Simply the Best
Our annual look at York's undergrad achievers

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How China’s students fare. By Berton Woodward

Bright Pearls

Here’s a quote in one of our profiles of this year’s top students that jumped out at me, a former resident of the Chinese side of the Pacific. In a recent speech, the president of York University, Marty Tanczek, spoke of the importance of the exchange of ideas:

“It is easy to be tolerant of those who agree with us; the trick is to be respectful of those who disagree.”

The Office of the Vice-President Students, Student Community & Leadership Development and the Centre for Human Rights are working with students to ensure that appropriate policies are in place to facilitate free expression, and that students who moderate activities are trained to handle such issues. They are not always easy to handle — sometimes they end up causing more controversy than the original issue.

Some of these elements are addressed in our Back Talk column by Toronto reporter Shin Qiao (BA ’04). Having covered the Beijing Olympics, she notes the sharp contrast on this side of the Pacific with the dourness in China.

The line is clear and immutable: when it descends to hate, when it invokes violence, when it violates the law of the land, we’re no longer dealing with free speech. We communicate better through civil discourse than by shouting at each other. That said, there is a time and place for debates on controversial subjects.

Bright Pearls

It is easy to be tolerant of some of my best ideas have come to me in the course of conversation with colleagues. In this sense, Vari Hall is an incomparable asset to York and to our wider community: it’s the ideal place to discuss and debate, to exchange ideas and information.

I believe the exchange of ideas that happens in Vari Hall is as important as the exchange that happens in our lecture halls, labs and classrooms. That’s why we’ve increased the number of tables available to groups and clubs, opened Vari to booking for events and streamlined the booking process. We’re hoping these changes strike the right balance, that they increase dialogue and communication, and that they help promote civil discourse and mutual respect.

The Office of the Vice-President Students, Student Community & Leadership Development and the Centre for Human Rights are working with students to ensure that appropriate language is used at rallies and in printed material disseminated in Vari Hall. At the same time that we defend the right to free speech and facilitate free expression, we must recognize that there are limits.

In the case of free expression, the line is clear and immutable: when it descends to hate, when it invokes violence, when it violates the law of the land, we’re no longer dealing with free speech.

To be clear, it isn’t automatically “hate speech” if an idea offends us; an idea is not wrong simply because we disagree with it. And while Voltaire may not have actually written the line most often attributed to him — “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it” — it lends itself well to this argument.

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We communicate better through civil discourse than by shouting at each other. That said, there is a time and place for debates on controversial subjects. These ought to be conducted in a civil way, without invective or hostility; they ought to be won by force of reason, not by volume.

I believe we have an incredible asset in Vari Hall, and a terrific opportunity to talk – and listen – to each other. A good newspaper, to paraphrase the playwright Arthur Miller, is a nation talking to itself. Vari Hall is a York University talking to itself – it’s up to each of us to listen.
Holy Stroller

Jon Caulfield tours Toronto’s historic churches.

What can Toronto’s oldest churches tell us about The Big Smoke? A great deal, it seems. Jon Caulfield, a York urban studies professor in the Faculty of Arts, has documented the evolution of 92 Christian churches built in inner-city Toronto up to 1893 (Toronto’s centennial year) and found they have their own stories.

“The churches project arose from my interest in the adaptive reuse of old Toronto buildings,” Caulfield says. “I found old Toronto churches adapted as a dance theatre, an academic office, a women’s club, an animation studio and for a lot of other uses. On looking into the histories of these buildings I found not much had been written on them.”

Caulfield limited his project to pre-1893 buildings that were formerly Christian churches and were located in the area bounded by Palmerston Avenue, Davenport Road and the Don Valley. “The most interesting thing to me is the stories of the churches themselves,” he says. For example, he cites the history of the African Methodist Episcopal built in 1838 by black refugees from the US who came via the Underground Railroad. “By 1893 its congregation had dwindled and it had become a Christadelphian church, a Chinese church, a builder’s warehouse and a synagogue before it was removed in the 1920s.”

Another church, First Baptist, built in 1841 at Queen Street East and Victoria Street, housed Toronto’s oldest Afro-Canadian congregation, founded in 1822. First Baptist relocated once, finally settling at Huron and D’Arcy streets, where it remains today.

Caulfield says the loss of churches speaks to contemporary issues such as building conservation and urban planning conflicts, especially when congregations deal with condominium developers. “A study of church buildings is a way to explore Toronto history its social history and built fabric,” says Caulfield, who is writing a book based on his research.
What They’re Reading

York people reveal what’s on the bedside table

Sarah Flicker
Environmental studies professor

“My favourite book for pleasure at the moment is The Glass Castle. A Memoir – Jeanette Walls’ reminiscence of growing up with wacky parents and persevering against all odds. I also really enjoyed Lullabies for Little Criminals, Heather O’Neill’s poignant narrative written from a child’s perspective about having a father with a heroin addiction. It is set in Montreal and deals with this tough subject with refreshing innocence. I am currently reading Stephanie Nolen’s book Bee Worried. It has 28 stories about HIV-positive people, one for each of the million Africans living with the virus. The book is both devastating and inspiring.”

May Friedman
Women’s studies doctoral candidate

“Sticking with my field of motherhood studies, I recently picked up Becoming a Said Sr.: 33 Mothers Write about Children, Sex, Men, Aging, Faith and Themselves. This is an excellent anthology that, while providing a provocative assessment of modern motherhood, is still light enough to act as good bedtime reading. On a more personal level, I recently finished读了的《The Guyet Person Ears》, written by blogger and musical theatre composer Joel Derfner. This book lives up to the hilarious potential of its title but goes much further, providing a poignant and touching look at the life of one gay man in Manhattan. It is extremely thought-provoking, entertaining and astute.”

