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LEGACY GIFTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

"I will never forget how much receiving this award helped me and my daughter during one of my toughest years -- academically, personally and financially. I am forever grateful to Dr. Lambert for his generosity."

Lisa Stewart is a single mom and high-achieving York student who plans to graduate this Fall. Her passion for Native and Aboriginal human rights earned her the Dr. Allen T. Lambert Scholars Award created by a bequest to York University in the late Dr. Lambert's Will. Lambert was a founding governor of the University, long-time friend and a distinguished community leader.

Photo caption: Ashley Hickey and Lisa Stewart



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RETIREMENT

Staff writer Martha Tancock retired in April after 13 years spent celebrating the glory that is York in these pages and in other University publications.

YorkU is published three times during the academic year by York University. It is printed and mailed to alumni and friends of the University two times a year, in the fall and spring. Printed copies of the magazine are no longer distributed on York's campuses, but *YorkU* is available digitally three times a year on the York University website at digital.yorku.ca. The winter issue of *YorkU* will be made available as a digital edition only. The total circulation for each printed issue is 245,000.

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President

BY MAMDOUH SHOUKRI

I have often said that people are what make a university great – the students, professors, researchers, staff, graduates, parents, visitors and friends whose unique backgrounds, interests, skills and passions combine to create a shared vision of excellence in teaching and learning.

York is no exception. In recent months I have had a number of opportunities to see the inspiring quality and commitment of our people first-hand.

At alumni events in Montreal, Ottawa and Naples, Fla., I met up with York graduates like John Bankes, who obtained LLB and MBA degrees from the University and holds the distinction of being one of our longest-serving board members after being appointed as a student in 1974. I also met York humanities Professor Emerita Elaine Newton in Naples, who has led a book and movie review club for more than 20 years that is so popular it is hard to get a seat. The strong community spirit of individuals like Bankes and Newton is infectious, and

There are nearly 50,000

they are putting it to good use by making a real contribution to their local communities.

In March, I traded places with York kinesiology and health science student Emanuel Ebrahim in our third annual “President for a Day” contest.

Powered by his impressive ideas to strengthen the University, Ebrahim showed purpose, poise and a maturity beyond his years in a day full of meetings with senior officials and donors, student roundtables and speaking engagements. My turn as a student for the day was enriched by opportunities to learn from award-winning graduate student and teaching assistant Corinne Babiolakis, Pilates instructor Evelyn Charters, Faculty of Health Professors Anne Moore, Jessica Fraser-Thomas and Michael Riddell, and the talented researchers in Riddell’s lab, including doctoral candidate Emily Dunford. If these York community members are any reflection of the broader community, I have complete confidence in the bright future of the University. I could not have been prouder – or more exhausted

York graduates, and nearly 2,000 staff and faculty living in York region.



– after walking a mile in one of our student’s shoes.

I have also had the opportunity to engage in stimulating conversations with a broad range of community leaders, thought leaders and friends of the University across the Greater Toronto Area – entrepreneurs, innovators, artists, researchers and civic leaders who are inspiring change as community builders and who share my excitement about the direction of the University and the role York is playing in social and economic development in the region. I welcome these opportunities to exchange ideas and engage in new ways of thinking by celebrating and drawing upon the diversity within our own community.

I recently learned that there are nearly 50,000 York University graduates living in York Region, and nearly 2,000 staff and faculty members. As our campuses expand and transform, it is exciting to see a corresponding growth in opportunities for connection and the sense of being at home at York. These campus and community connections, which can take many forms, contribute to a rich academic experience and foster life-long relationships with our neighbours.

As we celebrate the University’s 55th birthday this spring and reflect on the journey from founding values to forward-looking vision and priorities, it is easy to identify the one critical quality that makes York a leader of 21st century education today – our extraordinary people. ■

Mamdouh Shoukri is York’s president and vice-chancellor



Universe

Are optimists at higher risk
when purchasing big-ticket items?

Let's Make a Deal

WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE, whether at a car dealership or buying a new computer. Inevitably, once the deal is signed, the salesperson tries to upsell us with warranties and peripherals. This is where there are large profit margins. Then, as soon as we walk out of the store, we begin to have doubts: Was it too much money? Is it more power than I need? Did I buy the most reliable item? Do I really need that expensive warranty?

A series of studies by Schulich School of Business Professor Peter Darke and former Schulich doctoral student Andrew Wilson, now a professor at Saint Mary's College of California, indicate that people who believe the world is a just and good place tend to trust salespeople more following a purchase than consumers who have a glass half-empty view of life. However, the innate goodwill of optimistic consumers will evaporate if there are obvious signs the seller has ulterior motives, says Darke.

In an article published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, they write: "As consumers, we make many decisions each day that may or may not turn out the way we hope. Since we know salespeople may have their own reasons for providing the advice and recommendations they give, trusting in a salesperson too much may put us at further risk of making a bad decision."

Darke says they looked at the way consumers trust salespeople and how it's related to their world view – that is, whether or not they see the world as a place where good people get good outcomes and where bad outcomes happen mostly to bad people. "We found that people who hold the foregoing belief are a lot more optimistic when it comes to trusting salespeople," he says. In other words, they could be suckers.

Consumers who have what the researchers referred to as a "rose-coloured glasses" (RCG) world view, when dealing with

their post-purchase buyer's remorse, tend to believe that since the world is a just place the deal will turn out fine. This positive view helps them cope with the psychological stress of the purchase itself.

"You would think that when there's a perceived threat in the environment you would be less trusting, but we're seeing the opposite," says Darke. They found both optimists and pessimists had no difference in "trust judgment" before making a purchase, but after the decision to buy, trust judgments diverged dramatically.

"After the sale, our research indicated optimistic consumers enter into a more trusting state," says Darke. "And then the salesperson says you've made a very wise purchase today and the only way you can protect it is by buying this or that extended warranty or these add-on products. The statements salespeople make are then being processed by your very trusting mindset. So we think that's where it might not be of benefit to the consumer."

Darke says the reason their research matters is because consumers should know they could find themselves in a vulnerable state following a major purchasing decision. On the other hand, he says being an optimist might be a good thing since these are the consumers who usually end up feeling more satisfied with the decisions they made. "What was interesting about our findings was these perceptions tended to affect judgment automatically, meaning that consumers were not consciously aware that they were being optimistically trusting because of their world beliefs," says Darke.

If you're an RCG consumer and you want to protect yourself, what should you do? Darke suggests that consumers who have a clearly positive worldview bring a designated pessimist along with them when shopping. "That's especially important when you're shopping for more expensive items or when the purchase involves a lot of salesperson assistance," he says. ■

Easily Distracted

Does multitasking really inhibit classroom learning?

LIKE IT OR NOT, multitasking has become a *de rigueur* aspect of modern life – the ability to simultaneously monitor e-mails, write a business report, sip coffee, watch TV and check our Facebook accounts. Multitasking is supposedly more efficient and, so the argument goes, leaves us with time at the end of the day to devote to the things we really want to do. But does it actually?

A recent study led by Melody Wiseheart, a York University psychology professor, and co-authored by psychology doctoral students Tina Weston, in York's Faculty of Health, and Faria Sana from McMaster University, found that multitasking in the classroom leads to decreased learning efficiency. Since laptops are more or less ubiquitous in that environment (though some professors ban their use during lectures), the research findings are troublesome.

The study, which focused on undergraduate-level students, revealed that multitasking on a laptop significantly reduced a

student's ability to listen to and understand live lecture content. "In light of cognitive psychology theory on costs associated with multitasking, we examined how students used their laptops in a simulated classroom," says Weston. "We found that students who multitasked on a laptop during a lecture scored lower on a test compared to those who did not."

What was even more surprising, however, was the effect multitasking students had on fellow students. "We also found that participants who were in direct view of a multitasking peer scored lower on a test compared to those who were not," Weston says.

While the second result was somewhat unexpected, the first is not, she says. "Managing two or more tasks at one time requires a great deal of attention, and attentional resources are not infinite." Weston says the bottom line is that the experiment's results show multitasking on a laptop poses a significant distraction to both the user and his or her fellow students, and can be detrimental to comprehending lecture content. ■

TASK MASTER: Doctoral student Tina Weston

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
MCKENZIE JAMES



YOU'VE LIKELY HEARD about the corporate glass ceiling, the invisible barrier to career success. Well, it seems that women in the new venture world, particularly technology entrepreneurs, face similar hurdles – dubbed the “thorny floor” syndrome by York human resources management Professors Souha Ezzedeem and Jelena Zikic. They recently conducted interviews with a dozen female technology entrepreneurs (ages ranging from mid-20s to 50s) to provide the opportunity for exploration of these women’s subjective experiences.

