Cormack remembered the way he and Rick Hodgson became good friends back at journalism school.

"If you were working late on the paper, if it was two o'clock in the morning and there were six people there, he'd drive everybody home, no matter where you lived," Cormack said.

At the time, in the early 2000s, the two attended classes in the journalism program at Centennial College's East York campus on Carlaw Avenue.

"If people needed to deliver the paper to get credits," Cormack said, "Rick would drive them around... even though he didn't need the credits."

According to Cormack, now senior producer, multi-platform NHL at Sportsnet, Hodgson was always willing to help, whether during his time as a student at Centennial or later as a producer at TSN.

"He was very compassionate. He cared for everybody," Cormack said.

Rick Hodgson, 36, died of a heart attack Nov. 27, leaving his wife Jennie Hodgson and young son Rickey.

"He was great at bringing people together," Cormack added. "He liked everyone's company and he did his best to make sure they enjoyed each other's company too."

That talent of bringing people together was al-



(L-R) Former Centennial journalism students Erik Launiainen, Rick Hodgson and Mike Cormack remained friends after graduating in 2003.

ways on display around the holidays. For the past several years, Hodgson took it upon himself to organize the TSN Christmas party.

James Duthie, the host of TSN's hockey panels, recalled that Hodgson would show up dressed in a full Santa costume, and he'd remain at the entrance to the party, making sure everyone felt welcome.

Hodgson's career at TSN began after his graduation from Centennial College in 2003. Starting as an intern, he worked his way up to becoming one of TSN's most knowledgeable

and reliable producers.

Hodgson produced TSN's hockey coverage on TV. Duthie considered him the "unsung hero" of the hockey panels, because despite the pressures of the job, Hodgson always delivered.

Duthie said the question TV professionals often pose to each other as a gauge of whether they understand the nature of the industry is, "Do they get it?"

"That's one of the best ways to describe Rick," Duthie said. "He got it. Always!"

Duthie said one of Hodgson's legacies was the

number of people he helped; his editing suite at TSN was always a hub of activity.

"We're going to put a plaque up there for him," he said.

Another indicator of how appreciated Hodgson was came through a gofundme account set up to support his five-year-old son Rickey. Donors have contributed more than \$70,000.

Hodgson also continued to serve as a mentor for current Centennial College journalism students.

"He would make sure to go back to (the East York campus) to talk to prospective interns before they went on their placements," Cormack said.

In addition to offering advice on internships, Hodgson helped students with school projects.

Current journalism student Dannika Russell interviewed Hodgson for a class project in February. Russell said Hodgson answered all her questions regarding sports journalism.

"He helped a lot... and I'm hoping to do my internship at TSN," Russell said. "I'm sad that I won't get a chance to work with him again."

In Russell's interview with Hodgson, he explained some of the challenges of interviewing pro-athletes, ending the conversation with some advice.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "People are more often than not willing to help you.... You just have to ask."

Rick Hodgson was proof of that.

Donation 'a game-changer' for community health care

Cont'd. from page 1

friendship with the hospital and Singal.

"Over time, the Garrons have come to understand the unique and special things that are done here at the hospital and have progressively looked to ways to support that with their generosity," the doctor said.

At the donation announcement, Sarah Downey, president and CEO of TEGH, explained that the hospital delivers health care to the entire east end of Toronto.

That catchment area includes Thorncliffe Park, which has the highest birth rate in the city, as well as Flemingdon Park, which has the highest concentration of

senior residents.

"We serve the greatest number of low-income Torontonians of any hospitals in this region, and we serve four of 10 at-risk neighbourhoods in Toronto," she said.

The Garrons' donation will allow TEGH to purchase much-needed medical equipment, help create the first chair and research po-

sitions to recruit medical talent, and fund research for clinical innovation.

CEO Downey cited the purchase of a new CT scanner as an immediate benefit of the donation.

"Equipment that's very close to the patients is (the Garrons') vision of this gift," Downey said. "Things that get in the hands of our

doctors and nurses to make patients' lives better."

Singal said the Garrons' gift had two objectives: to support the hospital and its ambitious care, and to create a legacy for their son, Michael Garron.

"From a medical staff side, for me personally, after 20 years of work, to see that somebody would actually

believe in such a vision is so gratifying," the doctor said.

Foundation chair Burns said this donation will be a catalyst for more giving, and will help expand the health network in the east end of Toronto.

"It's a game-changer for us," he said.

"We're excited about what the future holds."

