As a journalist, I’ve interviewed many people over the years, but I have to say I’ve never met a restaurant owner quite like Roberto Martella. Until now, that is.

Roberto Martella and his wife Lucia own Grano restaurant — an Italian eatery at Yonge and Eglinton. Most restaurants that I go into do the usual, serve food and drink — but not Grano. Roberto makes sure of that. Since its opening in 1986, it has been a cultural piazza or “salon” where people are encouraged to share and discuss ideas while eating great Italian food.

Roberto was born in Canada but it’s not surprising why he’s so passionate about the Italian culture when he tells me about his father. “My father came to Canada from

Continued on page 14
Dear Good News Toronto Readers,

I hope you have been enjoying your summer — one of the most spectacular ones we have experienced in Toronto in a long time.

I love summer. I love the sun and the heat. It allows me to do all the things that give me so much enjoyment. I can get around on my motor scooter (as does Roberto on our front cover), I can in-line skate on our many glorious park pathways, I can eat ice cream everywhere, and I can celebrate with Torontonians our abundant street festivals, such as the New Bloor Festival (page 7), sharing food, music, art, and good times.

One of my favourite activities this summer was the lunch the Good News Toronto extended family had at Palais Royale. On that beautiful Wednesday afternoon we gathered at this splendid vintage venue by the shores of the lake and partook of Chef Steffan Howard’s creations. With this breathtaking view, we ate, told stories, laughed, and made new friends. And through everyone’s generosity we raised funds to help publish this paper.

We had such a wonderful time that we are doing it again! We would like to invite you to join us on Wednesday, August 18th, at noon at Palais Royale. Please check out our website for more details. Please call, email, or write to get your ticket. Do not miss out, more details. Please call, email, or write to get your ticket.

Another activity that has that has made my summer so much fun is doing random acts of kindness. I made lots of copies of the card on page 3 so when I indulge in my favourite summer treat — ice cream — I can treat the next person as well. Have you been one of my recipients? I hope so!

Remember to send in your experience, as Barbara and Sharon have on page 3, and you could win a Good News Toronto T-shirt!

To encourage all of Toronto to participate in this profound endeavour, Stephen D’Amico, our Kindness Campaign manager, along with his team at Global Awakening In Action has created a “Kindness Pays” Day on Saturday, August 21st at Nathan Phillips Square from 2:00–4:00pm. Lots of wonderful activities have been planned to encourage us, inspire us, and to collectively have fun as we embark on a multitude of acts of kindness.

Please join us for this first event of its kind in Toronto. Together let’s create a groundswell of positive change!

Now please make yourself the Summer-Thyme Lime Refresher on page 10, go outside to your favourite spot, I can eat ice cream at the same time.

You can find us on Twitter: @GoodNewsToro and on Facebook: Good News Toronto. Please check out our website for more information.

I look forward to seeing you on August 18th and 21st.

Fondly,
Eva Karpati
Publisher/Editor
evakarpati@goodnewstoronto.ca

Mission Statement
Good News Toronto celebrates the multitude of inspirational people who live in Toronto with the goal of motivating all of us to continue to make this city rich in everyday heroes.

Good News Toronto is a not-for-profit newspaper distributed at the beginning of the month throughout the GTA.

Good News Toronto had no political or religious affiliation.

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Email us at info@goodnewstoronto.ca
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Join us for
LUNCH
at Palais Royale
1601 Lakeshore Blvd. W.
on Wednesday, August 18th at 12:00 noon

This is a wonderful opportunity to meet the GNT contributors enjoy delicious local, sustainable food, and dine in an original historic Toronto landmark by the shores of the lake on a wonderful summer day.

Your $20.00 minimum donation will benefit Good News Toronto.

R.S.V.P. to let us know you are coming at info@goodnewstoronto.ca or 416-661-2556, or visit http://www.goodnewstoronto.ca/community.shtml for more information and to pay online.

We truly look forward to an afternoon with you at the Palais Royale.
http://www.palaisroyale.ca/

August 2010
The Kindness Campaign

Last month we officially launched the Kindness Campaign here at Good News Toronto. Initially inspired by the desire to inject some kindness into the city following the end of the tragic Bryant–Sheppard case, we suggested placing flow- ers on someone’s car or bike as a secret gift from the universe. But it is important to point out that the goal of our campaign goes beyond increasing empathy between cyclists and drivers, and includes our desire to inspire as many acts of kindness towards our fellow Torontonians as possible.

The concept is simple but powerful: Each month we feature a suggested act of kindness. Readers are invited to perform the suggested random act of kindness (or one of their choosing) and leave behind the “Kindness Card” provided below.

This month’s suggestion is just that: a suggestion. Of course, our monthly suggestion is only a suggestion and encourages the reader to let your spirit soar with possibilities, and then put those inspiring ideas into action through your spontaneous good deeds.

This month’s story: Our first story is from Barbara Fishbein, a social worker at Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, who writes about facilitating a random act of kindness that was initiated by another person, powerfully reminding us that remaining anonymous never goes completely unnoticed.

On the off chance that I could locate the family I asked the caller to give me a note of appreciation “from a local citizen” to the officers at your local police station. Using the power of kindness, we can remind the officers on the police force that the citizens of Toronto appreciate the protection they give and the risks they take doing their jobs.

From Sharon Smith

I was recently given a gift card from Starbucks and decided to treat a couple of friends while we were enjoying a brisk walk together. After placing our order, I offered the gift card for payment. The young man serving us asked if I was a teacher, to which I replied “Yes.” I had received the card as a gift from some of my students. Imagine my embarrassment when, after several tries, the card continued to show a zero balance! He then jokingly inquired, “Are you a bad teacher?” Upon hearing our laughter, the manager came over to see what was happening. After explaining the situation, she pressed a few buttons and, lo and behold, there was enough money to cover the cost of our drinks!