In an in-depth content analysis of responses, Ezzedeem and Zikic found their subjects consistently reported encountering persistent gender stereotypes, a paucity of female role models, resistance from associates both within and outside their organizations (such as financiers, peers and stakeholders), and societal pressures to maintain appropriate levels of work-family balance.

“We found that the barriers faced by women entrepreneurs are different than those experienced by women working in the corporate world,” says Ezzedeem. “Although our findings are exploratory and preliminary in nature, I think they do indicate that women entrepreneurs do not experience glass ceilings so much as they experience what we’re calling ‘thorny floors’ – meaning outright opposition and sabotage from male subordinates.”

The social implications of their findings, says Ezzedeem, is that women considering entrepreneurship should expect to encounter resistance to their leadership, albeit manifested in different forms than in strictly corporate settings. Male-dominated



Plus ça Change...

Why women tech entrepreneurs face an uphill battle

FROZEN OUT: Souha Ezzedeem explores women's tech troubles

fields such as technology involve industry-level resistance as well as opposition from within the organization.

She notes, however, that women still perceived the technology entrepreneurship field as merit-driven whereby they gained acceptance once they established themselves as credible competitors.

“Our study is one of the few to elucidate the multiple levels of opposition to women’s entrepreneurship in male-dominated settings.” ■

Duly Noted

Researchers discover music improves young minds

THERE ARE MANY WAYS to keep minds fresh and evolving, and now music has been added to the list. A recent study by a team of Canadian scientists who specialize in learning, memory and language in children – including York University Distinguished Research Professor Ellen Bialystok – found young children showed improved verbal IQ after only 20 days of exposure to interactive, music-based cognitive training cartoons.

The study, conducted at York University and the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, looked at 48 children between the ages of four and six as they participated in computer programs that were projected onto a classroom wall.

The children were split into two groups: one received music-based training involving a combination of motor, perceptual and cognitive tasks, and included instruction on rhythm, pitch, melody, voice and other basic musical concepts; and the other received visual art training that emphasized the development of

visuospatial skills relating to concepts such as shape, colour, line, dimension and perspective. Both groups received two one-hour training sessions each day for a month.

Researchers found no significant increases in verbal intelligence or brain changes for the children who completed the visual art training module. However, they found quite a different result in the children who took the music-based training: 90 per cent of those children exhibited improvements in intelligence.

Bialystok, an associate scientist at Baycrest academic health centre and principal collaborator on the study, says the results have impact beyond the benefits of musical education. “They’re interesting not only because they clearly connect cognitive improvement to musical training, but also because the improvements in language and attention are found in completely different domains than the one used for training.”

The research team also included lead author Sylvia Moreno, as well as Tom Chau, Glenn Schellenberg, Raluca Barac and Melody Wiseheart of York University. ■



In the Media

Handing it to Them

York University kinesiology Professor Norman Gledhill recently established one of the things that sets hockey players apart. He's the man behind the fitness testing at the NHL's annual scouting combine. "I'm not sure that hockey players have bigger hands on average than you or I, but we can say their reachability is greater, and that surely has an impact on things like stickhandling and generating power from a slap."

The Globe and Mail

Cease & Desist

Police entering a home with a search warrant have no right to examine any computers they find unless a judge has given them specific permission, the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled unanimously. Benjamin Berger, a law professor at York University's Osgoode Hall Law School, called the ruling a "strong and appropriate protection of privacy rights in light of the reality of the way we communicate and store information."

The Globe and Mail

Enough Already

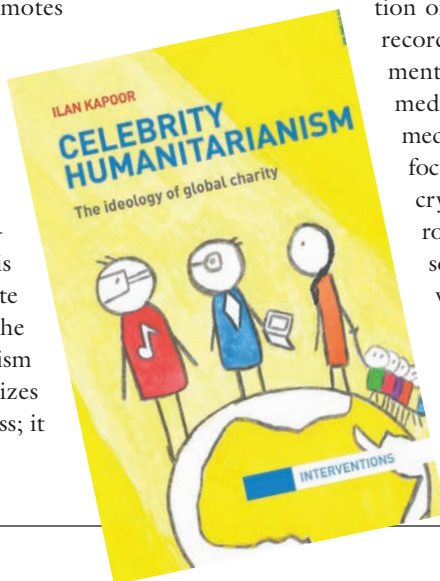
Do celebrities overdo it when it comes to charities?

MADONNA ADOPTS and it's front page news. Likewise for other famous personalities including Angelina Jolie. The past two decades have seen a significant rise in many forms of "celebrity" global humanitarianism and charity work, spearheaded by entertainment stars, billionaires and activist non-governmental organizations – Bob Geldof, Bono, Bill Gates, George Soros and Medecins Sans Frontières among them. Ilan Kapoor's new book, *Celebrity Humanitarianism: The ideology of global charity*, examines this phenomenon, arguing that celebrity humanitarianism legitimates and promotes neoliberal capitalism and global inequality.

Kapoor, a York University environmental studies professor, draws on philosopher Slavoj Žižek's work. His book opines that celebrity humanitarianism, far from being altruistic, is significantly contaminated and ideological: it is most often self-serving, helping to promote institutional aggrandizement and often the celebrity's "brand"; it advances consumerism and corporate capitalism, and it rationalizes the very global inequality it seeks to redress; it

is fundamentally depoliticizing despite its pretensions to activism; and it contributes to a "postdemocratic" political landscape, which appears outwardly open and consensual, but is in fact managed by unaccountable elites.

Celebrity charity may well provide funds for, say, poverty projects, writes Kapoor, but it fails to tackle the broader politics of inequality. There can often be a direct relationship, for example, between the corporations for which celebrities provide product endorsements and the creation of social ills: the dispossession of indigenous communities as a result of the privatization of their lands, questionable corporate labour records, use of sweatshop production or environmental pollution. Celebrity charity work brings media attention to humanitarian crises, but the media spectacle that surrounds the crises tends to focus only on the outward and visible violence – crying mothers, dilapidated houses, destroyed roads – as opposed to the recurring patterns of social exclusion and inequality, the use of state violence against marginalized communities or the complicity of the West in perpetuating unequal trade patterns. All of this contributes, at least in part, to humanitarian crises in the Global South, says Kapoor. ■





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Hertz

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Three York professors tackle why our grey matter matters

BRAINIACS



BY MICHAEL TODD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MCKENZIE JAMES



THE BRAIN IS A STRANGE and remarkable machine. Not only does it control our dreams and thoughts, movements and decisions, but it stores all our memories and, ultimately, makes us who we are. It is made up of billions of nerve cells that transmit and receive information around the body. The brain is our

own personal supercomputer and, just like those machines, it needs a lot of power – in fact, for a bit of human tissue that only weighs about 1.5 kilograms in an adult human (just 2 per cent of the body’s weight), it uses approximately 20 per cent of the body’s energy supply. While our brains usually hum and process along just fine in support of our daily existence, sometimes things can go very wrong – whether from disease or injury. Here, we profile three York professors who are literally getting inside our heads and coming up with some surprising discoveries.

Sudden Impact

Studying the effects of concussion

EVER SINCE SHE WAS A KID, York kinesiology Professor Lauren Sergio was always keen on sports and physical activity. “Basically, if it involved movement and jumping around, I was into it,” she states flatly. She’s been lucky enough in her life path to combine that passion with a brilliant mind that she was able to translate into a university research career. Although not a kid anymore, Sergio’s interests still concern movement, but in this case how the body’s biomechanics are involved with concussions, how to detect early-onset Alzheimer’s symptoms and how to develop tests that may be instrumental in assessing the extent of both conditions.

If Sergio hadn’t got hooked on biology she probably would have ended up a physical education teacher, she says. “But luckily I took a course in my undergrad years where we were looking at the brain’s control of movement. And I thought ‘Wow, this is cool.’ So I got a job in that prof’s lab and one thing led to another and now I am researching how the brain combines thinking and movement.”

Sergio is particularly interested in how the brain is affected by concussions and what that means for the ways in which it processes movement after the event. To that end, she recently received a Canadian Institutes of Health Research grant worth \$472,549 to study the effects of thinking and moving simultaneously in people who have had a concussion or are at risk of dementia (through early signs of cognitive decline or family history).

In Ontario, concussions have been on a steady rise. Statistics for 2002-05 show a large increase in the 11 to 18 age group in

particular. Why this is so is unclear, says Sergio. “It may be increased competition and hitting in sports or better reporting of injury.”

What is clear from research, however, is that concussive injuries to the brain are cumulative, she says. “Once you’ve had one and get another, the effects are worse and last longer. And there’s evidence that repeated concussion causes long-term damage.”