Sara Smyth
Women’s studies doctoral candidate

“My PhD thesis about online child pornography gets accepted for book publication, Sara Smyth hopes to put forth solutions to a problem she says has long been misunderstood – or ignored – in Canada. “Very little has been written on this topic in the past 10 years,” says Smyth, an Osgoode Hall Law School grad (LLD ’08). “And much of what has, especially in the media, focuses on sensational stories about child sexual predators.”

Laws designed to control child porn on the Internet pose several problems, Smyth says. “Privacy is a concern, so Parliament needs to be mindful of safeguarding existing privacy and freedom of expression guarantees. There is also the importance of preserving the essential nature of cyberspace. The key is to find a balance, promoting privacy and expression online while making it easier for law enforcement to target those who want to use this important space for their own illegal purposes. This balance hasn’t yet been achieved in Canada.”

One of the biggest myths, says Smyth, is that all child porn consumers are sexual predators. “This is not true. Not everyone who consumes child porn has an interest in children. “This has led to bad laws, she says, with policy-makers assuming that unless Parliament prohibits every conceivable form of child porn, all Canadian children will be at risk. That’s meant a prohibition on stories, drawings and other fictional works that have little or no connection to the commission of harmful acts against children.

Another difficulty is harmonizing laws that will police cyberspace. Countries often have very different legal definitions of who a child is or what constitutes child pornography.

Says Smyth, “Focusing limited prosecutorial resources on producers and consumers of stories and paintings makes little sense. The circulation of real child sex abuse images is global, not local. We should be focusing on how we can target the circulation of real child porn in cyberspace. That will take many countries cooperating worldwide.”

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There are myths out there about child porn

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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What kind of person are you and what are you looking for in a career? It's a tough question for many students. New York's Career Centre has made answering it a little easier with its “Who Am I?” workshop. It's a hands-on game designed to help students who are wondering what careers fit with their personalities and strengths.

“Students play an interactive self-discovery board game to explore who they are and what they want in their careers and their life. It lets them identify their unique skills, abilities, assets and desires,” says Dianne Twombly, manager of programs and services for the Career Centre.

The game, which is facilitated by a career counsellor, also gives students a chance to interact with others in the same situation, notes Twombly. “We get students from all levels,” she says. “Basically anyone who isn’t sure of his or her direction. And we also serve recent York grads, up to two years after graduation.”

The workshop, which has been offered for a year and a half, is held two to five times a month, depending on the time of year. “Often students learn how others may influence their career choices—like parents or peers. They gain self-awareness,” Twombly says. “They come out of this clarifying who they are and what they want, not what others think they should become. They learn that understanding who they are is what matters when it comes to making good career decisions.”

York study is the first to confirm that a small number of schizophrenic patients have superior verbal abilities. In fact, they rank in the upper five to 10 per cent of the general population, right alongside similarly gifted healthy people. The study was conducted by York psychology Professors Walter Heinrichs and Joel Goldberg of the Faculty of Health and Hamilton neuropsychologist Stephanie McDermid Vaz (MA ’01, PhD ’05).

“There are no previous research reports of schizophrenia patients with superior ability in any aspect of standard cognitive performance,” says Heinrichs, the lead author. “We were originally studying memory in the illness and as the database started to grow it became apparent that we had recruited a very high-functioning sample. So we decided to look for gifted patients and found them.”

Verbally gifted schizophrenic patients, as defined by their vocabulary scores, were significantly more independent in community living than typical patients. However, both groups still experienced equivalent levels of delusions, hallucinations, apathy and other common symptoms.

“There are two main reasons to study exceptional cognition in schizophrenia,” says Heinrichs. “First, gifted patients help us understand to what degree better cognitive performance translates into better outcomes for mentally ill people, especially in terms of functioning on their own in the community. The future of treatment may lie in improving cognition in these people.”

The second, says Heinrichs, has to do with a basic understanding of schizophrenia’s disease process. How can gifted patients be just as “crazy” as their more cognitively typical peers? One possibility is that the brain mechanisms that cause psychotic illness are different from those that cause cognitive impairment, he says. “The challenge is to isolate what neural defects the gifted and more typical patients have in common as well as those that distinguish them. We may be able to make progress in specifying what goes wrong in the brain in schizophrenia by studying these exceptional patients.”

York research offers new insights into schizophrenia

How York’s Career Centre can help

Know Thyself

 Hide and Seek

How to make your published article easier to find online

Gifted Patients

Y
“I never knew I would go to university,” says Naomi Greenwald (who declined to be photographed). She couldn’t have felt more fulfilled as a Grade 1 teacher at a North Toronto Hebrew girls school. Then she noticed that a few of her charges had problems and at age 23 she enrolled in psychology at York to learn how to help them. For four years, she’s been juggling part-time studies with half-time teaching. It’s an ideal mix of theory and practice for the 27-year-old who may end up counselling for a living, an activity she was born into. “My family loves analyzing people, not in a gossipy way. We like to talk about what makes people tick. People confide in us,” says Greenwald, a middle child who says she won’t leave home until she marries.

Intellectually drawn to mastering Torah logic and calculus, she is studying psychology because “I want to understand people.” Her favourite escape in a life without TV, an iPod or the Internet comes from diving into characters’ lives in classic novels like Daphne du Maurier’s Rebecca. Sometimes, she paddles a canoe to see an Algonquin Park sunset. But compelling her most is what Orthodox Jews call tikkun olam, or “repairing the world.” “Coming to university is taking that community service even deeper.”
Looking East

JENNY XIAO
Schulich School of Business
GPA: 8.5

FOR SOMEONE WHO LIKES NOTHING BETTER than shopping for clothes with her girlfriends at Toronto Eaton Centre, visiting Shanghai last spring was heaven for Jenny Xiao. The daughter of Chinese immigrants who came to Canada nine years ago via New Zealand had signed up for intermediate Chinese expressly for a chance to see her country of birth. Compared to Shanghai’s bustling streets, Canada looked boring. “I didn’t want to come back.” But she did, to a payroll job at a cosmetics factory, a comfortable home in Vaughan with her parents and younger brother, and more school.