Thank you, Jessica for your “random act of kindness.”

Come to Toronto’s First-Ever “Kindness Pays” Day

Join us on August 21st for Good News Toronto’s first official “Kindness Pays” Day, a social action movement organized by Global Awakening In Action.

Learn how you can become a kindness activist, and start spreading kindness in our city!

Become part of a growing group and movement dedicated to changing the world one random act of kindness at a time, starting right here in our city.

August 21, 2010
2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Nathan Phillips Square

Visit us on www.facebook.com/kindness.pays for more details

KINDNESS CARD

This Random Act of Kindness is sponsored by Good News Toronto!

Please help us keep the kindness going...

Give this Kindness Card to the next person you help. And, if you pay it forward, we would love to hear from you.

Just write a brief description of your act of kindness and email it to us at: info@goodnewstoronto.ca.

If your story is printed in our paper, you will receive a FREE Good News Toronto T-Shirt as a reminder of your good deed!

Visit goodnewstoronto.ca for more info.
Act with Courage

In this Q and A column, Communications Coach Vera Held explores with Good News Toronto readers important aspects of courage that surface in our personal and professional lives.

Q: I recently attended a conference overseas where I ran into “Frida,” a former business associate. I said a friendly “hello” and looked her straight in the eye, but Frida turned on her heel and did not acknowledge me. I was disgusted at her lack of business etiquette and her treatment of a fellow Canadian on foreign soil. Do you agree?

A: Frida’s got a few problems — thankfully none of which are yours. First, it’s unprofessional to not acknowledge someone who is simply making a salutation and demanding nothing more. What does it cost to say “hello”? Zilch. Yet Frida’s self-absorption took precedence. Second, Frida put her professional reputation in danger. Behaviours such as these spread like wildfire, especially at conferences. The inappropriate behaviour then takes on a whole new “status” once on terra firma and gossip will escalate. Moral of this story: Be nice. It’s the same price.

Q: I was standing by the elevator casually chatting with the son of the owner of our office building when all of a sudden “Priscilla,” the property manager, came up behind me and asked if I had any questions. I responded, “No, I don’t have any questions,” and I carried my conversation with the owner’s son to a natural conclusion. Although Priscilla didn’t interrupt again, she listened intently to every word we said. Is it my imagination or was she beyond rude?

A: Belligerent even. Perhaps Priscilla was concerned that you were talking about her. Or worse, that you were trying to get a deal on your office rent — behind her back. Despite her interruption, you chose not to return her rude-ness. Further, you amicably concluded the conversation that you were in the middle of. Bravo. You’ve got class and finesse. And just to keep things in perspective, there are good property managers out there — Priscilla’s just not one of them.

Q: My colleague “George” receives $25 an hour for an 8-hour day. The problem is that he consistently stretches out his day. So really he only works 4 hours, but gets paid for 8. Recently, a good man in our department was fired, and I believe George had something to do with him being fired but I can’t prove it. This situation really bugs me. I think the wrong man got axed.

A: I see why you are bugged. And it is clearly demotivating for you to see George getting paid for work that he could do in half the time. Here’s the rub: Will management appreciate your feedback? Or will you be seen as the office snitch if you come forward to report on George? Experience shows that eventually a person’s true colours surface and management gets savvy. What’s important is that you focus on you, and in doing the very best job that you can. When we put energy into situations and people that we have no control over, we take away from our self-motivation and our ability to continually challenge ourselves and grow. So target you as your number one client, and give yourself and your organization your absolute best.

Please forward queries on tough personal and professional situations to Vera at courage@goodnewstoronto.ca

There’s No Place Like Home

Paul Nguyen is proud of his childhood community, Jane and Finch, and hopes that Torontonians discover the beauty and inspiration it holds, just as he experienced it when he was a child.

ALINA OLSHENITSKY

Twenty-nine-year-old film producer and website developer Paul Nguyen grew up in one of Toronto’s most talked about neighbourhoods. No, it wasn’t in Forest Hills or anywhere in downtown Toronto — not even in the suburbs of the GTA. Paul has lived within a five-minute walk from the neighbourhood of Jane and Finch all his life, and he couldn’t be more thankful for this experience.

Unlike the media’s portrayal of Jane and Finch, Paul says that his best memories took place in the areas surrounding his community and the most inspiring people he’s ever known have all lived close to home.

With the goal of sharing with Torontonians the realities of the Jane and Finch Community, Paul has created a website called www.Jane-Finch.com, a non profit initiative run by students and volunteers. Together with Mark Simms, Paul’s childhood friend who is also the executive producer of the website, Paul decided to create a channel for people to voice their ideas on matters related to the Jane and Finch Community.

As the first and only project to feature original content about the Jane and Finch Community, the website has anything from historical maps of the area, population statistics, news and events, poetry submitted by anybody who wants to share his/her thoughts, and short videos of speakers who come to speak in the Jane and Finch Community.

Since the creation of the online initiative in 2004, the website has received widespread media coverage and praise from Canadian politicians and community leaders.

“The site has really changed my life. Normally I’m a really shy and quiet guy, but the site has put me in a situation where I meet a lot of people and I learn a lot,” says Paul.

“It showed me that children who grow up here must be open to new experiences and talk to people outside of their immediate surroundings. When I used to hang out at the McDonald’s outside my house as a kid, I never thought I’d meet people such as the Governor General Michelle Jean, give presentations to top marketing firms downtown, or interview influential figures like the famous coach Pinball Clemons. Kids should really stay open minded if they want to discover their life’s passions.”

Paul decided to create a channel for people to voice their ideas on matters related to the Jane and Finch Community.