The biggest challenge facing concussion researchers is to develop some kind of test that can identify, with certainty, the severity of and/or recovery from concussions. Current tests tend to look at movement and thinking skills separately in injured brains, but Sergio says that’s not how humans live their lives: “We move and think at the same time in most cases. So tests that calibrate skill levels separately post-trauma really aren’t giving us an accurate picture for at-risk patients, particularly those with a family history of Alzheimer’s or those who have already suffered concussions.”

One of the big questions for athletes or anyone injured on the job (for example, a construction worker) is when is it the right time to go back safely to work or the hockey rink? The problem arises when injured players are given the all-OK because the separate test results indicate injured players are problem free, says Sergio. However, when the brain is asked to multi-task, Sergio’s experiments show that injured brains perform more poorly than non-injured ones. “Performance just drops off when you ask people who have had concussions to do tasks that require both thinking and moving simultaneously,” she says, “even though if you asked them to do separate tests that just look at one or the other they’d perform just fine.”

The reason for this apparent anomaly is that our brains are masters of figuring out ways to overcome setbacks, like an injury. “Even if you’ve had a concussion years earlier, it will show up on our test results,” says Sergio. “But in the meantime, the brain has figured out how to ‘bypass’ the injury. So that’s a real challenge when trying to design tests that measure thinking and moving together in a way that is sensitive enough to not be tricked by [a person’s brain] compensation strategy.”

Sergio’s ultimate goal is to develop the research into a validated, clinically proven and feasible cognitive-motor assessment tool that can improve return-to-play safety, detect early signs of dementia and possibly even predict who will progress to full-blown dementia.

“It’s clear that the old ways of measuring brain function aren’t working,” says Sergio. “We need to find a new model, new ways of investigating how our brains are functioning and if they can recover, to see if there are things we can do to help speed up that process. Our work with dementia isn’t preventative – we can’t undo genetic predisposition – but our research can contribute to heightening awareness. If you’re struggling, maybe there are things about your environment or the way you do things that can be changed to make your brain’s multi-tasking easier. That’s something we hope to find out.”

The Plastic Brain

New research sheds light on how our brains can relearn lost tasks

YOU MIGHT THINK YOUR BRAIN is hardwired from infancy, and that it remains pretty much unchanged throughout life, but new research at both York and abroad shows that's far from the case. In York psychology Professor Kari Hoffman's Perception & Plasticity (P&P) Lab, she and research colleagues are discovering our brains' neurons are always changing and having new "conversations" with each other. Think of it as a giant cocktail party where new groups of people are constantly meeting, coming and going, and, in doing so, generating small cliques where fresh conversations are always springing up (even when we're asleep) and information sharing is ongoing. It's like a 24-7 meet-up.

Hoffman says many of the brain's mysterious functions and dysfunctions lie in its ability to adapt and learn. Yet, she says, we know very little about how this learning happens in intact, living brains when all the parts are humming away in concord or – in the case of diseases such as Alzheimer's or in brain-damaged individuals – discord.

"We know now that injured brains can regenerate themselves and find new paths or different ways to do things," says Hoffman. "That makes sense, because our brains are always looking for ways to maximize the results of incoming stimuli to process it better and faster. That means the output – movement, speech or whatever – will be more efficient."

The P&P Lab focuses on three essential areas: memory, perception and neural interactions. Hoffman's research looks at how we perceive and process social signals – such as faces, voices, body parts and gestures – how we form our memories of them and even the role sleep plays in the way neurons talk to each other when the mind is at rest. Researchers have found that nighttime seems to be when memories of what we observed during the day are consolidated.

"The name of the game in our brain is about dynamics," says



KARI HOFFMAN: Exploring how old brains learn new tricks

Hoffman. "We clearly are not hardwired from birth and there are differences in how our neural networks talk to each other as we develop. We live in a world of objects, but what actually hits our eyes are wavelengths of light. But that's not how we describe our surroundings. So how does the brain learn to differentiate subtle differences in, say, faces or different kinds of boxes – perhaps a wood one versus a cardboard one? Smaller or bigger? It's incredibly complex. And even the best computer software has big difficulties doing what our brains do effortlessly."

Hoffman says her research is all about trying

to figure out how our brains do this so effortlessly. What she's found is our brains' neural networks seem to talk to each other. "We think these cliques allow us to process information faster and more efficiently and that helps reduce the background noise that you might have if you had millions of neurons all responding individually," says Hoffman. "It's a bit like a piece of music. If the right parts of the brain are sent the right information at the right times, the rhythm of the music flows. But if the wrong signals are sent for processing, the flow of the music is disrupted. That's what we mean by the brain's plasticity. We think that timing-based plasticity – the way neurons change the tune as it were – is by their timing with each other."

Essentially, Hoffman listens to the conversations people's brains are having via their neural networks using magnetic resonance imaging. She looks at these networks both when they're being stimulated (in experiments) and afterwards when the brain is at rest but still busy processing and sorting what it's seen hours earlier.

Hoffman likens the challenges in her work to listening in on the conversations among a whole football stadium of people: "Imagine you care about each individual in that stadium and what he or she is saying among people close to them or further away. And then what fans of the other team are saying and, finally, what various cliques of fans on both sides are saying."

Ultimately, Hoffman's work could have far-ranging implications for people with Alzheimer's disease, she says. "If we can find the right stimulation parameters for the brain's 'good' smooth rhythms, that could have a big impact on helping improve Alzheimer's patients' memories in the future."

Just Dance

Can learning to dance help people with Parkinson's?

A YORK RESEARCH TEAM, led by neuroscience Professor Joseph DeSouza and Rachel Bar, a retired professional ballet dancer and now a clinical psychology student at Ryerson University, has embarked on a novel line of research – to see if learning to dance, or learning a specific dance routine, can improve motor control in people with Parkinson's disease (PD).

PD is a neurological disease and degenerative disorder of the central nervous system that severely inhibits movement, currently affecting more than 100,000 Canadians. The motor symptoms of Parkinson's result from the loss of dopamine-generating cells in a region of the midbrain; the cause of this cell death is unknown. Early in the course of the disease, the most obvious symptoms are movement-related, including shaking, rigidity, slowness of movement and difficulty with walking and gait. Later, cognitive and behavioural problems may start to arise, with dementia occurring in the advanced stages of the disease. Depression is the most common psychiatric symptom. Parkinson's disease is more common in older people, with most cases occurring after the age of 50.

“While working on research involving dance – but not specifically in relation to Parkinson's – we came across some articles that mentioned how dance seemed to help some people with PD,” says DeSouza. “One thing led to another, including a large donation to our lab from Irpinia, an Italian social club, which provided the financial means to do research into dance as a means of PD therapy.”

DeSouza gained access to dancers from the National Ballet of Canada through Bar, a graduate of Canada's National Ballet School's full-time professional program.

It has been known for some time that singing can help people who stutter, and DeSouza says there was previous evidence that learning to dance (which is also associated with



JOSEPH DESOUSA: Dancing with Parkinson's patients

rhythm and melody) seems to have an ameliorative effect for sufferers of Parkinson's.

“The goal is to test the hypothesis that the brain can develop new paths around damaged areas if stimulated in certain ways,” says DeSouza. “In this case, we're stimulating the brain using music and dance. We're hoping that learning simple dance movement sequences can help improve Parkinson's sufferers' mobility.”

DeSouza's research team is using York's own magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) equipment located

in the Sherman Health Science Research Centre to scan the brains of National Ballet of Canada dancers and Parkinson's patients before, during and after learning a dance routine. The focus of the research is to see how their respective brains work and, in the case of Parkinson's sufferers, to see how their brains might be able to develop new paths around damaged areas.

The MRI measures blood flow to different areas of the brain to determine how various areas respond to learning movements. York researchers monitor the neural circuits (medial frontal areas) that focus on the sequencing of movements. They hope to conduct further research to figure out dance therapies for patients.

Volunteers for the study will come from the 12-week dance program for people with Parkinson's at Canada's National Ballet School (NBS), which begins this fall. Known as Dancing with Parkinson's at NBS, the school is collaborating with the Mark Morris Dance Group's Dance for PD program, based in New York City, and other local professionals.

There have been other studies highlighting the usefulness of dance as a form of PD therapy, but they have all used measures of analysis taken outside the body to track improvements. “The neural mechanisms behind those positive effects of dance for people with PD are still not understood,” says DeSouza. “Our study aims to address that gap in the literature by specifically studying changes in brain activity and structure that result from people with PD participating in dance classes.” ■

Whether it's learning how to yo-yo or discussing outer space over pizza, there's no shortage of York clubs to broaden student horizons

BY MICHAEL TODD

Join the Club

AT LAST COUNT, according to the University website, there were 528 clubs and associations at York (and more than 16,000 students who've joined them).

It all adds up to an amazing array of experiences and chances for camaraderie. Want to design and build a robot that fights with other robots? There's a club for that. Or how about ultimate Frisbee? There's a club for that, too.