Xiao wasn’t such a high achiever until she found herself vying with smart fellow Asians in high school. The trained painter and pianist excelled at life sciences but in Grade 12 opted to study business at university. “Science seemed too hard and you can’t make a lot of money.” You can if you get your MBA and become a chartered accountant, however. The 20-year-old, who says she reads only textbooks (well, sometimes the National Post) and amuses herself by channel surfing and skimming LouLou magazine, hopes to launch her career at a major accounting firm. Her future remains a mystery, the way she likes it, except for this: “For sure, I want to work in China.”

Why Not Do It Well?

WAQAR ZAHID
Schulich School of Business
GPA: 8.5

PROFESSIONAL, THAT’S WAQAR ZAHID. Always on time, congenial, accommodating. These qualities may come naturally to the sunny 20-year-old accounting major, but he’s also deliberately buffing them, prepping for a career with one of the Big Four auditing firms. Last summer, he leapt at an internship with KPMG in Saudi Arabia, where his father works, so he could gain experience interacting with clients. During second year, the Mississauga resident worked part time at a drugstore; this year he’s working at a bank, less for the paycheque than the discipline. “It forces you to better manage your time,” says “The Office” fan whose social life consists of playing cricket and soccer and eating out with friends.

Zahid’s Pakistani parents left Saudi Arabia for Canada so their three children could get a superior education. Schooled in both countries, Zahid finished Grade 12 here a valedictorian. “I’m not going to say I’m brilliant,” says the number-crunching whiz. “My philosophy is: If you’re going to do something, why not do it well?” He’s followed his siblings into business at York, hooked on case-based analysis. “I can see the benefits not too far off now.”

The Great Equalizer

SARAH SHAHMRUDAYAN
Glendon
GPA: 8.5

LIVING AS AN ARMENIAN REFUGEE in Germany instilled Sarah Shahmuradyan with a burning desire to make the world more just and fair. While her parents, both ethnographers whose jobs disappeared when the Soviet Union imploded, waited in vain for German citizenship, they encouraged their bright daughter to excel at school. “Education is one door you want to fling wide open,” they told her. Shahmuradyan was 10 when Canada threw open its doors to her family. Fluent in Armenian, Russian and German, she felt at home in multicultural Scarborough and soon soared to the top of her class – in English.

Grade 11 law sparked her interest, but the teenager involved with the student council, school newspaper and Amnesty International aimed to pursue social work until she realized politics could correct injustice. Now the politics and sociology student, who has added French to her arsenal, plans to study law, then become an international legal policy analyst. Last summer, she worked with new immigrant programs for Ontario’s Ministry of Education and tasted her future. “Law, like education, is one of the great equalizers,” says the 20-year-old “CSI” fan who likes to dance to CHUM-FM. “Regardless of your background, you should be treated the same. Rights are the same everywhere. Freedoms should be the same everywhere.”

Challenge Yourself

MICHELE CARANCI
Faculty of Environmental Studies
GPA: 8.2

MICHELE CARANCI THROWS into the sweet embrace of her large Italian family. She chose York partly because she could scurry home on weekends “to get my Mom fix.” At 20, the youngest of four from rural Schomberg doesn’t drive because she can depend on relatives and friends for lifts to work at Swiss Chalet or to the salsa dance club on girl’s night out. Yet the daughter of a municipal worker and a real estate agent displays a fierce independence when it comes to academics. Not for her, memorizing historical dates or spouting Marx’s theories. “I like giving my own opinion.” She’ll spend three months chomping on essay questions like “What is nature?”, then write her answer in a day. “I love open ended questions,” she says. “You can go as deep as you want – challenging yourself and the way you think.”

Once an avid gamer, this incurable romantic rereads Gone With the Wind and Harry Potter adventures, watches “Grey’s Anatomy”, concocts pasta dishes and redecorates with her mother. She’s also a math tutor who aims to practise law and one day teach, and a dotting aunt who hopes for her own big family. “My goal is to transform the world into a place my children can be proud to live in.”
Back on Track

JENNIFER LY
Faculty of Arts
GPA: 8.53

ALMOST 35, JENNIFER LY is “making up for lost time.” The Grade 10 dropout who hated high school finally earned her diploma after years of dead-end jobs. She doesn’t regret her rebellious phase, but now the daughter of Vietnamese boat people, raised in the Jane-Finch neighbourhood, sees education as her way to move on and up. Inspired by her father who earned a Canadian engineering degree and her high-achieving sister, Ly has ventured deep into sociology and philosophy. “Five years ago, I didn’t think I’d be in university,” she says. Impatient to learn, Ly remains plagued by fears of mediocrity and surprised by her high marks. The big-scholarship-winner works weekends at a karaoke bar and tutors in an adult literacy program and as a York peer adviser. She rarely sees old pals and never watches TV (“It’s so mindless now”) but reads widely – and dotes on her pug Phoebe. Ly is fast-tracking, taking summer courses and preparing for law, MBA and medical program entrance exams, keeping her options open. She wants to earn enough to support her parents and find her niche in policy-making, health or education. “I hope one day to make a change to something that I feel is important.”

Music to the Max

BRENT WIRTH
Faculty of Fine Arts
GPA: 8.43

BRENT WIRTH DOESN’T DRINK or smoke or carouse, yet he’s been hanging out at the Corktown Tavern in Hamilton since he was 12 – singing and playing bass in Kosmonaut, an indie band he and his brother plan to take on the road after he graduates. He was only four when his guitar-picking dad started him on an electric keyboard, then bought him a drum set, eager to perform Smashing Pumpkins hits with his sons in the basement of their rural Stoney Creek home. That basement is now a recording studio where the Wirth boys produce band demos for a fee and Brent doves his older sibling crazy making tracks just so.