Paul, who has graduated from the TV and Film Program at Humber College, had his first experience with producing a movie when his father brought a new video camera home when he was a kid. Both Paul and Mark played with the camera after school just for fun, and before they knew it, their fun turned into passion. Their childhood passion turned into reality when in 2007, both Paul and Mark helped co-produce Last in the Struggle, a documentary for the prominent CBC series The Fifth Estate. The film features the stories of three young men living at Jane and Finch and their everyday struggles as they face social pressures and issues with the law as they turn from teenagers to young adults. The film is available for viewing in five parts on Youtube and CBC.ca.

At the moment, Paul is eager to continue fulfilling his dream of drawing positive attention to the Jane and Finch area and informing people worldwide about the beauty and talent this area has to offer. He is excited about enriching his website by having people contribute their thoughts and opinions from all over the world. Anyone wishing to contribute and/or volunteer can contact Paul by going to www.jane-finch.com.

Paul Nguyen is eager to draw positive attention to the Jane and Finch area.

Vera Held, M.Ed. is a coach, facilitator, speaker, writer, PR consultant, and the author of How Not to Take it Personally www.veraheld.com

ALINA OLSHENITSKY is an ESL teacher and a freelance writer in Toronto
If the Mountain Will Not Come to Lynn Manwar, then She Must Go to the Mountain

Lynn Manwar uses her illness as a teacher guiding her onward and upwards

Lynn Manwar has experienced a variety of medical conditions that most would find debilitating. The only constant across all these conditions has been her dedication to the human condition, viewing illness as a teaching experience and retaining an “onward and upwards” mentality.

After graduating university in 1996, she was eager to start her climb up the corporate ladder. Regrettably, her first step landed her in quicksand with her doctoral delivering the devastating diagnosis of thyroid cancer. She feared this would spell the end to her dream of teaching English in Nagano, Japan, during the Olympics, but two surgeries later, while undergoing radioactive iodine treatment, she experienced a revelation. She visualized herself finishing her post in Japan and receiving laudation from her future employer. Just three short weeks later she flew out to Japan on a plane fueled with equal measures of kerosene and her own determination.

In Nagano she saw the possibility for peace at its finest, with myriad people speaking in the common tongue of peaceful cultural exchange. Shortly thereafter, she visited Hiroshima and witnessed firsthand the devastation war can wreak on a civilization. Japan had seen humanity at its finest in Nagano and at its worst in Hiroshima. Strange irony that the radiation used to cure Lynn had also been used to destroy a culture.

Passion is needed in everyone’s work life. I had to get arthritis to realize that.

One morning, several years after, she woke to discover that she couldn’t get out of bed. All her joints were too stiff to move. At the age of 30, she was diagnosed with Psoriatic Arthritis. She was now stymied; everyday tasks were proving difficult. Opening jars, turning doorknobs, washing dishes, and even using the bathroom were all suddenly out of reach. No stranger to adversity, she took each problem in turn: “I bought a jar opener, a raised toilet seat, and asked others to open my bottled water when out in public.” Just the same, the constant pain of arthritis made it difficult to cope with her career in recruitment and she tepidly submitted her resignation in 2003.

She transitioned into a volunteer coordinator for arts festivals with up to 600 volunteers. What had seemed misfortune proved serendipitous in that she found passion in her new work, which served as a potent anesthetic for her arthritic pain. Again she regarded her condition as a teacher rather than an adversary: “Passion is needed in everyone’s work life, I had to get arthritis to realize that.”

Always looking to improve upon herself, Lynn became aware that she had acquired some surplus baggage in the way she looked and carried herself, and so she set a goal to get a professional makeover. She applied to appear on Style by Jury and attended what she thought was an interview, but was in fact the show already in progress. The jurors’ comments were hard to swallow, but ultimately helpful. One juror noted, “She seems to be defining herself through her arthritis and using it as an excuse for the way she looks.”

By the end of her makeover, her exterior better reflected her dynamic interior, and in a final consequence to arthritis, she swung from a trapeze at the Toronto School of Circus Arts. Lynn Manwar has been climbing mountains thrown up in front of her by her medical conditions. It only seems fitting that she has chosen to climb Mount Everest, as a member of the Arthritis Society’s Joints in Motion program. She hopes to depart this winter or next spring, depending on when she can raise the funds. Lynn has never allowed her conditions to be impediments, merely guides in her personal journey. Undoubtedly she will one day reach base camp on Mount Everest, but for now her indomitable spirit will guide all of us in our ascension in life.

To support Lynn, please visit: http://arthritis.akaraisin.com/pledge/Participant/Home.

Fitness Matters

In this monthly column Marlon Teekah focuses on various aspects of fitness and answers questions you might have in order to encourage you to be your best in body, mind, and spirit.

The Truth about Nutrition

To expand on last month’s article about fitness myths, I will discuss a few of the nutrition myths that many people have.

Myth 1: Low carbohydrate diets are the best and fastest way to lose weight.

Fact: Reducing your carbohydrate intake to dangerous levels leaves your body without the vital energy it needs for daily maintenance. Carbohydrates are your body’s primary source of fuel, so when levels get too low, your body will start to store carbs to use as energy. The drastic weight loss seen at the beginning of low-carb diets is due to water loss as a result of your body burning up all of its remaining carbohydrate stores. In the end, cutting a particular food group from your diet will only lead to cravings and muscle breakdown, without any lasting results.

* Note: All carbs are not equal; reduce sugar intake, especially artificial and during the night.

Myth 2: Crash dieting or fasting makes you lose weight

Fact: Crash diets may provide a quick 5lb fix but they ultimately hinder weight loss. Crash diets and fasting typically lead to a lot of water loss as well as fat and lean muscle. Decreasing lean muscle will decrease your metabolism, which means that your body is burning fewer calories throughout the day and therefore needs fewer calories to sustain itself. This means that once you inevitably stop the diet or the fast, you will gain more weight back and faster!