Aside from being a great place to meet new friends and develop different interests, clubs are the perfect way to build transferable job skills for future careers. Many foster skills such as leadership, teamwork, communication, problem solving and time management – all of which are invaluable in the workplace.



Infinity



Life of Pi

If a love of numbers + pizza + good, old-fashioned socializing = fun, then Club Infinity might be for you. Membership is a healthy 75+ members this year, with the gender balance at about 50/50, according to club president Alex Ashbourne. "Many people have a false image of what a math student, or a mathematician, is. Most think we're all mad geniuses who are cooped up in an office or around a blackboard trying to get breakthroughs on the hardest problems known to man. This is not true! Mathematics is a social game, best played with your friends and colleagues."

For more information, visit [ClubInfinityYorku](#) on Facebook or e-mail club_infinity@msn.com.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SOFIE KIRK



Bullseye

YORK'S ARCHERY CLUB offers people who join a “new and different kind of experience,” says Richard Tang, the club’s public relations representative. The club normally has about 30 to 40 members each year, and membership and lessons cost \$60. If you don’t have a bow or arrows, don’t worry. You can rent those from the club for the whole year for \$25 and \$15 respectively.

Tang says archery is a great way to take your mind off worries and it provides stress relief. “It’s all about focus, but it’s also a great way to meet people with the same interests,” he says.

The gender mix is about 60 per cent male to 40 per cent female, says Tang, but the motivations for joining for either gender are pretty much the same: “It mostly comes down to the whole cool-factor of being able to shoot a bow.” For more information, e-mail archery@yorku.ca.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SOFIE KIRK



Cruising for a Bruising

FRANCESCO DE CHELLIS, president of York's longboarding club, established the club four years ago when he was a first-year student. The emphasis is on fun and safety and, for now, the club has permission to skate the loading dock area of Bethune College, a place De Chellis says is great for beginners.

What's a "longboard"?

Think of an elongated version of a standard skateboard. Longboarders are usually less into stunts and more into downhill runs, cruising and carving. The club has three complete boarding outfits so far – board, helmet, gloves, knee pads and elbow pads – and will be getting more this year. You don't need prior boarding experience, says De Chellis. Club executives will teach you all you need to know. For more information, visit [LAYUS](#) on Facebook or e-mail layus@yorku.ca.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MCKENZIE JAMES



8:11:35

Foiled Again

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE a day's fencing to sharpen your reflexes and your mind, say those who are hooked on the sport. And that would include all 30 members of York's fencing club.

Fencing, according to the club's president Michael Buslovich, "trains the mind and body to strategically control one's actions to achieve personal goals."

Beginners are taught the basics of fencing, which falls under the category of "foil" fencing. For that style there are three weapons you can choose from – take your pick. Buslovich says the club has a fully accessible armory provided for all students. There is a modest fee to join (\$90), but that covers coaching and equipment for one semester. For more information, e-mail fencing.york@gmail.com.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SOFIE KIRK



Strings Attached

YORK'S YO-YO CLUB'S PURPOSE couldn't be much simpler. "Our goal is to teach people how to yo-yo and to do tricks," says Michael Maddeaux, second-year York student and de facto president of the YU Yo-yo Club (YUYYC), which had a record 38 people sign up to be members last fall.

When it comes to spinning a small disk at the end of a string, Maddeaux is pretty spectacular. If anyone should be starting up a yo-yo club, it's him. He competed in the 2013 World Yo-Yo Contest held in Orlando, Fla., and placed 88th out of 182. Not bad for a kid who only began the sport (yes, it's a sport) five years ago, when he was in Grade 9. "Some of my strongest friendships have been made through yo-yoing," says Maddeaux. "And we all socialize outside the club." For more information, e-mail yuyoyoclub@gmail.com. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MCKENZIE JAMES

Legal Ease

Natalka Falcomer's television show provides legal advice to those who can't afford a good lawyer

BY MICHAEL TODD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KIRK



THERE'S SO MUCH free legal advice handed out during Nataalka Falcomer's (LLB '10) new legal call-in show, "Toronto Speaks: Legal Advice", it's almost criminal. Once a month, on a Monday night (9pm on Rogers TV), the Osgoode Hall Law School grad and a guest lawyer offer their legal expertise to viewers based on whatever points of law concern them at the time. Thorny questions can range from issues around tenant rights to what to do if your employer is "packaging" you out or how to proceed if you witness a violent crime. Viewers e-mail, tweet, Facebook message or call in their queries. "We don't have Skype at the moment," says Falcomer, "but we're working on it."

"Toronto Speaks" is a series of programs that air on Rogers TV each week, covering various topics and issues, from pet care to entrepreneurship. For Falcomer, her show is a dream come true. Even as a kid she dreamed of becoming "the next Oprah or Barbara Walters – my childhood idols," she says.

A first-generation Canadian (she's half Italian, half Ukrainian), Falcomer received many academic awards while at Osgoode and articulated with Hicks Morely Hamilton Stewart Storie LLP. But it was her work with a poverty law clinic in Toronto's Parkdale neighbourhood that led her to the idea of combining complimentary legal advice with television. "Even at Osgoode, I knew I didn't want to practise law," says Falcomer, who admits she wanted a law degree to pursue her true interest, real estate. "But my experience in Parkdale showed me a way to combine my dream of being a TV show host with a subject matter I knew."

Falcomer approached Rogers many times with different ideas for a show only to be turned down, until one day a call came from a producer who suggested a call-in show that would have her as host alongside a guest lawyer. She knew it was the right fit. Her first show aired in fall 2012.

"I truly believe the public is benefitting from the show. After all, free legal advice doesn't come around that often," says

Falcomer. "A spin-off benefit is that I think it also helps enhance the reputation of lawyers.

"While I was at Osgoode, I felt I was one of those people who never really fit in. I wasn't fixated on a law career on Bay Street. By the end of the first semester, I'd developed my secret plan to use my law degree in my original ambition, which was to work in real estate investment. Meanwhile, the dream of being Barbara [Walters] was beginning to fade. Working with Parkdale Community Legal Services (PCLS) showed me I didn't need to walk away from my law degree and I could really put it to use in something I believed in."

Falcomer says she learned many things while working at PCLS – one being how lucky she was and also that members of the middle class were stuck in what she calls a "legal representation purgatory". The problem, she says, is middle-class people make too much money to qualify for legal aid, but don't make enough to enlist the services of a lawyer. "Without any other options, I witnessed the middle class being forced to deal with their legal issues through self-medication, as it were. But that self-help approach often backfires, causing huge personal and financial losses."

Falcomer saw a market for a venue where good advice was offered free of charge, but it would have to reach more people than those who walked through a legal clinic's door. "When I got the call from a producer at Rogers TV who felt there was a niche I could fill as a lawyer, I said, 'Absolutely!'"

Rogers isn't exactly network television, and Falcomer was warned the budget was small. Never mind; she was in it to fulfill her dream and a promise to herself to provide high-quality legal support to the public. To her surprise, the show's ratings – so far – have been climbing steadily.

"While I'm no Barbara Walters, this whole process has taught me invaluable lessons. It's possible to make change, and questioning the status quo is OK," says Falcomer. "Working relentlessly toward your passion will take you to places you never dreamed existed." ■



Urban Nation

Where the subway goes, development follows.
In the next 25 years York's Keele campus will become
a small and vibrant city all its own

BY MARTHA TANCOCK PHOTOGRAPHY BY MCKENZIE JAMES

PICTURE YORK'S KEELE CAMPUS 50 years ago. A broad, windswept tract of farmland with woodlots here and there, bordered by dusty, unpaved township roads and a creek. Rural, remote, barely reachable by bus and a world away from downtown Toronto.

In 1964, Keele campus was a blank canvas, a gleam in Murray Ross's eye. Remember the famous photo of York's founding president sitting at his desk in a wintery field, telephone at the ready? What an image of boundless potential.

No one remembers where that photo was taken on the original 400-acre property acquired for York's second campus, but wherever Ross posed is now the site of Canada's second largest university. Since shovels broke ground in 1964, construction has rarely abated. Today, Keele campus is a dense cluster of labs, lecture halls, libraries, student residences and offices, and a daily destination for 60,000 students, faculty and staff – bigger than anything Ross had envisioned.

Now imagine Keele campus in 25 years. That's what Bud Purves, president of the York University Development Corporation (YUDC), is challenging the York community to do. Two new subway stations will open on Keele campus in late 2016. And York has recently completed a new master plan for its

academic core inside the ring roads, where there's still a lot of room to expand. So now is ideal time to explore exciting options for developing the vacant lands surrounding the academic core, on the campus periphery – the Lands for Learning.