In high school, he consistently earned 100 per cent in music, hungry to understand theory and the science of sound, and master French horn, classical guitar, bass guitar and drums. “Music became the centre of my life,” he says. It still is. Thriving on a mere three hours sleep – without benefit of caffeine – the 20-year-old tutors at the local conservatory, rehearses with the band and devotes late nights to learning non-Western music styles at York. “I’m always looking for new things,” says Kosmonaut’s resident songwriter who dreams of a future composing film scores. Watch for his name as the credits roll.

A Big Heart

ALICE MELCOV
Atkinson Faculty of Liberal & Professional Studies
GPA: 8.55

WHEN THE SOVIET UNION COLLAPSED in 1990, Alice Melcov’s engineer parents fled politically unstable Azerbaijan for South Africa, hoping for a better future for their two children. Six years after they settled in Johannesburg, Melcov’s father died, sending her nine-year-old daughter into a soul-searching tailspin. By 12, the child born in a churchless Soviet republic was a prayerful Christian, raising funds to help children with AIDS in Johannesburg. When the family relocated to suburban Thornhill, Ont., Melcov earned on her good work. In high school, she set up a chapter of the Stephen Lewis Foundation and mentored immigrants struggling with English. At York, she has tutored at the Student Peer Support Centre and a Jane-Finch community after-school program.

Actively involved with Campus for Christ, the multilingual 20-year-old joined an evangelical mission last summer to Montreal and Paris universities. “I have a big heart for volunteer work,” says the Nelson Mandela fan. An introvert who can lose herself in a practical ethics text as much as a Tolkien epic, she imagined a life in medicine until she sensed the heady power of public policy. “It can make a big impact on the day-to-day life” of citizens, she says, and she may now pursue public-interest law. “If you are privileged, you should help others.”

Fencing Against Cancer

ANDREW BANG
Faculty of Science & Engineering
GPA: 9.0

FOR A GUY WHOSE LIFE seems so compartmentalized and prescribed, Andrew Bang has come to appreciate risk. After his fresh year, the biology major took his first journey alone to volunteer at a medical clinic in Costa Rica and ended up performing instructive skits in Spanish and zip-lining through jungle trees like Tarzan. The son of South Korean immigrants came home confident he could make a difference in the world.

He ditched business studies for dreams of medicine and onco- logical research. “I want to find the cure for cancer,” says the 20-year-old, inspired by survivors dear to him.

Bang is moving in that direction. He worked in a York lab researching heart-tissue proteins last summer. The former lacrosse athlete has taken up fencing to strengthen his wrists, steady hands being a prerequisite for surgeons. And as founder of the campus Marrow Initiative, he campaigns for student donations. The Richmond Hill commuter does all his school work on campus because at home he can’t resist basketball video games. Cautious by nature, he is proud he has veered into biology and an unknown future. He has taken his father’s advice to heart: It is more important to try and fail than not to try at all.
Michiel Horn had several reasons for not wanting to write York University: The Way Must Be Tried, the authorized history being published in January to kick off York’s 50th birthday celebration. Although eminently qualified — he is one of York’s most respected historians, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and a faculty member since 1968 at the Glendon campus, where York spent four of its first five years — Horn was reluctant to take on the project so soon after completing his latest book on academic freedom in Canada. “The last thing I wanted was to write a university history because I had just read every university history available. Well, I tell you, that’s a sure cure for insomnia,” he says, relaxing in his backyard 10 years after he was first approached by the committee overseeing York’s 40th anniversary.

Horn was also concerned about his objectivity, an indispensable quality for any historian, not to mention one writing about his employer. “I said I was too much a part of the furniture to criticize the layout of the room,” he explains. Then too, with York being relatively young, “a lot of the people who were active in the early years are still around and it’s very difficult to write passionately about things that other people feel passionate about.” But in 1999, at the urging of the late Kent Haxworth, York’s archivist, Horn agreed to hear a pitch from a former fellow undergrad at BC’s Victoria College (now UVic) — York president & vice-chancellor Lorna R. Marsden. She offered him research assistance and an appointment as University Historian with unfettered access to all records. “I decided that the offer was too good to refuse,” he says.

Once Horn set his mind to the undertaking, he was determined that The Way Must Be Tried not be another “doorstop.” To get at the colourful story of Canada’s third largest university, he conducted some 250 personal interviews with people such as James Kachkie, a member of the original “summer bachelor group” that first mooted the new adult education faculty in 1955, and many of the first students, who wanted to be part of “creating something new.” In the hands of an accomplished historian, their words bring York’s story to life. The resulting 320 pages, which include hundreds of new colour photographs and archival images, detail York’s history up to the appointment in 1985 of Harry Arthurs, York’s fourth president — or seventh, counting three acting presidents. The final chapter — a wide-ranging essay on York’s past and present — brings the story up to date and deals with important changes that are still taking place, such as the building boom that has made the Keele campus “rather like a sizable town”, and the achievements of York’s researchers.

While Horn admits he felt obligated to tell a story that would appeal primarily to people who love York, he provides ample context for the general reader to understand the decisions and motivations of the actors. From the first inklings of the baby boom to wrangling over land for a new, much larger campus, Horn tells a story of dedication and commitment to ideas about education that set York apart from Canada’s other postsecondary institutions. From the beginning, he notes, York was intended to be the interdisciplinary university. Although the development of curriculum might not seem like a barnburner, Horn decided the story of how York got its general education courses had to be told. Similarly, he knew it wouldn’t do to gloss over controversy. Readers will certainly find the names, faces and signal events they would expect in a piece of celebratory memorabilia, but they will also find fascinating treatments of the more delicate moments in York’s history, such as the frustrating search for a new campus and opposition to the project by some in business and government.