East Yorkers honour one of their own

Park bench dedicated to the memory of longtime booster of community of East York

By ERIC PEMBER
The Observer

The East York Historical Society chose a special venue for a meeting on Nov. 30.

But then, their meeting had a special purpose: to honour Maureen Lindsay, a longtime member of the EYHS who rose to the position of treasurer, but then died in a house fire on March 28, 2010 at the age of 61.

The observance took place at Dentonia Park, at East York's southeast corner. Ms. Lindsay had been a member of the Friends of Dentonia Park, and had worked on improvements to it.

Now there'll be an ongoing remembrance of her efforts on behalf of both the park and the EYHS: a plaque in her name on a Dentonia park bench.

Ms. Lindsay came to prominence in the fight against the province's imposed amalgamation of the former Metro municipalities in the late 1990s. She was active in an organization called Team East York that tried to prevent the merger.

"As a result of her effort and the efforts of



■ LINDSAY

many others, East York voted...something like 81 per cent against amalgamation," said former East York mayor Alan Redway. "But it took place in any event, unfortunately."

Ms. Lindsay even came up with the idea for East Yorkers to tie yellow ribbons around their trees to signify opposition to amalgamation — a symbolic protest that spread to other areas of Toronto.

She also spoke at the committees that debated amalgamation. And when it became clear that the Harris government at Queen's Park was going to go ahead with the "mega-city" regardless of public opinion, she continued to fight.

"She strongly urged that East York should have more representation than it was going to have in an amalgamated city," Redway said.

After amalgamation in 1998, and until her death 12 years later, Ms. Lindsay remained active within the community.

About a year before she died, she began lobbying the city about a car-repair business being operated in the backyard of a home on Thyra Avenue, contrary to city rules on home businesses. She was picking up the torch on a longstanding issue.

"Re-reading the old minutes of the East York Council, I came across the fact that back in 1961, the residents of Thyra were complaining about that same problem," Redway said, "and the council of the day said, 'Don't worry, it will all be fixed up by the end of February 1961.'"

Pancheta Barnett became the president



Eric Pember // The Observer

Members of the East York Historical Society unveil a park bench memorial for Maureen Lindsay, a longtime member of the Friends of Dentonia Park.

of the EYHS in 2013. She didn't personally know Ms. Lindsay, but after reading about her, she decided it was time that her predecessor got an honour. So the EYHS decided to dedicate a Dentonia park bench.

Ms. Lindsay "was dedicated to policing and trying to keep free from people peddling

drugs and people littering all over the place, so that was the appropriate place to have her memorialized with the bench," Redway said.

Initially, the EYHS had difficulty in raising enough money to place the memorial. But Barnett and her daughter kicked in the needed balance themselves.

CEO Downey loves being a part of 'welcoming hospital'

By NAZANEEN BAQIZADA
The Observer

"Good morning, Queen Sarah!"

That's how one housekeeper greets Sarah Downey, CEO of what used to be known as Toronto East General Hospital — and what's now called the Michael Garron Hospital, following the Garron family's \$50-million donation last week in remembrance of their late son.

The name may be changing, but the job is the same; Downey runs an 86-year-old community hospital that in the midst of a major redevelopment continues to deliver an annual average of 3,200 babies and yearly serve 20,000 patients and 70,000 emergency room visitors.

All while being a wife, as well as a mom to two kids, ages 7 and 9.

"Once a week, we walk to work, then we have Tim Hortons for breakfast together in my office and I pack them a Subway sub for lunch as well," Downey said. Then she packs them off to the French school that they attend just two blocks away.

Downey has lived in the community for eight years, and her affinity for East York is apparent when her eyes widen with pride while listing the reasons she moved here. She also takes time out of her busy schedule to volunteer in the community — and is on the board of WoodGreen Community Services.

She came to the hospital less than a year ago, with a master's degree in health administration and a resume that most recently included the executive vice-presidency for clinical programs at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH).

"If only I'd known all the great



Nazaneen Baqizada // The Observer

Sarah Downey (left) shares a laugh with her staff after viewing a new patient care video at the Michael Garron Hospital in East York.

things East General was doing all this time, I'd been banging on their door ages ago," Downey said.

But despite her recent arrival, Downey is already feeling right at home.

"People have been very open, kind, humble and always stop to talk to me," she said. "It's a very welcoming hospital. Maybe that's an east-end Toronto thing."

Downey's days are filled with conversations with staff from different departments. She tries to stay as involved as she can in what's going on in the hospital. Downey has done dispatches, where she goes out to different lines of the hospital to meet the people doing it and see how they work first-hand. She also does "rounding" on patients, in order

to see how they are doing and assure them they are being taken care of.