York has begun to dream big. The potential is staggering, says Purves. "We have approval to develop 15 million square feet." The Spadina subway extension will transform York from an isolated campus to an urban one just 40 minutes from downtown universities and research hubs. Purves calls it the knowledge highway: "The subway is going to change the whole shebang."

Here's the vision: In 25 years, there could be 24,500 people living and 21,000 working in a vibrant urban belt full of office and residential towers, shops and restaurants, businesses, schools and community centres connected by bicycle paths, sidewalks and tree-lined streets. The current planning framework divides the Lands for Learning into four areas:

- Steeles West: residential and office towers clustered around the new Pioneer Village subway station, creating a northern gateway to campus;
- Steeles East: a research park integrating the historic Stong House and barn;
- South Keele: a high-density mix of commercial and

FIELD OF DREAMS: Former York president Murray Ross sits in an empty field destined to become the site of Canada's third largest university



WALKABLE, LIVING, CONNECTED: Student ambassadors discuss future visions for York's Keele campus in the Lands for Learning Studio. A scale model of proposed development is in the foreground

residential buildings, a park, and maybe a community centre and school; and

- Assiniboine West: a medium-density residential neighbourhood of townhouses, mid-rise buildings and maybe a town square, school and park.

This framework is by no means a *fait accompli*. At this point it is a conversation starter. “We want to develop an integrated, planned community around the campus, not just do a real estate deal.”

In the old days it was design first, defend later. Today, developers wish to avoid conflict and insist on knowing what stakeholders want before they even begin to put pencil to paper, says Purves. Now it’s discuss first, design later. “We have to know what people think in advance.”

So, Purves engaged The Planning Partnership to find out. The urban designers dispatched Jane Farrow, former CBC Radio host and founder of Jane’s Walks, to spearhead the conversation. YUDC set up a tabletop model of the Lands for Learning in a York Lanes storefront (pictured, above) and invited community feedback. Farrow sent out hundreds of e-mail invitations, canvassed the faculty, dropped in on staff and held focus groups. The subway is coming and development will follow, she said. What kind of housing, shops and services do

you want? What about building heights, streetscape design, walkability, cycling paths, parks and open space?

Here’s what she heard from the York community: We want an urban, walkable, livable and connected place to live, work and play; places to socialize after class, places to sit and chat, green spaces and public squares; school and jobs within walking distance of campus; shops – especially grocery stores – and services; friendly, safe streets, bicycle paths and quick access to transit.

Student ambassadors recorded their responses and the project team translated them into key principles before going back to the community to confirm: Is this what you said you wanted? Does this reflect what you need and desire? Then they reached out even further, to alumni on Facebook, Twitter and other social media channels.

“The consultation approach heightens trust and awareness,” says Farrow. It increases urban literacy and builds support. It’s democracy in action, she says. “I’m a big fan of radical inclusion. There aren’t any opinions that are not welcome. It’s better to have the widest possible range of voices in the room.”

By June, those voices and what they said will be distilled into guiding principles and a planning framework to be presented to York University for approval. Then requests for proposals will go out, and construction could begin by 2018.

“We only have one chance at this,” says Purves. “We have to get it right.” ■



soul searcher

BY MARTHA TANCOCK
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE KIRK



First he was a fan of the Beatles and rock 'n' roll. Then Rob Bowman fell madly in love with Memphis soul.

HOW DID A BOY GROWING UP in the Toronto suburb of Don Mills in the 1960s become the chronicler of Memphis soul music? It all started with the Beatles. Rob Bowman (BA '78, MFA '82) was seven when his 14-year-old brother came home one day after school, set up the portable record player in the backyard and played Beatles songs his girlfriend had brought from England. He had never heard anything like "Twist and Shout" and "Please Please Me". "Life suddenly became infinitely brighter. I became instantly fanatical," he says. "The Beatles were everything, every day, all day."

His "cultural capital" with girls soared. By 10, he'd moved on to Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones. When he heard the Stones' version of Otis Redding's "That's How Strong My Love Is" he scoured local record stores for more by Redding and came home with "Try a Little Tenderness". "My life was transformed again," says Bowman. "Here was another whole world. I started digging more and more."

Fifty years later he's still digging – as an ethnomusicologist in York's Department of Music. He has interviewed most of the rock stars of the 1960s and '70s – including the Rolling Stones – and has an encyclopedic knowledge of reggae, rap, rhythm and blues, funk, gospel, punk, heavy metal and hip hop. "I have to know that stuff. It's my job!"

Bowman pioneered pop music studies in Canada and his students call him the "rock 'n' roll" prof. But his is no bird course.

As a teenager, Bowman sang in a band and dreamt of being a rock star. He spent all his money on records, and played trombone, euphonium, cello and percussion at school. "I was trying to learn everything I could. I was ambitious."

At 15, one year short of the legal age to work in Ontario, he lied about his age so editors at *Beetle* – a *Rolling Stone* magazine wannabe in Toronto – would hire him. "I couldn't write very well," he says, "but they were taken by my primordial passion." He got free albums, free concert tickets and a chance to interview famous recording artists like Frank Zappa and T Bone Walker. His first cover story was on Pink Floyd.

Bowman wanted to study music, but not the usual classical curriculum. York offered something different – jazz and world music. He knew he'd landed in the right place in his first class with Robert Witmer: "He blew my mind. In one sentence he could link the music of African Pygmies of the Ituri Rainforest with blues music of Howlin' Wolf and jazz musician Ornette Coleman. I couldn't believe anybody could be that hip." When Witmer started a graduate program in ethnomusicology, Bowman signed up. He had found his calling.

After earning an MFA, Bowman headed for Memphis,

Tenn., to do a PhD. Memphis was home of Stax Records, the studio that had launched Redding, Isaac Hayes and other legendary soul singers in the 1960s. "I wanted to live in the South where soul started, to live within the culture that produced so much music," he says. Stax had gone bankrupt only eight years before Bowman arrived, yet few locals remembered it. "I became a man with a mission. I decided to right a historical wrong."

He wrote the history of Stax, first as a doctoral thesis then as a book, *Soulsville U.S.A.: The Story of Stax Records*. The book earned him induction into the Blues Hall of Fame. He co-produced a series of CD box sets featuring re-releases of all Stax singles, winning five nominations and one Grammy Award for his exhaustive liner notes. He produced documentaries. And he helped found the Stax Museum of American Soul Music. Preserving a priceless American musical legacy became his life's work.

Bowman never does anything by halves. *Soulsville* took him seven years to write, but 12 to go to print because he refused to cut a single one of the 220,000 words. His Grammy Award-winning album notes are an epic 47,000 words. When the Rolling Stones commissioned Bowman to write a book like *Soulsville* about their music, he went into total immersion for three months. He read every story printed about the band in British music weeklies since 1962 and analyzed every song they ever recorded – bass line, chord progressions, drums, stylistic shifts. He filled dozens of single-spaced pages with questions – including ones about Mick Jagger's vocals and dance moves – and memorized them in advance. "They were blown away," he says.

Bowman used to thrive on four hours sleep and say yes to most projects. But just after midnight on Sept. 13, 2013, he was put on life support. If he hadn't had a double lung transplant, he'd have died of pulmonary fibrosis. A month later he was back home, answering 100 e-mails a day and cancelling interviews he was doing for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame life history project with the Flamingos in Miami and Traffic in Chicago, and lectures on the Rolling Stones in Cleveland and David Bowie in Toronto. He'd never missed a class before in his life. "I'll speed up again," he says. "I've been lucky enough to get a chapter two." By January, he was back in the classroom.

Over the years, American universities and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame have often come courting, but Bowman has always demurred. At York, this Beatles fan forged a career that lets him probe as deep as he wants into the music he loves. He's here to stay. ■

Can the study of asexuality teach us something about how we behave in bed – and toward each other?

BY MICHAEL TODD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE KIRK

ASEXUALITY JUST MIGHT be the most recent sexual behavioural niche to make its debut on the social trend radar. It first popped up on the Internet in the early 2000s. While the phenomenon of being asexual isn't new – it's as old as human sexual behaviour itself – the category is, according to experts like Ela Przybylo, who is completing a doctor of philosophy degree on the subject. Przybylo has been studying the intersection of asexuality and feminism for the past five years, both at the master's level at the University of Alberta and at the doctoral level in York's School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies.

If there's one thing for certain – although rarely discussed in any meaningful way – it's that our culture is sex obsessed. From performance anxiety to having more and better orgasms (pick up any glossy magazine as proof), sex, or lack thereof, consumes a huge amount of our cultural consciousness. Simply tune into shows like “Sex and the City” or Lena Dunham's more explicit HBO series, “Girls”, for an example of what, we're told, is on our minds sexually.