Myth 3: All foods that have reduced fats or are “diet” are okay for me to eat

Fact: Just because a food product proclaims to be “non-fat” or “diet,” does not mean that it is right for your diet. Although “low fat” products reduce the amount of fat, they often contain more sugar than their counterpart, which may turn into fat if you do not use the additional sugar.

Diet sodas and low calorie drinks may have zero calories, but they are high in sugar substitutes such as aspartame that aren’t doing your diet any favors. In fact, some studies have indicated that sugar substitutes have been found to increase fat storage; the long-term effects of these sugars on health are still unknown. In addition, many of these diet foods and mini-meals are highly processed and are lacking in many important nutrients and minerals that you can only get from real, natural food products.

Myth 4: All fats are “bad fats”

Fact: The moderate intake (35-45 ml/day) of healthy fats (such as omega 3-6-9) will improve your heart health and body composition as well as improve your workout stamina. Remember, all fats are not created equal! Avoid trans and saturated fats found in baked goods and fried foods, which have no health benefits. Instead, opt for mono (omega 3) and polyunsaturated fats (omega 3-6-9) found in fish, nuts and vegetable oils (such as olive oil).

Now that you have this new found knowledge, put it into action! For more information on Fitness, please visit me online at www.goodnewstoronto.ca or contact me directly at fitness@goodnewstoronto.ca with any further questions.

Best of luck,
Marlon Teekah

DISCLAIMER: The information provided in this article is recommended for the general population who are physically able to exercise. To determine if exercise is appropriate for you, please consult your physician before trying anything offered in this column or exercise in general. Marlon Teekah and Good News Toronto are not liable for your safety.

Marlon Teekah is a Certified Personal Trainer, Certified Kinesiologist, and Personal Fitness Coach at Marlon Teekah: Dynamic Fitness Training. If you have any questions or comments, you can e-mail Marlon at fitness@goodnewstoronto.ca or visit him online at www.marlongteekah.com
Quiet Giants Among Us

Several years ago I wrote a story about Martin Maxwell entitled One Person Does Make A Difference. It had to do with events that Max had no control over and weaved its way to a conclusion that emphasized the title of the story. It was a story of chance and circumstance.

On May 6th, I attended a Tribute Dinner at Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda Synagogue. The Honouree was a 101-year-old non-Jew. In 1938 he set into motion a series of events that affected the lives of many people in the years to come. He saved the lives of 669 children just before the war began; they grew up, married, had children and grandchildren and now number over 5,000.

Nicholas Winton was a stockbroker in England. Martin Maxwell was a young man in Austria. Nicholas saw the refugee camps that the Germans had interned Jews prior to their invading Czechoslovakia and realized their plight. He returned to England to find people to sponsor Czech children if he could arrange for their arrival. Martin Maxwell and his brother were rounded up with all the Jews in Vienna on Kristallnacht and brought to an assembly building to be shipped to a concentration camp.

Not getting any co-operation from the British government, Nicholas forged passports in the children’s names, releasing them from the camps. He then engaged eight trains over the next several months filled with children destined for England.

When the war ended, Martin became an interpreter for the children he had saved. He answered that he did not. The newscaster asked those in the audience if any of them knew where any of Nicholas’ children might be. Almost everyone in the room stood up.

Nicholas forged passports in the children’s names, releasing them from the camps. He then engaged eight trains over the next several months filled with children destined for England.

Nicholas was knighted and his story was revealed to the world. When asked why he kept what he had done a secret, his answer was, “I didn’t keep what I did a secret – I just didn’t talk about it.”

On May 6th, Beth Emeth honored Sir Nicholas Winton; Martin Maxwell was in Holland as part of the celebration of the 65th Anniversary of the liberation of Holland by Canadian troops, selected to represent the Canadians who fought in Holland.

He gave testimonial as a survivor of the Holocaust, as a Canadian, and as a person, like Sir Nicholas Winton, for making a difference.

Good News Toronto

next issue
August 31st
The New Bloor Festival

ANTHONY KISSOON

On Saturday, July 24th, the streets of Bloordale Village (Bloor between Lansdowne Avenue and Dufferin Street) closed to host one of Toronto's most amazing festivals — The New Bloor Festival. One event in particular caught the interest of many. “Represent!” — as it was so aptly named — was a mixture of community organizations such as AK, Studio 32, UforChange, The LOFT, Under The Radar, and CONC coming together to infuse the wonders of hip-hop culture into the day's festivities.

The main attractions included live performances by both independent local youth as well as tenured artists, alongside live graffiti and mural painting. One piece that received much attention was the large mural painted on a delivery truck owned by Furniture Emporium, a local business that had donated the “wall space” to the event. The truck can now be seen around the city still emblazoned with Jose-Gabriel Sandoval's art.

The weather was not as favourable as many had hoped, but that dampened neither microphone nor spray can. Organized by Anthony Kissoon and Jose-Gabriel Sandoval, the event allowed the participating artists the opportunity to express the beauty of the culture while offering exposure to the supporting local businesses. All involved in the event were awarded certificates of congratulations from the Mayor's office, acknowledging their hard work and community participation. Among other supporters and sponsors of the event were Long & McQuade, I Respect Music of Canada Entertainment, and yours truly, Good News Toronto. If you missed the festival this year, you will not want to miss it next!

Anthony Kissoon is a contracted creative director actively involved in community based programs all across the GTA.
Beyond Book Smarts

Literature for Life founder serves the underserved with words.

TAMARA SHELLY

Josephine Altilia affectionately called “Jo” by all that know her, even if they don’t know her very well. Before meeting her, the monk tells you that she is down-to-earth and approachable. Some might associate “Jo” with the common phrase “The Average Joe,” but after meeting her, it becomes obvious that she is anything but.

Jo Altilia is the founder of registered charitable organization Literature for Life; an organization committed to engaging at-risk young families in building a culture of literacy and learning to overcome systemic barriers, thereby investing in their own and their families’ future.