"An important part of the job as a CEO is to know the people who work in and use this hospital," Downey said. "I want to know what they like about it, what their challenges are, and how we can find solutions for them, so I spend a lot of my day talking."

While talking is an important part of her job, finding ways to improve the organization is another. That's why there is currently an eight-storey patient care tower with over 200 patient rooms in the making. Downey wants to make sure the new building is a physical representation of the spirit and people of the community.

"You can't stop taking care of

patients while you build new facilities," she said. "It adds an element of complexity... but this organization is mature and sophisticated enough to be able to do that."

Some of the hospital's physical infrastructure dates back as far as the 1930s. Now, Downey said, she wants to be able to conceptualize and use the leverage she has to help give suggestions on how to put up new facilities that will be there "for at least 50 years and serve people who live in this area for all those years to come."

Juggling such heavy responsibilities is difficult, but Downey said structure helps.

"Life is a balance, and so there are a number of ways I balance the complexities of my life," she said. "I

don't take my work home, so when I leave work, I know there's a system at play at the hospital and there will probably be many calls for help to other staff before it gets to me."

Downey has quite a few plans for the future of Michael Garron Hospital. She said she wants the world to know what a great place the hospital is and hopes it will continue to be a source of pride in the community.

"We are very innovative in what we do, so we want to really continue and propel our great legacy forward and be a star in the health-care system," she said.

It's one in the afternoon, and Downey has an important meeting to get to, which all board members and executives are attending. One of the recent additions to the meetings has been patient videos — a video of a different patient each week. The patients provide the management with feedback on the care they've received. This practice has been happening for 18 months now, and helps top management "stay current" and "hear the patient's voices."

As Downey walks into the meeting, she is met with smiles, laughter and warm-hearted greetings from the staff. When the patient video is finished, the woman running the meeting asks the staff what their thoughts are on it. Downey is the first to put her hand up. Her leadership is what begins the meeting and keeps it going. This is clearly a job that requires that sort of leadership, and that is what Downey seems to radiate.

"Working here so far has been a treasure trove of terrific things and people," she said, "and it's made my decision to come here all the more validated."

■ EDITORIALS

No fare warning

TTC's latest fare increase may price low-income families right out of using Toronto's public transit

Another year, another TTC fare increase.

In what is quickly becoming a routine event, the TTC voted last week to hike the cost of riding the rocket. This time, Metropass users can breath a sigh of relief as the cost of a monthly pass will not go up. However, it will cost you an extra 10 cents to purchase a token, and you'll need to cough up another quarter if you're paying your fare in cash.

It may seem like an insignificant amount at first glance, but to low-income families in East York and throughout the GTA, it makes a world of a difference. Amid the wave of disgruntled reactions from those that can easily afford to throw in an extra few cents, it is important to stop and acknowledge the people who will really be affected by the increase. The reality is that low-income families are slowly being priced out of using Toronto's public transit.

According to the TTC, 15 per cent of riders paying a cash fare come from low-income backgrounds; defined as a collective family income of less than \$41,568 a year. In the East York area alone, the Thorncliffe Park and Crescent Town neighborhoods rank third and eighth on the list of Toronto's low-income neighbourhoods. In Thorncliffe Park, 44.3 per cent of inhabitants are considered to be a part of that economic group, while 32.8 per cent of those living in Crescent Town are also of low-income status.

Individuals and families from this specific background will be hit the hardest, as they tend to pay cash fares rather than Metropasses — because the latter are bigger one-time costs. But cash fares could soon also be out of reach for these low-income riders — and they will be if the TTC continues to make increases in this category.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

The TTC commissioned fare increases to make up for a projected budget shortfall of \$58 million. But why should the most vulnerable of customers be punished for their loyal ridership when there are other ways of balancing their budget?

Toronto's transit system is the least subsidized in all of North America, and massively underfunded as a result. If the province of Ontario did its part in providing subsidies to the TTC, riders would not be getting hit in the wallet — as they have been all too often in the last few years.

For now, this latest increase could be the difference between walking to work and riding to work for those of low-income status.

~ Nasra Osman

Eyes on the road

As this is being written, 35 people have been killed on the roads of Toronto so far this year. And they weren't even in cars.

That's 35 too many. And according to city statistics these pedestrian and cyclist fatalities are on the rise — along with injuries.

In September, the government of Ontario brought in new legislation on road safety, including stiffer fines for things such as distracted driving while using electronics.