In Western culture, sex is taken for granted as being at the heart of “coupledom”. It's widely accepted that it is the glue that binds people together. The kicker is sex is only considered good if it's in the context of a hetero-religious commitment (traditionally, anyway), and bad if it isn't. So sex labours under the moral burden that it is both good and bad depending on the context. To complicate things further, if you're not getting enough “good” sex, or any sex, well, that's problematic too – especially if you're a couple. Then, suddenly, a lack of sex between people is indicative of relationship problems and quickly becomes pathologized.

But should it be? In an article relating to asexuality, CNN cites a 1994 survey called “U.K. National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles” that included 18,876 participants aged 16 to 59. Would many of those people identify as asexual?

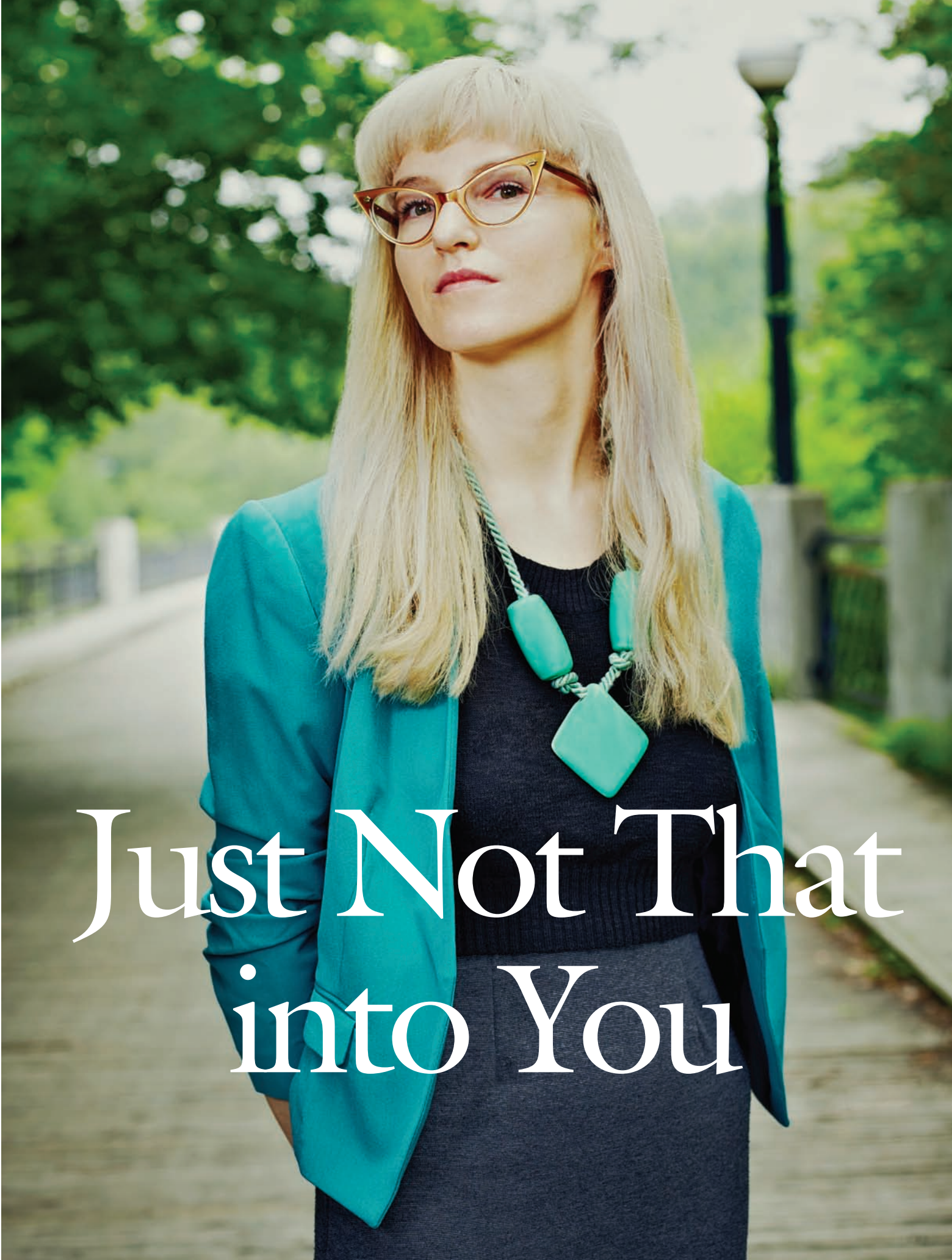
It's hard to know. In a 2004 paper published in the *Journal of Sex Research* by Anthony Bogaert, a Brock University professor, psychologist and human sexuality expert, he estimated that based on the British study, about one per cent of adults – one person in every 100 – have absolutely no interest in sex. Another 1994 survey, published by the University of Chicago Press, found that 13 per cent of 3,500 respondents hadn't had sex in the past year, yet 40 per cent of those said they were extremely or very happy with their lives.

“The importance our society places on sexuality is stifling to asexuals, who are constantly being told they are lonely,” says Przybylo. “But that is not the case at all. Asexuals are constantly put in the category of ‘abnormal’. Representations of asexuals, the few that can be found, are often portrayed as melancholy, lonely, sad and just waiting for the ‘right’ person to come along. Another misconception is that asexuality simply doesn't exist. And of course the big one is that asexuals are ‘frigid’ and ‘less fun’ in a relationship or that they haven't come out, matured or ‘discovered’ their sexuality yet. But that's not the case either.”

Przybylo says the pressure on asexuals to “blend in” is extremely intense in our society. In one of her research projects, she interviewed a number of men from the Greater Toronto Area who identified themselves as asexual to see how they negotiated sexual pressures in their lives. “For many of these men, the pressure is not only on having sex, but the physical act itself must be incredibly enjoyable and result in orgasm.”

HOW IS ASEXUALITY DEFINED by those who self-identify? Przybylo says it can loosely be characterized as a lack of sexual attraction to others. “Asexual activists tend to say it is a lack of sexual attraction to preserve categorical clarity, but in my work I prefer to think of asexuality as more complex than that – there are shades to it.”

ELA PRZYBYLO: Being asexual is nothing new



Just Not That
into You

AVENwiki, an online asexuality hub, defines an asexual as “someone who does not experience sexual attraction. [But] unlike celibacy, which people choose, asexuality is an intrinsic part of who we are. There is considerable diversity among the asexual community; each asexual person experiences things like relationships, attraction and arousal somewhat differently. Asexuality does not make our lives any worse or any better, we just face a different set of challenges than most sexual people. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy or sexual abstinence, which are behaviours, whereas asexuality is generally considered to be a sexual orientation. Some asexuals do participate in sex, for a variety of reasons.”

The category of asexuality became more visible with the advent of the Asexual and Visibility and Education Network’s (AVEN’s) online presence in 2001. AVEN was established by San Franciscan David Jay, who also happens to be the subject of a recent documentary called *(A)sexual*. According to AVEN, there are a number of categories of asexuals, including: sex-positive, antisexual, demisexual, grey-A, aromantic, heteroromantic, homoromantic, biromantic and, finally, panromantic.

In the past five years, there has been more and more media interest in asexuality. Jay was profiled in *The Atlantic* and, in 2008, the *Guardian* ran a piece on the subject, titled “We’re married, we just don’t have sex”. A 2012 article in the *Observer* (“Among the Asexuals: In a society obsessed with sex, it’s hard if you have no sexual desire at all. Some are searching for a new form of intimacy”) profiles various self-identified asexuals to get their side of the story.

THE DEFINING POINT in those who identify as asexuals is that they can, and do, experience sexual arousal; it’s just that they feel no need to seek out partners for satisfaction through “partnered sexuality”. While asexuals might not want to have sex with you, that doesn’t mean they can’t be attracted to you – they just don’t necessarily want to get physical. The challenge for them is to figure out how to flirt, be intimate and form relationships in a nonsexual way in a world that is predominately geared towards the sexual, says Przybylo.

Many people will likely find such attitudes confusing given our standard beliefs about what most people want and do. An online article (“Asexuals: Who Are They and Why Are They Important?”) published in *Psychology Today* in 2009, states: “Asexuality poses a challenge to some of our most fundamental beliefs about humans and their feelings. Yet, on this topic, we

We need to ask ourselves, why is sex at the heart of ‘the couple’ and how does that do damage to everyone?

are mostly ignoramuses. Many Americans regard the prevailing assumptions about sex and sexuality as universal...even within the scientific community, the study of asexuality as an orientation [remains] starkly underdeveloped.” In “Glad to be asexual”, published in the *New Scientist* in 2004, the writer suggests any official definition of asexuality needs to take in the multi-faceted nature of the asexual experience: “The amazing degree of variation in the experiences of asexual people suggest that the underlying causes of their lack of sexual attraction are very different. Some asexuals might

simply have extremely low sex drives in spite of an innate orientation towards males or females. Other asexuals might form a fourth category of sexual orientation in addition to the hetero-, homo- and bi-sexual ones – namely people who are attracted to neither gender, even if they have normal sex drives.”