Literature for life is a testament to Jo’s dedication to marginalized women and youth. Jo founded the organization to help engage young mothers in social change and leadership through the power of the written word to build better futures for themselves, their children, and their communities.

Jo’s background as an advocate for underprivileged youth and her understanding of the link between literacy, community, and good mental health is extensive. Over the last nine years, their program has worked with over 1,600 at-risk mothers and ten social services agencies in Toronto’s thirteen priority neighbourhoods, raising literacy levels of both mother and child.

The young mothers begin to see language as a tool to express themselves. They become empowered through reading, writing, and discussions, finding new ways to solve problems and learning to be proactive in their lives instead of reactive.

Understanding that the key to literacy is not simply teaching people how to read, but in creating a love of reading and building a culture of literacy and learning for at-risk families, Literature for Life held its first Women with Words reading circle at Jessie’s Centre for Teenagers. Each week, pregnant and parenting teenage girls meet at various shelters and youth centres throughout the city.

Literature for Life produces a magazine called Yo’ Mama written by young mothers for young mothers with over 20,000 copies distributed annually and 35 young mothers employed as writers, editors, and other various roles.

Jo’s vision has been recognized and rewarded by the Mayor’s Community Safety Award, YWCA’s Woman of Distinction, Canada Post’s Community Leadership Award for Literacy and, most recently, with a Toronto Community Foundation Award and recognition as one of Toronto’s “Vital People.”

Jo’s dedication to young at-risk families is tireless. In addition to the necessary board meetings and networking needed for the growth of the organization and a Woman with Words reading circle with Humewood House each week, Jo also has a family of five and serves as a mentor, all while continually trying to raise funds towards Literature for Life programming. This month she will be balancing many of those responsibilities as she raises funds for the organization with the annual Literary Life Summer Book Sale, taking place on her own front yard on August 15th, 2010. Thousands of titles and hundreds of genres will be available for readers of all ages at the cost of only $1.

For more information about Jo Altilia, Literature for Life, and the Annual Summer Book Sale, visit: www.literatureforlife.org

Lesley Brewer is a freelance writer and PR specialist. Her passion is revealing the cultural gems found within the city of Toronto.

Kids Boogie Too…with Melissa Donheim and Pepper

LESLEY BREWER

These are the thoughts of Melissa Donheim, a successful and dynamic children’s entertainer.

I think that everyone has the potential to be someone’s hero. I have been blessed with loving people and heroes in my life; people who encouraged me, even when I showed indifference. I am forever grateful. Now it’s my turn. I strongly believe that it’s not one individual or family that raise children, it is the community.”

Melissa was a rebellious teen and a high-school dropout who bounced around for a time, uncertain of which direction to take. At 20, with the defiant teen in the past, the young adult sought to compete high school, which she did at the City Adult Learning Centre.

At 23, Melissa enrolled at a college and completed training to become an animal care worker, but soon realized she was unable to separate her deep love for animals from the realities of injury, illness, and death. That phase having ended, her journey to become the children’s entertainer she is today inched ever closer.

I have been blessed with loving people and heroes in my life; people who encouraged me, even when I showed indifference. I am forever grateful.

In the years immediately following her completion of college, Melissa was employed as a nanny. While employed in this field, an amazing thing happened: one of the mothers, a well-established producer, began sowing the seeds of independence by helping Melissa become aware of her own potential and opening her mind to possibilities. This woman allowed Melissa to plough through her basement and take whatever she thought she could use. It was here that the puppy puppet Pepper was unearthing, along with many instruments that Melissa continues to employ in her shows.

Still another mother let Melissa hold music classes in the basement of her house. Not long after, “Kids Boogie Too” was born. And so the journey continued. Melissa acknowledges that both women were very encouraging and influential in her life and both played significant roles in taking her to the place where she is today.

Through it all, Melissa’s mom remained steadfast in her support and encouragement, and her beautiful, loving and loving Pepper provided motivation and unconditional love, so much so that the puppet was given her name.

There is no doubt that Melissa loves children! Her eyes seem to twinkle all the time, but put a child in front of her, and, well, those eyes of hers start to dance! Imagine a party with a puppy puppet, singing and boogying, blowing bubbles, playing instruments along with the sounds of happy, giggling children. This is an environment where kids can explore new skills, build confidence, get exercise in a fun way, and make new friends.

As with all entrepreneurs, one of her biggest challenges is staying motivated and keeping to some kind of schedule. Marketing herself and her business is also something she can find difficult at times. However, with her demonstrated effervescent personality and word-of-mouth endorsements, I am quite certain she will continue to do very well. Just being with Melissa is an uplifting experience; she always has a smile for those she knows and even those she doesn’t.

Melissa has been in business in earnest since 2008 and is a testament to how someone open to “hearing” and exploring a new path; following her heart and doing what she is passionate about is a channel for the flow of love everywhere she goes.

If you would like to learn more about “Kids Boogie Too” or would like to book a party or event, please call Melissa at 416-833-0942.

Lesley Brewer is a freelance writer who is an active member of her hosting co-op, She lives with her fabulous felines, and loves all animals and nature.
Cyber Saviours

In this series, Winnie Czulinski features diverse Torontonians using their tech expertise to help improve quality of life.

CONNECTIONS FOR ALL AGES

Thanks to a very special team, the downtown neighbourhoolds of Regent Park and St. James Town are reaping great tech benefits at the Yonge Street Mission on Gerrard Street East.

Shirley Kim, Julian Williams, and their YSM colleagues help “connect” local residents, ranging from three-year-old daycare denizens to seniors, through the long-running faith-based Mission’s TD Securities Computer Literacy Centre.

“It’s definitely filling a huge need, across the board,” says Shirley, YSM’s computer education facilitator. “This is an amazing community. And you can totally make technology relevant to any age group you’re working with.”