The City of Toronto followed suit, reducing speed limits on some Toronto streets — including several in East York — to 30 kilometres per hour.

But these new laws, by themselves, are not the solution. They require enforcement. Politicians can implement new rules, but things won't really change unless these laws are reinforced on the street.

And it could be argued that what the politicians are really doing is just passing the buck — shifting the burden onto law enforcement to ensure that these accidents don't happen.

Realistically, we can't expect the police to be around every corner enforcing these stricter rules of the road. So what's truly needed is for everyone to take up this challenge. All of us are going to have to make changes in our mindset: cyclists, pedestrians and motorists included.

Like it or not, motorists, cyclists and pedestrians are a reality on Toronto roads. As much as one party may find another to be an annoyance, we share the space and we need to learn to peacefully co-exist. (After all, everyone is a mother or father, brother or sister, and son or daughter.)

As winter comes, extended periods of darkness and slippery and slick roads come too. We all need to be more aware of our surroundings in these darker days... and yes, that means pulling out the headphones and putting down the smartphone.

Toronto's transportation system is already dysfunctional. Let's not compound the issue with avoidable accidents.

Let's be careful out there.

~ Jeffrey Sze

■ COLUMN



Members of this year's East York Observer staff bid adieu as they prepare to move to off-campus newsroom internships following this edition of the newspaper. A fresh crop of student-reporters will take over after our Christmas hiatus, which starts now and runs until January.

Until we meet again...

East York has been my home away from home for almost four years. The four years since I graduated from high school and embarked on post-secondary education. Now that college schooling is approaching its end. It's not easy to say good-bye, but I and the rest of the staff of this student newspaper are about to move on to professional newsrooms and careers beyond the journalism program at Centennial College's Carlaw Avenue campus.

It's funny how time flies. I remember first coming

to Centennial and East York — especially because I was so surprised at how long the commute was from my home in Scarborough. It still takes 50 minutes to an hour, but I've gotten used to the time. I've even gotten used to the bizarre fellow passengers whom I sometimes have to share a subway car with. A watershed moment was that actual first day of an official journalism class, when Prof. Ellin Bessner handed out pipe cleaners to the students.

Pipe cleaners, you say? She explained that when you shape the pipe cleaner into something creative, you have concocted a story. Then there was reporting teacher Prof. Ted Barris, who drilled into us the importance of accuracy and initiative, with lines like: "If your mother says she loves you, check," and "It's

not what you know, it's how quickly you can find it." Words to live by, coming from great journalists who taught us a lot.

In our time on the East York Observer — and its web companion, the Toronto Observer — we've witnessed a bit of history here, like the tragic-comedy around Mayor Rob Ford. That was something. We've covered landmark municipal and federal elections late into the night. And we've burned midnight oil on more mundane assignments too. Talk about stress. But that, they tell us, is part and parcel of the news business.

Besides campus life, I've explored East York. It so happens that I have a serious interest in photography, and these environs have been real fodder for me and my camera. But that's all coming to an end now. So on behalf of my colleagues on this outgoing Observer staff, we wish the incoming crew the best. And most of all, we thank East Yorkers for sharing your story — and our 7,000 readers for sharing our finished product.



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Racing into Leaside's history books



Courtesy of City of Toronto Archives

The Observer continues its look back on East York history through photographs from the City of Toronto Archives. These two pictures are a reminder of a feature of Leaside now lost to history — but prominent from its opening in 1917 until it was closed in 1952: The Thorncliffe Park Raceway, between Eglinton Avenue and Millwood Road. City archivists say the photo on the left was taken in 1937, and shows Lou Turofsky and “Nat” with the photo finish camera that they had just installed at the track. The picture on the right is from eight years earlier, in 1929, and shows a newsreel truck from Fox Movietone News covering a track event.



Kimberly Naipaul /// The Observer

Can you say Christmas?

(L-R) Snehlata Ghose, Carol Lewis, Carol Watson and Mary Okubo sell homemade preserves after a concert at Kimbourne Park United Church on Wolverleigh Boulevard on Dec. 5. Proceeds from the sale went to the Glen Rhodes United Church Food Bank on Gerrard Street East.

Lower voting age, student says

Catholic school board's new chair supports proposal

By ANUSSA NITHIYANANTHAN
The Observer

At one of her last meetings before she ascended from trustee to chair, East York's representative on the Toronto Catholic District School Board came out in favour of a student initiative to lower the age of voting for school trustees in municipal elections.