There is definitely a “many-layered aspect to asexuals’ experience,” says Przybylo. “A lot of asexuals are still having sex, but they might not have the same sexual drive that we assume people should have to be ‘normal’. I think one important aspect of studying asexuality is that it helps us think about what we do with our bodies, or what sort of sex we are having with those bodies. It could be romantic or non-romantic, or you could have romantic attraction but not be sexually attracted, or you could agree to have sex on certain occasions, but without really desiring to have sex.”

Do people find the idea of asexuality confounding? Przybylo says she thinks they do, but suggests public consciousness is slowly changing. “However, I don’t think the word, or category, is always used now the way sex activists intended it to be,” she says.

Discussion of asexuality provides us with provocative ways to think about ourselves in a social and inter-social context while also considering why a lack of attraction to sex should be “problematized” at all, says Przybylo. “We need to ask ourselves, why is sex at the heart of ‘the couple’ and how does that do damage to everyone? That’s not to say sex is damaging, but it is if it’s experienced as an obligation – then you have unwanted sex, coercion, uneven levels of sexual desire within a relationship,” she says. “We come to sex with a certain investment. Asexuals are not anti-sex, but assert themselves in a way that shows sex is not integral to their lives. Understandably, this presents a challenge to some people, and it challenges the way we have centralized sex and how it affects the ways in which we think about ourselves.” ■



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Alumni

Ins Choi's Big Play

IT TOOK **INS CHOI** (BFA '98) six years and weekly bouts of doubt to write *Kim's Convenience* and nobody was more surprised than he was at its overnight success.

After graduating from York's theatre program, the son of a Korean pastor who'd grown up putting on church plays and high school musicals in Scarborough, Ont., struggled to make a living as an actor. Restlessly creative, he yearned for roles that reflected his experience and so he joined fu-GEN, a young company keen to develop Asian Canadian theatre.

Kim's Convenience started life as a sketch for a fu-GEN playwriting workshop in 2005. Over the next few years, Choi stole every minute he could – between cues as a bit player in *Hamlet* at Stratford and during rehearsal breaks as an apprentice with the Soulpepper Academy – to polish his lighthearted drama about a Korean family running a corner store in a diverse immigrant neighbourhood. His wife finally insisted he pitch the play. Faced with wholesale rejection, he entered it in the 2011 Toronto Fringe Festival where it won the Best Play Contest and the Patrons' Pick Award then triggered a bidding war for rights to produce it. Soulpepper prevailed, staging it three times in two seasons. The *Toronto Star* named Choi one of 12 to watch in 2012.

Now *Kim's* is touring major cities across Canada, including Ottawa, where Korean-Canadian Senator Yonah Martin proudly declared it a "part of Canadian theatre history". Choi plays the estranged son in the touring show, but is also commandeering church spaces to present his spoken-word show, *Subway Stations of the Cross*, to raise money for homeless shelters. Meanwhile, Soulpepper has signed a production deal for a *Kim's* TV series and feature film. Choi is writing scripts for both.

"There's a new face to Canada," says Choi. "It's really important to reflect that on our stages and to celebrate that." ■



PHOTOGRAPHY BY
CYLLA VON TIEDEMANN

Class Notes



1998: Shane Weisfeld

1977

Li, Wing-Keung (BA Calumet) moved to Adelaide, Australia, after graduating. He is retired now and would like to get in touch with his 1975 winter semester friends from Hong Kong and Malaysia.

1986

Orford, Neil (BA Combined Hons. Glendon) is completing his 27th year as a teacher in Dufferin County, Ont. In 2012, he received the Ontario Premier's Award for Teaching Excellence, the Alan Skeoch Award for History Teaching and a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. This year, Orford was one of six recipients of the 2013 Governor General's Award for Teaching Excellence in History. He has been married for 24 years to Laurie (Henderson) and has two daughters, Nancy and Louisa, both studying at McMaster University. He lives in Orangeville, Ont.

1990

Grose, Karen (BEd) was recently appointed TVO's vice-president, digital education. She is responsible for developing innovative content, products and services to enhance

indoor and outdoor education for Ontario's school children. Prior to joining TVO, Karen served the Toronto District School Board as coordinating superintendent of strategy and program planning.

1992

Froman, Adam (MBA) is the CEO of Delvinia Interactive, a digital strategy, design and innovation company founded in 1998. To mark Delvinia's 15th anniversary, Froman has released his first e-book, *Delve In, Dig Deep: An Entrepreneurial Journey*, sharing the lessons he's learned as an entrepreneur.

1993

Gill, Robert (BA McLaughlin) is the producer/director of a feature called *Demon Legacy*, an independent film funded by a Kickstarter campaign in February.

Kofman, Edward (MBA, LLB) was recently appointed head of loan trading and hedge effort at Center-State Bank in Florida. He previously served as managing director at PCBB Capital Markets and as a financial risk manager with Wells Fargo Bank's

capital markets group and Bank of America.

1996

Maynard, Michael (MFA) is the new dean of Seneca College's Faculty of Communication, Art & Design. The renowned graphic designer and author taught graphic design at Georgian and Sheridan colleges and founded the School of Design at George Brown College. Most recently, he was director of the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design in Fredericton.

Perry, Derek (BA Spec. Hons. Glendon) works at the Canadian Embassy in Berlin, Germany.

1998

Posno, Matthew (MBA) is chief financial officer of Inscape, a custom workspace design and engineering consulting firm. He has worked in the finance field for more than 15 years.

Turner, Nathaniel (BA McLaughlin) studied political science at York and then earned a law degree in the United Kingdom. After returning home to Bermuda, he practised as a commercial litigator for 10 years. He has recently been made partner at ASW Law Limited, a prominent law firm in Hamilton, Bermuda.

Weisfeld, Shane (BFA Spec. Hons. Winters) is a screenwriter who recently produced a movie called *Freezer*, a one-location crime thriller starring Dylan McDermott, Peter Facinelli and Yuliya Snigir. It was

released on Jan. 17 for a limited theatrical run.

1999

Najjar, Michael (MFA) is an assistant professor of theatre arts at the University of Oregon. He is editor of the recently published anthology *Four Arab American Plays: Works by Leila Buck, Jamil Khoury, Yussef El Guindi, and Lameece Issaq & Jacob Kader*.

2002

Klein, Jay (BA Hons. Vanier) is the CEO and founder of PUR Gum, a sugar-free chewing gum made without aspartame. The gum comes in four flavours and is widely available in health food, grocery and drug stores. For more information, visit pur-gum.com.

Potter, Sarah (BA Hons. Calumet) is the founder of shecantrade.com, a website dedicated to helping traders of all abilities understand and navigate the market. In her new book, *How You Can Trade Like A Pro*, she challenges barriers and myths that usually deter people from participating in the trading world.

2003

Campbell, Tara (MES) is an environmental educator, adventurer and hatha yoga teacher who worked for seven years as an adventure tour leader. In 2011, she founded Green Stone Journeys, a wellness travel company offering yoga adventures in Brazil.

Majic, Samantha (MA) is an assistant professor and researcher at



2003: Samantha Majic

Class Notes

John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Her fields of specialty are sex work, civic engagement, institutionalism and the non-profit sector. She recently published two books: *Sex, Work, Politics: From Protest to Service Provision* and *Negotiating Sex Work: Unintended Consequences of Policy and Activism*.

Rashkovsky, Karine (BEd, BSc Hons. Bethune, PhD '10) is the founder of Brain Power and Language Arts tutorial service. She recently won a bronze Stevie Award at the 2013 Stevie Awards for Women in Business for her role as a leader in the fields of education and social entrepreneurship in Canada.

Xiang, James (MBA) is the CEO of Jien International Investment Ltd., and director and general partner of F&M and JJ Global Resource Fund. He was recently appointed to the board of directors of Kombat Copper Inc.

2004

Choi, Danny (BA Vanier) is an account executive at National Debit Card Network, a provider of credit card processing solutions for independent businesses in the US and Canada.

Sumner-Smith, Karina (BA Hons. Calumet) recently completed writing her first novel, a far-future fantasy titled *Radiant*, which will be published by Skyhorse in the fall.

2005

Ernstberger, Wanda (BA, BEEd '06 Vanier) published her first fantasy novel, *To Catch a Ripple*, under the pen name K. Rosemont last November through World Castle Publishing.

Sampson, Fiona (JD) is executive director of Equality Effect, an organization that uses human rights law to achieve concrete change in the lives of women and girls in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi. She recently received the Distinction in International Affairs Award from the New York State Bar Association. The award recognizes those who have made a major contribution to international peace, understanding and democracy.