Under the eyes of the YSM team Computer Literacy Centre team, children joyfully interact with colours, numbers, and letters. Youth immerse themselves in projects like designing magazine covers and movie making. One recent engineering and technology design project for Grade 3 and 4 girls also exposed them to careers in IT (Information Technology). “I see that as a huge need, across the board,” says Julian, YSM’s computer education facilitator. Shirley, who has background in Human Resources, economics, IT, and adult education, went on an overseas tech-teaching mission trip with her church several years ago.

“It opened my eyes to how important computer education is, in being able to function in this world. It can be very empowering and life-changing.”

The YSM offers projects like inter-generational digital storytelling collaboration. Here, the partnering of seniors with youths brings decades of life stories to life through multimedia, with a major showing at the end.

In using existing plans or creating her own lessons, computer education facilitator Shirley “brings a bottomless pit of energy and enthusiasm and creativity to work every day,” says Julian Williams, YSM’s computer education coordinator. Julian, who has been at the YSM four years now, supervises a staff of 3 and a volunteer team of 25 to 30. He has many years of experience working with children, camps, city youth, and neighbourhood groups.

“For me, as a program coordinator, just being able to watch the regular improvements in media and troubleshooting, and seniors embrace games, puzzles, and communicating with kin far away. Accomplishments in the 50-computer Centre are celebrated.

Shirley, who has background in Human Resources, economics, IT, and adult education, went on an overseas tech-teaching mission trip with her church several years ago. She is an amazing person who brings a bottomless pit of energy and enthusiasm and creativity to work every day,” says Julian Williams, YSM’s computer education coordinator.

One of the things I have found that is most meaningful, and what applies to children and adults as well, is just being told, ‘Try it — you can do it’”

Young adults who took programs there as children return to help other youngsters. As well, some high school volunteers at the YSM put in many times the hours required for community credits.

Shirley and Julian work with other community agencies, schools, and libraries, as well as homes. That’s because the YSM, with users’ completion of some of its courses, provides free refurbished computers. To date, at least 1,600 families in the neighbourhood have received them.

The YSM’s computer programs and accessibility for all ages are plaguing local residents into a world of connections, confidence, and competence. Julian says, “One of the things I have found that is most meaningful, and what applies to children and adults as well, is just being told, ‘Try it — you can do it.’”

Buckling up isn’t just for Kids

BY RANGER ROSS

Gael Ross, my owner, has always had animals’ best interests at heart. But now she has branched out beyond her own animals with a program to help all pet owners and their pets. I am proud to be the official mascot for her new initiative.

BARC (Buckle up Animal Restraint Control) is an initiative she has spearheaded under the auspices of the Toronto Police Services’ 32 Division Community Police Liaison Committee (CPLC). It is supported by the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog program, of which I am a retired member. I served for five years, visiting Villa Columbo.

Did you know an unrestrained pet can cause you to lose control of your vehicle? Unrestrained animals can become projectiles during sudden stops and accidents. This can cause them to be injured or killed as well as causing injury or death to the human occupants of the motor vehicle.

Animals should be restrained in the back seat or back compartment of your vehicle.

For example, you have to come to a sudden stop. You have control of your vehicle, thanks to safety features like ABS brakes and Stability Control.

Unfortunately, an unrestrained pet in your vehicle goes flying and hits the back of your seat, causing you to lose control of your vehicle and create an accident situation slamming into the car ahead of or beside you. That’s why Gael always makes sure that I am wearing my seat-belt whenever she takes me in the car.

Whenever your pet is in the vehicle there is a risk of one of us becoming a projectile. It is too late to restrain an animal after an accident.

Animals should be restrained in the back seat or back compartment of your vehicle. Using the front seat can put us at risk of being injured by the airbag. Animals should never travel in the back of a pick-up truck.

Pet stores provide a wide variety of animal restraint systems to protect me — and your best friends as well:

- Vest harnesses
- Animal barriers
- Tethers
- Travel crates
- Animal booster seats

You wouldn’t think of driving with an improperly restrained child. Why would you drive with an unrestrained pet?

It takes no longer than doing up your own seat belt. After a few times, we get used to it. I actually look forward to it, as I know we are going for a ride in the car!

If you are not sure what to do with your old computers please refer to our April 2010 issue of Good News Toronto in which Jon Alexander informs us of some meaning ways to recycle them so that others can use them.

Summer-Thyme Lime Refresher

KATHLEEN BETTS AND NURAMINA IBRAHIM

For Good News Toronto readers who sing out loud the tunes of Summertime, or for those who prefer to hum in their heads, this thymely refresher is just the juice to cool, calm, delight, and quench you with what you need to feel fabulous. This one’s as easy as a cool summer breeze…

The Few Fine Ingredients You’ll Need:
• Fresh sprigs of thyme (approx. 20 g)
• 6 fresh limes
• 3 or 4 cups of water
• Honey (to taste)

Simple Steps:
1. Snip fresh sprigs of home-grown thyme from your glorious garden or power walk down to your green grocer to get a fantastic cardiovascular workout for the day and pick up some thyme while you’re choosing the freshest lovely limes they have in store. Be sure to drink plenty of water on your walk and sing “olé, olé, olé … feeling hot hot hot” along your route to entertain yourself — and others too.

2. Back home, invigorated from the exercise and ready to concoct, rinse the fresh herbs and change the tune in your head to think with a smile of how thankful we are to have thyme on our side. Boil the herbs whole on their stem in approximately 6 cups of water and allow to cool with the lid on the pot to lock in the essence and the natural nourishment.

3. With careful attention to the toning benefits to the biceps, squeeze the juice from the luscious limes and, once assured no seeds seeped in, pour it along with the pulp and the cooled steeped thyme into the blender jug.

4. Blend the mixture on high for up to 90 seconds. You can do a little dance or some extended arm rolls or even lean in on the counter and do 20 or so push-ups to take full advantage of the time passing. Add honey to taste and blend again for a few more seconds.