One major controversy that he says “cast a long shadow” over York’s growth in the 1970s was the leadership crisis that followed the retirement of founding president Murray Ross and the era of financial retrenchment in which it was played out. Two of those acting presidents appear in this period. Horn also writes about the formation of York’s faculty and staff unions (he is a former chair of the York University Faculty Association) and the strikes of the 1980s. The decision in the early ’70s to suspend classes on some Jewish high holidays is described along with the many debates over how the University would develop as it responded to the ebb and flow of enrolment, the economy and political winds.

“I had a lot of fun doing it,” Horn admits now that the book is completed. “I’m conscious of the fact that a lot of people are going to criticize me for one thing or another,” he says with a grin. “One thing that they’ll probably be thinking is, ‘Why didn’t he come and talk to me? I could have told him a thing or two.’”

York University: The Way Must Be Tried will be published by McGill Queen’s University Press in January 2009 and can be pre-ordered through the York University Bookstore.
LOIN TAMER

York’s new football coach, Mike McLean, has a proven track record in team turnarounds.

BY DAVID FULLER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KC ARMSTRONG

LION TAMER

Those are the first two words you hear in Mike McLean, York’s new head football coach, talking about his guiding philosophy in turning around a team that saw some of the worst days in its history over the previous two years. They’re simple words, but they hold a lot of truth—truth that the team has been and where it’s going. Although he is loath to discuss the past, McLean admits he knew he was taking on a tough job when he agreed to coach the Lions, who had won only two games since 2006. “They didn’t have the talent,” he said, “but the heart and the team spirit that we’re trying to create are pretty significant.”

When he took up residence in his Stong College office last February, McLean immediately began “bailing water” to try to keep the Lions’ ship afloat. With the all-important recruiting season already underway, he had to go on what he calls an “internal and external” talent drive. It’s the most critical factor in the success of any sports program, one that’s made more difficult by teams with bigger budgets who can attract the best players with scholarships. A few players left but most stayed. Still, fully half of this year’s team are first-year players, only four are seniors—“the guys you win with,” as McLean calls them.

One of those five-year men, quarterback Bart Zemanek, who left the Lions after the 2006 season for a stint with a semi-pro team in Finland, returned to complete his master’s degree in kinesiology and quickly became a McLean booster. “He’s a guy you want to follow,” Zemanek told a downtown reporter. “Five days into camp and all the vets were hugging each other.”

McLean expects a lot from the team and makes his point in direct terms. “You play like you practice,” he says, reciting a coach’s maxim that takes on ominous significance from a man who once wore army fatigues on the sidelines, has a body in the US Marines and rides a Harley Davidson. Oh, and did we mention the tattoos? Since his playing days ended in 1992, McLean became a religion teacher and coach at a Catholic high school in Edmonton and then, in 1999, joined the winless Edmonton Huskies junior team, which he guided to immediate respectability and national titles in 2004 and 2005, earning him a coach of the year award. In 2006 he moved to St. Mary’s University in Halifax as defensive coordinator and moulded his players into the country’s top-rated defensive unit. But his desire for a head-coaching position soon led him to York.

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According to an old Russian proverb, “jealousy and love are sisters.” So perhaps it’s reasonable to infer that this powerful feeling might arise in infancy, or at least have roots in childhood and family settings. A pioneering new handbook co-edited by York psychology Professor Maria Legerstee is devoted to unlocking the processes of jealousy’s development. Interestingly, the book was sparked not by work with adults, but by Legerstee’s own research with infants.

The Handbook of Jealousy: Theories, Principles and Multidisciplinary Approaches will present a complete picture of jealousy, dealing with its functions, origins and differentiation during infancy and childhood, says Legerstee. “It’s a unique book, the first of its kind.” Due in 2009, its 20 papers and three commentaries will chart how jealousy unfolds while also looking at the familial, cultural, cognitive and biological factors that drive its development.

Legerstee herself had never done any work in the area of jealousy before. So where did the idea come from? “It developed from the babies’ responses in an experiment I had put them in,” she says. “My research focuses on infant socio-cognitive development. That refers to the ability to understand other people. I use the infants’ ability to communicate to infer what they know about people.”

It’s a topic the Faculty of Health professor, who has taught at York since she established the Centre for Infancy Studies in 1991, knows well. She is the author of Infants’ Sense of People: Precursors to a Theory of Mind (2005), and co-editor of a special section of the journal Infant Behavior and Development, titled “What Does It Mean to Communicate for Infants?” She is also preparing to edit a new book on early socio-cognitive development.

Legerstee conducted her study on jealousy with 3-, 6- and 9-month-old infants. Each communicated with a female experimenter in three situations while the mother sat at their side in a triangle. In one situation, the experimenter communicated face-to-face with the infant in a normal, baby-friendly fashion. In another, the experimenter looked at the infant but was unwilling to communicate with it. Then, in two “unable” conditions, the experimenter first drank water from a bottle while looking at the infant and later was interrupted by the baby’s mother, who began to talk with her to the exclusion of the infant. In all cases the experimenter was looking at the infant.

“What I wanted to know was whether infants would discriminate between the unable and unwilling experimenter. That is, does the infant differentiate between the different communicative motives of the woman?” explains Legerstee. “The infants reacted with more sadness and gaze aversions and less smiling when I was unwilling to communicate with them than when I was willing. However, the infants did not get upset when I was unable to talk because I was drinking. But when I was unable to talk to the infants because I was interrupted by their mother, and we began to engage in an energetic and vivid dialogue together to the exclusion of the baby, the babies got very upset.”

Could this be jealousy? Legerstee also discovered another curious phenomenon. While absent at a conference, she had student researchers try to replicate her findings with the infants and mothers. Reviewing the videotapes of the interactions later, she found her students had merely kept up a monologue with the mother (the student talked, the mother listened). Intriguingly, the babies were not upset. They merely watched the spectacle of the student talking to/at mom.