2006

Riddle, Christopher (MA) is an associate professor and researcher at the University of Utica. His research focuses on justice and accommodating

people with disabilities. He released his first book, *Disability & Justice: The Capabilities Approach in Practice*, in March. Riddle is working on his second book, tentatively titled *From Disability Theory to Practice: Essays in Honour of Jerome E. Bickenbach*.

2010

Jivani, Jamil (BA) is a community activist who has launched the Policing Literacy Initiative to improve police services and community safety in Toronto. He and his group are producing a documentary about the relationship between police and community members.

Soldati, Emmett (BA Spec. Hons. Founders) opened a teahouse called Teatotaler in his hometown of Somersworth, N.H., in December 2011 after earning a graduate degree from the London School of Economics. He has also recently opened a beer and bread shop, Leaven Bread and Beer House.

2012

Whitbread, Jessica (MES), an international AIDS activist, recently published a book, *Tea Time: Mapping*

Informal Networks of Women Living with HIV. The book is a compilation of conversations with and personal letters from 64 women from all over the world who live with HIV.

2013

Mao, Ying (BA Founders), recently travelled to Kenya as part of a humanitarian aid project to install BioSand Water Filters, a Canadian invention that removes contaminants from drinking water. Mao is a graduate of York's International Development Studies program.

Zhou, Tian (BA Winters) plays a news reporter in the final scenes of *Transformers 4: Age of Extinction*, a motion picture to be released this year. Zhou has been invited to be the bilingual MC and special guest performer at the movie's appreciation gala in Beijing's landmark Pangu Plaza. She is a graduate of York's Culture & Expression program.



A Holistic Approach to Career Planning

AT A TIME OF RECORD YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT in Canada, Ashley Wightman (BA '02) launched a career counselling service that takes a holistic approach to helping young adults plan their future.

"Instead of handing out aptitude tests, revising their resumes or helping them job search, I use one-on-one sessions to take a big-picture view of their life so far, who they are and where they're headed," says Wightman. "I help them organize their thoughts and passions and point them towards their unique path towards meaningful learning, working and living."

Curious Life Consulting provides personalized guidance to young adults anywhere in Canada – in person, over the phone and online via Skype.

"I wanted to create something that supports our youth in exploring and achieving their career and life goals," says Wightman of her decision to start the firm in 2013. "My high school experience was less than ideal, and it was only after I graduated from Glendon with a BA in psychology that I started to find my footing. It would have been great to have this resource back then."

Wightman went on to earn a master's degree in education and a diploma in career counselling foundations. She has 15 years of experience in education administration, tutoring and youth outreach. For more information, visit curiouslife.ca. ■

Alumni News



John Lewis: Designing Livable Cities

DURING A WALK with his daughter to school in one of Calgary's most walkable neighbourhoods, John Lewis (BES '97) counted 12 instances where they crossed a road or parking lot in a 500-metre span. "That's 12 chances for a little person to not be seen by a driver who might be texting," wrote Lewis, an award-winning urban planner, in his blog.

To build a better tomorrow for his daughter, Lewis takes a creative and collaborative approach. As founder of Intelligent Futures, he strives to make sustainability understandable and find fresh perspectives, from toddlers to TV hosts. In 2013, his firm received three national and international industry awards for the Wascana Centre in Regina, the Bow to Bluff project in Calgary and the Open Space Master Plan in Cochrane, Alta.

"It's an exciting time to be working in the urbanism and engagement fields," says Lewis, named one of Calgary's Top 40 Under 40 in 2010 by the city's *Avenue* magazine. "It's definitely not 'business as usual' anymore." ■

Turning a Negative into a Positive

PARALYZED in a high school skiing accident, Tamara Gordon (BAS '09) has created the Tamara Gordon Foundation to provide financial aid and support to young people with disabilities who want to pursue postsecondary education.

On Feb. 13, she launched the foundation at a ceremony at Toronto's Queen's Park hosted by David Onley, lieutenant-governor of Ontario.

"My life was dramatically changed by my accident. But instead of feeling sorry for myself, I relied upon my faith and focused on how this could be turned



from a negative into a positive," says Gordon, a Toronto resident who has won recognition for helping young people in her community over the past 12 years.

It was at York that Gordon built on her passion for helping others and transformed it into action. "My degree in business administration gave me the experience needed to create a foundation like this," she says. "York's rich student life got me involved with projects that would help me effect change for people in situations like mine."

The foundation aims to provide financial support to at least five students with disabilities this coming school year. It will also help these students find jobs and remain independent.

For more information on the Tamara Gordon Foundation, visit tgfoundation.ca. ■

Giving

An Unforgettable Gift

How the Krembil Foundation is supporting neuroscience research at York

FOR MARK KREMBIL, choosing to support an organization has everything to do with the people who work there. Case in point: Kari Hoffman, a neuroscientist in York's Faculty of Health (profiled in "Brainiacs" on page 12). Hoffman's drive, innovation and passion convinced Krembil she was worth funding.

"We support health initiatives and we support quality," says Krembil, the foundation's president. "Our mandate is to find principal investigators doing important work and partner with them for the long term. With pervasive conditions like Alzheimer's disease and epilepsy, we understand that the greatest strides in helping patients must be made at the research level."

When Krembil first met Hoffman, she was just beginning to discover links between how the brain supports memory functions and what happens when memory fails. "The brain is largely still a mystery," Hoffman says. "However, through our extensive research and patient work, we believe there's a real possibility to better understand what exactly is causing people to develop the memory loss seen in Alzheimer's disease."

The Krembil Foundation has since contributed more than \$440,000 towards Hoffman's research.

"The invaluable generosity of the Krembil Foundation has created new possibilities both for our research and for neuroscience at York," says Hoffman. "With the foundation's support, we're now able to take advantage of the best and latest technology. In particular, we are able to capture images of complete brain structures affected in Alzheimer's disease. This helps us to specifically target the right regions for treatment and is a huge step forward in our goal of supporting good memory formation."

Krembil says he hopes Hoffman's work leads to a cure, "but even superstars like Kari need time and resources for big change to happen." For now, he expects her work will increase attention on neuroscience research at York and lead to fruitful partnerships. "My goal is to fund her search for a therapy that will improve the lives of people suffering with Alzheimer's disease and epilepsy around the globe." ■



Alumni News



Forty Years Strong

Campers share happy memories of York Youth Connection

GROWING UP as a self-professed “York brat”, Francesca Accinelli (BA '92) had a blast at the University. With her mother working on campus, she has fond memories of York Youth Connection (YYC) summer day camp, which she attended from an early age.

“It was a different time,” Accinelli recalls. “We hung out at the Stong Pond and put on talent shows. We sang to Barbra Streisand.”

Accinelli made her YYC singing debut with Streisand’s “Memory”. She enjoyed camping trips to Alliston, Ont., sitting around the campfire and cooking pasta under the stars. “We did some crazy things and made such fun memories,” she says.

One of the longest-running community initiatives at York, YYC welcomes children ages eight to 14. Programs range from art and design to performance and improvisation, health and fitness, and eco-science and leadership. Activities like water balloon fights on a hot day are likely to be part of the fun this summer as YYC celebrates its 40th anniversary. It will be the last big hurrah before the camp suspends operations next year to make way for the 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games on campus.

Looking back, Accinelli, who later worked as an YYC counsellor and now serves on the York University Alumni Association board, says the camp’s mandate to include children from the surrounding community hasn’t faltered one bit. She credited her

late mother, Nancy Accinelli, who worked tirelessly for York in a wide variety of roles, for helping to raise funds for YYC.

“I loved the diversity of the people. It was my first real experience with kids from different economic and education backgrounds,” she says. “Everyone had equal opportunities to grow. No one was treated differently.”

Karla Campos, a York employee and former YYC counsellor, agrees. She plans to enrol her 12-year-old daughter, Aaliyah, in the camp for the third year this summer.

“I can’t think of a nicer place for Aaliyah,” Campos says. “She was very shy the first year, but now she loves it.”

Aaliyah can’t wait to see old friends and meet new ones. One of the familiar faces she’ll see is Sungeevan Sivakumar, who, in the past decade, has been an YYC camper, volunteer and staff member.

“I’ve seen kids change over the years,” says Sivakumar, 22. “Everyone transitions the same way. We all come back for the same reasons: new challenges and loads of fun.”

For Ashley Hiralal, a fourth-year York student and veteran YYC staff, the camp has become an important part of her life.

“There’s a strong family dynamic,” she says. “Each year, I look forward to seeing who’s coming back and who’s new. I’m ready for this year.”

Want to be a part of YYC’s 40th anniversary celebration? Visit yorku.ca/yyc. ■

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