5. With tazlanted taste-buds, and adoration for the goodness in it, pour your limy libation through a strainer into the perfect pitcher and prepare to be refreshed. If foam from the blending slipped through the sieve, skin it off the top before indulging in or sharing your summer-thyme sensation.

6. Quench your thirst.

Have one glass a day along with any meal, all on its own. It’s thyme to enjoy. As the summer weeks and the summer fun continue, we like to think of how thankful we are to share with our friends the goodness of the Earth and the goodness of the people. For more fountain-of-youth tips and recipes, contact Nuramina at nuramina@rogers.com. If you have tips you would love to share with GNT readers, that’s even better. We’d love to hear your suggestions for loving life one smoothie at a time and one act of kindness at a time.

Kathleen Betts is a mother of four, freelance writer, and entrepreneur
Nuramina Ibrahim is a health and fitness guru who enjoys sharing her fountain-of-youth secrets for energetic living

Green and Lean

In this monthly column Dr. Martin Kijazi discusses how we can be active participants in creating a healthy environment.

GREEN SPACES

Forests and trees are a crucial part of life on Earth: they maintain diversity of living things, clean the air and water, provide basic human needs, and contribute to culture and recreation. Almost half of Canada’s land is covered in forests, but, according to Statistics Canada, 80% of the population lives in urban regions, where tree cover can be sparse. Special care is therefore needed to maintain and enhance urban tree cover for urbanites to accrue the benefits of trees. Alongside lawns and gardens, trees within a city, often referred to as the urban forest, comprise one of the most important green spaces. They contribute greatly to the image, health, and quality of life of the cities.

According to the Eastern Ontario Urban Forest Network, Canada’s cities are about 19% forested. While this may seem significant, the expert recommended amount of tree canopy (the percentage of leaf coverage of a city) for a healthy urban forest is 35 to 40%. Urban air is often quite polluted because of emissions from motor vehicles, factories, power plants, and furnaces, so extensive tree cover is needed to clean the air. In particular, trees’ leaves absorb nitrous oxides, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, and ground-level ozone, which are contributors to air pollution in Toronto and other large cities.

Cites are prone to large amounts of storm runoff (excess water that cannot be absorbed by soil) because of the abundance of paved roads and other impermeable surfaces. Runoff carries pollutants into local water bodies and hastens soil erosion. Trees and their roots help keep our water clean by retaining large amounts of water and reducing erosion and runoff.

In addition, trees provide shade in the summer and serve as a shelter from the wind in the winter, which helps to reduce energy needed to heat and cool buildings. There are also less obvious benefits to having trees in the city. For instance, many studies have shown that the presence of trees can improve the aesthetic image of an area and help build stronger, safer communities. Some studies have shown that green settings have psychological benefits, including improving concentration in children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and improving recovery rates and times for hospital patients with window views of trees.

Given such benefits, we can all contribute to growing urban trees. Is your residential area deprived of trees? Urban Forestry Services plants trees on city-owned street allowances for up to 90 seconds. You can do a little dance or some extended arm rolls or even lean in on the counter and do 20 or so push-ups to take full advantage of the time passing. Add honey to taste and blend again for a few more seconds. For information on city-owned street allowances to order a tree, download the residential street tree planting brochure at http://www.torontoparksandtrees.org/grants.htm).

Consider all these options to maintain and enhance the vitality of green spaces of your residence, your community, and your city. In doing so, you will also improve the image, health, and quality of life of the city in which you live.

Dr. Martin Kijazi is an Environment Researcher & Educator currently working for the University of Toronto. He is also actively engaged in environmental activism and advocacy.
Cuddle Up and Read

In this monthly column, Etta Kaner shares some of her favourite children’s books written for a variety of ages.

Dear Readers,

Summer is often a time when we get a chance to break from routine and do something different. So, instead of reviewing books in this month’s column, I’d like to talk about the reluctant reader. In previous columns, I’ve made suggestions about how you can encourage your child to become an avid reader. Perhaps you’ve tried some or all of these and none of them seem to make a difference. Well, the first thing I would say is, “Don’t give up.” Keep trying. Be consistent and persistent. It takes longer with some children to develop that love of reading. You might also want to try some of these ideas.

1. Give your child comics or graphic novels to read and read them together.

2. If you go on a trip, have your child help you plan the trip by reading information on the internet or in travel books. During the trip, assign your child the task of reading maps, street signs, and store signs. Give him/her lots of praise for being so helpful.

3. Take your child grocery shopping and give him/her the job of getting items that are packaged and require reading.

4. Find non-fiction books that match your child’s interests. Just be sure that the text is at a level that your child can read and understand with relative ease.

5. Read chants, poems, and limericks out loud with your child.

6. Do some cooking together. Have your child read the recipe in order to gather the ingredients as well as make the dish.

7. Read the sports page of the newspaper to find out what your child’s favourite team is doing.

8. Read movie reviews together to determine what movie you’re going to see.

9. Read joke and riddle books together.

10. Listen to books on tape and afterwards give your child the book to read.

11. Find plays that you and your child can read. You can each take on several parts and change your voices according to the character. There are lots of plays on the internet under Reader’s Theatre.

12. Get your child a building, science, or sewing kit that requires the reading of instructions in order for the project to be successful.

You may have noticed one factor that all of these ideas have in common — your involvement. If you want your child to become interested in reading, you have to demonstrate how pleasurable and useful an activity daily reading is. Happy reading!

Azraa’s Kids Column

Since childhood we have heard of queens, kings, princesses, and princes — whether it be from the fairy tales we loved as kids or through the media. They always seemed to have the perfect life, where everything worked out for them. Princess Aurora is awakened by her Prince Charming; Queen Elizabeth holds some of the best and most priceless rocks in the world. No matter where they go, royalty are treated with respect, and people travel from far and wide to catch a 30-second glimpse of them.