“I realized that here I had my experimental control,” says Legerstee. “Infants reacted negatively to being excluded by their mother, but not when being excluded by a stranger. I had shown what the distinguished neuroscientist and psychologist Jaak Panksepp calls “the affective precondition for the emergence of human jealousy, namely, the existence of a social bond that is threatened by the perceived intervention of a third party.”

Legerstee says some people might be cautious about calling the infants’ response “jealousy” and feel that what she discovered could be more akin to “separation distress,” a basic human social emotion and one of the foundational processes for human sadness. However, says Legerstee, “while separation distress is elicited in a dyadic situation, that is, a fear of being separated from mother, and jealousy involves a triadic one – a fear of losing mother to someone else – both may have the same root.”

“But this is only a theoretical position,” stresses Legerstee. “No one really knows for sure what’s going on in the mind of a baby.”
Two years ago, when Joseph Moncada failed to get a summer internship with a big corporation after second year, he decided to open a candy shop at Wasaga Beach on Georgian Bay. Who wanted to spend their holidays making photocopies and running for coffee anyway? Some people scoffed — but not for long. Within two years, the York business student’s beachfront Sweet Tooth Candy Emporium has penetrated the Toronto market, and its 22-year-old owner is this year’s national champion student entrepreneur.

Moncada never planned to operate his specialty candy shop beyond Thanksgiving weekend that first year. He just wanted to have fun, live cheaply at his parents’ cottage and make enough money to pay for his winter exchange term in Milan, Italy — one reason he had enrolled in York’s International Bachelor of Business Administration program in the Schulich School of Business. With a $3,000 start-up grant from Ontario’s Summer Company program and about $8,000 in savings, he rented a 1,000-square-foot former T-shirt shop and fed his friends pizza and beer to help him prepare for the Mother’s Day opening.

Sweet Tooth would not be another Belgian chocolate shop, decided this young risk-taker. It would not sell Gatorade or jujubes in bulk, or the usual corner-store fare. Moncada carved out a niche market in retro candy — wax lips, hot toothpicks, pink popcorm, bottle caps, blackballs and sponge toffees, Malted Milk and Sweet Marie chocolate bars, Pop Shoppe pop — to appeal to baby boomers and gen Xers. His shelves are stocked with Cadbury Flake bars made in the United States, cappuccino Kit Kats from Japan, nougat from Europe and dark chocolate from Italy. And even unappetizing confections, like tequila-worm lollipops and Canadian chocolate-covered insects. To wash it down, there’s pomegranate lemonade and hot chocolate spiced with hot peppers.

“Kids love our products, but we target adults,” says Moncada, who obviously aced his marketing courses. “It’s a walk down memory lane whether you grew up in Canada or the States or Europe. When customers come into the store, they all say, ‘I haven’t seen this in 20 or 30 years.’ It’s a nostalgia trip.”

That first season in Wasaga Beach, Moncada worked 60- and 70-hour weeks and made almost $20,000. He sold off the remaining stock and gave back the key. “I thought I was done.” Then his sister persuaded him to start a year-round shop in a corner of the Scarborough Town Centre: “All the money I made for my exchange, I invested in a new store.” (He still managed to go to Milan, though.) Since then, the “moon and pop operation” has spawned a third store in another Toronto mall, branched into Christmas kiosks and may become a franchise operation one day.

The guy whose e-mail moniker is “superman” never doubted he could succeed. From childhood, this only son of Italian professionals has loved to work and has never shied from a challenge. “I continually seek to overcome my flaws and grow as a person. I want to be well rounded,” says the math and science talent who has struggled to master Italian and Spanish. “I just keep going, I never give up. I always attack things head on.”

In high school, Moncada won student achievement awards and problem-solving competitions. At five-foot-eight, he was a point guard in provincial level basketball and played competitive soccer. With energy to burn, he runs every morning and still kicks around a soccer ball. Though he owns and oversees Sweet Tooth, Moncada focuses on diversifying the product line and building the enterprise. “I’ve taken myself out of the equation.” And he’s moved on. In June, he and two friends went to Japan in search of new candy products and to climb Mount Fuji — a post-convocation celebration before he started as a management trainee for InBev, the world’s largest brewer. “I’m going from one dream job to another,” says the 2008 IBBA grad, who beat out thousands of MBAs for one of the handful of trainee positions at the Belgium-based company.

This fall, from somewhere in North America, the national champion of the 2008 Advancing Canadian Entrepreneurship (ACE) Student Entrepreneur Competition was due to fly to Chicago. There he would switch to his Sweet Tooth cap once again and represent Canada at the Global Student Entrepreneur Awards final. Watch for him soon making a business pitch on CBC’s “Dragons’ Den.” Life is indeed sweet: “I’m having fun and I’m loving it.”
PERFORMANCE

How I got a shot at stardom with WWE – and why I’m glad to be back at York.

BY SHANTELLE MALAWSKI

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KIRK

It’s not every mother’s dream to have a daughter who wants to become a professional wrestler. But things change when World Wrestling Entertainment Inc. offers you a contract! It certainly became my dream, and for a while I lived it – the wild world of caped characters, boastful promos, scripted battles and a lot of talented athleticism in the ring. I was 20 at the time, and in my second year of a BA in psychology at York. How did it go? Well, be careful what you wish for…

I have always been an overactive person, both mentally and physically. My parents signed me up for every sport or athletic activity in attempt to curb my hyperactive disposition. As soon as I could walk and talk I was in swimming, dance, gymnastics, skating, softball and ringette. I was also an infamous sleep-walker. In a zombie-like trance, I was able to have conversations, walk out to my backyard swing set and run around the living room screaming at the top of my lungs while in a deep sleep.

Being overactive is not all bad though. It enabled me to try many different athletic and creative outlets at which I excelled. I especially loved ringette; I owe so much of who I am to it. It taught me balance, time management, independence, leadership, teamwork, respect – and that life is not fair. It also gave me the chance to represent the southern region of Ontario in the Canadian Winter Games. I was one of the two youngest members of the team.