Ward 11 trustee Angela Kennedy was responding to Elizabeth Seredinina, a high school student from Bishop Allen Academy, and a representative of the “Catholic Student Leader Impact Team.”

Serdinina told last month's regular board meeting that it's time to lower the voting age for board of education elections to 16.

“Students deserve to have their voice heard through trustees,” she said.

Currently, the age requirement is 18, which gives few high schoolers a say in who

will sit on the school board.

“I think that students are engaged in politics it seems at a younger age — just evidenced by the most recent federal election,” Kennedy said in her support of Seredinina.

Ultimately, however, the TCDSB has little say by itself in how voting for its trustee positions is run.

Protocols around municipal elections in Ontario — including voting for school boards — are governed by the provincial Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Area went from golf club to apartment buildings

By ERIC PEMBER
The Observer

The East York Historical Society's November meeting featured a seminar on the Woodbine Gardens neighbourhood, at the northeast corner of East York — between O'Connor Drive and Victoria Park Avenue, just south of St. Clair. And the seminar leader comes by his interest in the neighbourhood honestly: Mike Dolbey has been a resident of Woodbine Gardens since 1972.

“When we moved in, our elderly neighbours told us that this used to overlook a golf course before the apartment buildings blocked their view,” he said.

Dolbey asked other people what they knew about the history of Woodbine Gardens, but few in the audience were able to contribute.

With the help of the Internet, Dolbey has been able to piece together the history of the area. The Woodbine Golf and Country Club originally took up the entirety of what would later become Woodbine Gardens.

“During the First World War, many Canadians stationed in England were introduced to the game of golf. During the post-war prosperity of the 1920s, there was an enormous design for new golf courses,” Dolbey said.

The Woodbine golf club was ready to open by 1932. However, by then, Canada was already in the throes of the Great Depression. Consequently, the golf club never took off as intended — and the township of East York ultimately acquired it after the developers couldn't pay their taxes on it. It changed hands a couple of more times, but the golf club ultimately ceased operation by 1950.

The land ultimately fell under the possession of Farlinger Development Ltd., which developed it into the Woodbine Gardens residential neighbourhood that we know today.

Farlinger had plans to build both single-family houses and apartments within the development, which is bordered to the south by Taylor-Massey Creek.

“However, the single-family houses were built first, so they were bought by people who were not aware of the developers' plans to build apartment buildings besides the ravine,” Dolbey said.

The buyers objected to the apartment building plans, since they wanted to preserve the parkland next to the ravine. Then Jack Allen was elected reeve of what was then the township of East York — and he announced plans for a Cosburn Avenue extension that would run along both sides of the Taylor Creek ravine. The yet-to-be-built apartments would, in turn, go alongside the road, and further eradicate the parkland in the valley.

“The plan was not received well by conservation groups, who wanted the Don Valley and Taylor Creek valley preserved as natural areas,” Dolbey said.

So residents opposed to the development formed the Woodbine Gardens and Morning-side Park Ratepayers Association. Allen was unimpressed.

According to Dolbey, the reeve referred to members of the association as “bird-watchers who don't know what they're meddling in.” Although Allen was re-elected reeve in 1958, the association managed to get a council elected that was decidedly anti-development.

However, as one of their last acts, the outgoing council paved the way for the construction of high-rise apartment buildings along the Ferris Ravine near Rexleigh Drive, which directly faces Taylor Creek.

The new council withdrew its support for that initiative, but it was too late. The developers of the apartments went to court and got approval for the development.



Our East York 'Christmas Card'

With this edition of the Observer, we say Happy Holidays — and goodbye for now. The Observer is published by students in the journalism program at Centennial College's East York campus on Carlaw Avenue... and those students are approaching the end of their semester, then Christmas holidays, and then off-campus internships beginning in January. But a new crop of student-reporters is waiting in the wings, and they'll be reopening the newsroom next month and resuming publication shortly after that. For now, we'd like to leave you with these images of Christmas-time in East York, taken by Observer photographer Sanjeev Wignarajah. Clockwise from above: Evergreen Brick Works has been transformed temporarily into the "Evergreen Winter Village" — with a Christmas tree and crafts market, winter activities and even live theatre. The Alexander the Great parkette on Danforth Avenue includes a brightly lit Christmas tree, and a centrepiece monument that lights up the night with words translating from Greek as "Many years." The Bloor viaduct's glow seems to take on a seasonal hue, punctuated by passing cars, while the Danforth's lampposts have been decorated with LED bells and greenery.

Sanjeev Wignarajah /// The Observer