In high school in Etobicoke, I did manage to squeeze some diversity into my growing athletic résumé. I played cello in the orchestra for six years, served as student council vice-president in Grade 12 and was a counsellor at leadership camps. I also worked hard on my academics and remained an honour student throughout high school.

In Grade 11, I participated in a cooperative education program and landed a part-time job as a fitness instructor at the Etobicoke Olympium. That’s what opened the door to my career as a professional wrestler. One of the former trainers, who visited the gym frequently, was a pro on the independent circuit. I had always been a wrestling fan, and admired the glitz and glam and athletic integrity of the wrestlers. But I had no idea there was a place in Toronto that could prepare me for such a career.

I started my professional wrestling preparation when I was 17, at Squared Circle Training in Toronto. Wrestling was, and still is, the most passionate love-hate relationship I have ever endured. Training is tough, and becoming a professional is even tougher. Being a natural athlete is a foot in the door, but you must still learn all the required technique. Few people realize that professional wrestling is based on respect. Not only are you a performer and an athlete, but you are also one of two people who go into the ring to fight. Goofy tights or not, you put each other’s lives at stake match after match. Without respect, there would be no sport – just a lot of fatalities. Throughout my training and career, I have broken numerous fingers and toes, sustained several concussions, and twisted, strained, sprained, stretched and jammed almost all of my joints. Still, the only long-term damage I have sustained is a 30-per-cent loss of sensation in my left hand due to nerve damage from repeated elbow and wrist injuries.

In fact, professional wrestling is one of the most empowering professions. You develop a new respect for your body because it takes you to an entirely different level of performance. And wrestling enabled me to travel the world and meet people of all different lifestyles. I soon had matches all over North America as well as in Mexico and South Africa. After two years of gaining a vast array of experience and credibility, I earned two try-outs with World Wrestling Entertainment Inc., the world’s top wrestling company, and was offered a contract.

I never intended to leave Toronto. My entire family is here, all my friends, school and work. Even though I had been travel-
ling solo for the past year for weeks at a time, I was extremely distressed. My dream job required me to stop attending York and move to Atlanta, Georgia, to what is called a developmental territory. It’s like a finishing school for independent wrestlers. It prepares you for the opportunity to perform on one of the WWE TV shows, “Raw”, “SmackDown” or “ECW”. Being hired by WWE does not guarantee you a position on any of the three shows. Like many things in life, these chances often spring from good timing and being at the right place at the right time.

Based in the US South, I was fortunate enough to appear in a few live events for both “Raw” and “SmackDown”. I performed on house shows (which happen on the weekends and are not filmed for television) and for dark matches, which occur before the live events are filmed. I wrestled as many different characters in a short amount of time. I fought as a Japanese male named Sendai, a masked female wrestler named Katana, and then a darker version of a Catwoman-like superhero. I had so much fun doing these live events, it made all the pain worthwhile. I got to perform in front of thousands while some of the biggest icons in wrestling watched and put me on the back after matches. My greatest memories come from meeting my childhood heroes, including Dean Malenko, Rey Mysterio, Ric Flair, Bill DeMott and the late Fabulous Moolah. It’s one thing to meet them, but it is quite a surreal experience to be a part of the same company and form a relationship with them.

The women in wrestling all share the same quality: we are very aware that we are a rare breed. But what separates us is that we come in two species. The first is the girls who realize how few of us there are and that we should all be fighting together to prove ourselves. And then there are the others. These girls would rather stab their friends in the back to get to the top, no matter whom they hurt. It’s worth it to get their time in the spotlight.

Despite my talents and all the hard work, after one year and one month the WWE creative team gave me the infamous line: they “had nothing for me”. I have no...
IItt’s s a a lloonngg wwaayy from North Battleford, Sask. – polka country – to Japan and the Middle East, but it’s an amusical journey York PhD student and saxophonist Daniel Schnee was willing to make after connecting with jazz iconoclast Ornette Coleman. “I met him at a party in New York and he agreed to give me a couple of lessons. When I told him I was interested in Japan, he said I should go there,” explains Schnee, who is in his third year of the Graduate Program in Ethnomusicology in York’s Faculty of Fine Arts.

Schnee went. While there he studied formal Japanese court music, composed for television and the theatre, performed, and learned about the inter-disciplinary nature of Japanese art. “They have dozens of ways of saying ‘beautiful’ that apply to all the arts,” he says. On his return to Canada and graduate studies at the University of Alberta, he was introduced to Arab music, which the saxophone was not designed to play, and set about learning the techniques required to achieve the unique sounds, known as quarter-tones. Schnee is one of only five saxophone players worldwide who studies and regularly performs classical Arab and Persian music on the saxophone. He plans to write a book about his techniques based on his PhD research, and this year he was included in a prestigious listing of innovative music scorers, Notations21, updating a work originated by the legendary John Cage.

LIKE ANY GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL FIGHTER, Laura Reinsborough (BES Spec. Hons. ‘05, MES ‘08) wanted to help last year when she learned about a new farmers’ market in her West Toronto neighborhood. When the organizers suggested she pick fruit for the market from the heritage orchard at Hitler’s Spadina House, it set the stage for her to play a role in a larger project. Noting all the fruit trees in her area, Reinsborough decided to organize “not far from the tree,” a collective that harvests unwanted fruit and distributes it among community organizations, fruit owners and the volunteer pickers.

Pulling people together for the project followed naturally from Reinsborough’s work as a student in York’s Faculty of Environmental Studies and her current role as community art facilitator with the Art Gallery of York University. The idea also gave her a chance to demonstrate how, with a bit of creativity, people can grow food locally, instead of having it shipped from halfway around the world. This season, volunteers collected over 3,000 pounds of fruit from homes in Toronto’s Word 21, including sweet cherries from trees in ETS Dean Barbara Rahder’s backyard. “I was amazed at the quality of the backyard fruit,” Reinsborough says. Now she is working with community groups to set up harvests in other parts of the city. “I really thrive on community organizing,” she says, “but I think I’m more of an enabler than an organizer.”
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“Our students are wonderful young people,” says retiree Mary Lyons. As former coordinator for both the women’s interuniversity sports program at York and the physical education program within her 1949 journey by horse from Quebec to BC – Ride the Rising Wind: One Woman’s Journey Across Canada (2005). In April, straight out of York, Sider set off with her horse Kat, a tent and plans to make a film of her adventure. This fall the pair were due to reach their destination, dipping toes and hooves into the Pacific Ocean. “We’ve enjoyed it, but we’re ready to go home.”

Canadians opened their stables, their homes and their hearts. It was a journey that was emotionally and physically trying, but also wonderful. “I’ve never been much for taking the easy route. I always want to take the interesting route,” says Sider.

That’s for sure. Sider plans to hitch trailer rides with her horse back to Ontario, testing Canada’s generous spirit once again. “It was wonderful. We’ve enjoyed it, but we’re ready to go home.”

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Latest data on York to the Power of 50, York University’s 50th anniversary fundraising campaign:

Target: $200 million
Current level: Over $167 million
Time since launch: 25 months
Priorities for support: Pioneering research and programs; student awards and scholarships; Chairs and professorships; infrastructure.

For more information, contact Jacqueline Cooper at 416-650-8210 or cooperja@yorkfoundation.yorku.ca.

Kimber Sider
Horse wrangler, distance rider
Heart Land

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TRASON FERNANDES

A Lasting Legacy
York donors discover the power of planned giving

Supporters: Mary Lyons

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York donors discover the power of planned giving

Supporters: Mary Lyons

M any of York’s greatest supporters are faculty members, staff and retirees who choose to continue their outstanding contributions to the University – often through the power of planned giving.

“Our students are wonderful young people,” says retiree Mary Lyons. As former coordinator for both the women’s interuniversity sports program at York and the physical education program within her 1949 journey by horse from Quebec to BC – Ride the Rising Wind: One Woman’s Journey Across Canada (2005). In April, straight out of York, Sider set off with her horse Kat, a tent and plans to make a film of her adventure. This fall the pair were due to reach their destination, dipping toes and hooves into the Pacific Ocean. “We’ve enjoyed it, but we’re ready to go home.”

Canadians opened their stables, their homes and their hearts. It was a journey that was emotionally and physically trying, but also wonderful. “I’ve never been much for taking the easy route. I always want to take the interesting route,” says Sider.

That’s for sure. Sider plans to hitch trailer rides with her horse back to Ontario, testing Canada’s generous spirit once again. “It was wonderful. We’ve enjoyed it, but we’re ready to go home.”

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Latest data on York to the Power of 50, York University’s 50th anniversary fundraising campaign:

Target: $200 million
Current level: Over $167 million
Time since launch: 25 months
Priorities for support: Pioneering research and programs; student awards and scholarships; Chairs and professorships; infrastructure.

For more information, contact Jacqueline Cooper at 416-650-8210 or cooperja@yorkfoundation.yorku.ca.

Kimber Sider
Horse wrangler, distance rider
Heart Land

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TRASON FERNANDES
The Games Afterglow

Beijing spent seven years preparing, and so did I.

ONLY AFTER THE JOURNALISTS LEFT did this shy girl start talking with me. A 21-year-old student at a local university, she came from the countryside of neighboring Hebei province. She was very curious about my life in Canada, especially the English I spoke. “I can understand most of the English from a tape. But I don’t know why I get so nervous when real people are talking to me in real English,” she said softly in Chinese.

I didn’t know how to answer her, telling her I sometimes still mix up “erotic” and “exotic.” She giggled after I translated the two words, and the typical Chinese wariness of strangers dissolved. “Being an Olympic volunteer is one of four tools in the job-hunting survival kit,” she explained. The other options are speaking fluent English, having powerful parents and, not least, becoming a member of the Communist Party.

Phoenix told me her parents were farmers. Farmers may have ties in their village, but definitely not in the Olympic Village. Join the Communist Party? She had no interest.

Phoenix is proud of the Games and proud of China, but she shows no sign of the aggrieved, defensive nationalism from the days of Chairman Mao. Her generation is more cosmopolitan than xenophobic – a practical group not easily manipulated.

The new generation in China is more cosmopolitan than xenophobic – a practical group not easily manipulated.

I told him, “They don’t have naked wires hanging in the air anywhere, especially not on top of customs officers.”

That’s what the Beijing Games gave me. Enough pride to push back when I need to.

Back in 2001, when Beijing defeated Toronto in the bidding for the 2008 Olympics, I dreamed of being a spectator at the Games. At the time, I was studying at York, an ESL student from China who felt totally out of place, didn’t talk in class, had to rewrite returned essays, and would sweat and stutter when people spoke to me in English.

Somewhere, I ended up as a daily newspaper reporter in Toronto and, last summer, got the chance to cover the Olympics. Beijing spent seven years getting ready. So did I.

The city was extraordinary. Every pedestrian overpass was festooned with the Olympic slogan “One World, One Dream.” Smiling Olympic volunteers worked tirelessly to show the world one thing: our country is stronger than ever.

That is not exactly what Phoenix was in it for, though. Phoenix was one of the 30,000 Olympic volunteers, working on a media shuttle bus. The first time I saw her, she was very nervous, trying to understand what two foreign journalists wanted. I translated for Phoenix and then started chatting with the pair, not realizing she was eyeing me the same way I had eyed my Canadian classmates years ago at York.

Shanghai-born Shan Qiao (BA ’04) is a reporter for the Chinese-language Today Daily News in Toronto.
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