Once upon a time, the royal family had much more say in the lives of the people who lived in their territory. Today, however, countries that were once ruled by the royal family now have prime ministers and democratic forms of government; so why is having a queen necessary if the majority of the duties left to them are purely ceremonial?

In our lifetime, having a queen has seemed to have been more for tradition’s sake, and I never understood her importance. It was not until recently that I understood that although the Queen’s roles may seem frivolous, it is the impact she has that is worth the title.

This past July, the Queen visited Canada, and I happened to be downtown with some friends that day. We ran down the street like crazy to get to Queen’s Park to see her. As fate had it, we missed her by mere minutes, but the impact of her presence hit us with a bang. Hundreds of people had seen five teenagers running down the street, cameras swinging from their wrists, wide smiles on their faces. Upon seeing us, they calmly informed us that we had just missed the Queen, and showed us the pictures they had of her. These absolute strangers shared their time and recounted their experience to us. Although we had not seen it firsthand, these people helped to make the Queen’s visit as tangible as possible for us.

The Queen’s short trip to Canada may have been ceremonial, but the affect she had was not. She brought together people of different ages, ethnicities, and from different parts of Canada. The people who had gathered for hours outside Queen’s Park were proud to be called Canadian, and proud to call her our Queen.

Maybe the official roles of the Royal family are not as important in today’s world as compared to the past, but the bearing she has is just as strong, if not stronger. Many years ago, people looked up to the Queen to make day-to-day life decisions; today we look up to her with a sense of pride and patriotism.

The activities in which royal family participates may appear to be frivolous, but in fact they are powerful and wide-reaching, bringing the people of nations together.

Azraa Janmohamed is a Grade 10 student attending high school in Toronto. To respond to Azraa please e-mail her at info@goodnewstoronto.ca
Paul, look.” His eyes follow my finger.

We’re enjoying the neighbourhood goings-on as we begin our morning walk.

“Oh yeah, I noticed that that house was for sale. I wonder what they’re asking for it. Maybe I could show it to one of my new clients.”

“No, not that,” I say. “See the cop sitting there by his bike just past the stop sign?”

Paul smiles and shakes his head. “Ohhhh … that’s tricky!”

The police officer is concealing himself strategically in the foliage just far enough away from the stop sign at the T-intersection. It’s pretty clear that he’s waiting to catch cyclists who routinely ride through the stop sign. We’ve both seen it happen hundreds of times.

I laugh agreeably and turn around. “Look, here comes a cyclist. Let’s see what happens.”

Paul gets a little thrill at the prospect of witnessing someone being pulled over. He’s always had this fascination with police activity, and so I’m humouring him by taking the time to gawk at someone’s potential misfortune.

“He doesn’t seem to be slowing down, that’s for sure. There he goes!” Paul’s voice becomes more enthusiastic as we watch what happens next.

Sure enough, the cyclist, a bike courier, whizzes through the stop sign without hesitation, and immediately the police officer jumps out from behind the shrub and onto the road and brings the surprised cyclist to a quick halt.

“He’s gonna get a ticket. Remember that email I sent you last week with the fines for cycling infractions in Toronto? It’s an $85 ticket for failing to stop at a stop sign.” I sigh, feeling sorry for the cyclist.

Paul, look.” His eyes follow my finger.

P

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Paul pulls out his cell phone, “No, I need to make a call. Go ahead, I’ll wait outside for you.”

With stamps in hand and the phone call completed, we wait for the light to change so we can cross the street. I lean down to pet a passing dog and hear Paul start laughing.

“What’s so funny?” I ask as I stand up to look at the source of his amusement.

“That bike cop was busting people down the street, but he didn’t stop before turning on a red light! Unbelievable!”

“Did he use a right turn hand signal at least?”

“Nope! If that were you or I, we’d be fined $85 for failing to stop and $85 for failing to signal the turn.”

A gentleman standing at the lights with us offers, “I guess you didn’t hear shouting down the street. That purse snatcher that’s been around for the last few weeks was in action and the cop was there and able to intervene just at the right time. He’s a hero if you ask me!”

Paul and I look at each other and then reflect on this little life lesson.

I whisper to Paul, “Less judging and more compassion, huh?” He squeezes my hand tightly in agreement.

Rhyme AND Reason

Each month Jennifer Hicks and Paul Kralik regale us with a different perspective on current issues

The most effective and successful people recognize a simple fact: that in virtually every aspect of life, a successful situation is based upon a cooperative partnership of two or more people. People get things done by cooperating, not competing. When put to the test, there is always enough to go around

from Living The Field

The Rhyme and Reason

Torontocentric Crosswords by Alixe MacRae

Answers on page 14
Summer Camp: Something beyond Fun and Games?

Diana (far left) leading 120 youth campers in Youth Leadership Camp 2009, Muskoka, Ontario

JENNIFER YIM

With summer in full swing, camps are on all throughout the GTA, offering different types of activities and skills that one can learn during a period of three to four days. Camps have been a large part of our summer memories, but how many of us can say that we have organized camps that have benefited thousands of teens? Diana Lam can.

This summer marks Across U-hub’s 11th annual youth leadership training camp (www.acrossuhub.com). It also marks Diana’s 11th year of volunteering and her 5th year as its camp director. Throughout 11 years, Diana has transformed from a mentee to a mentor to many youths. During her transformation from a camper to the camp’s director, she has learned how to be open-minded while exercising discernment when exposed to different opinions, knowledge that she continually passes on to young volunteers. Despite her full-time job, she manages to spend countless hours throughout the year preparing for the annual leadership camp. Volunteers describe Diana as “a natural leader, always challenging us to not settle for anything less than our full potential.” However, when asked if she ever imagined that she would become a camp director, Diana laughed and replied, “Ten years ago I didn’t even think I had leadership qualities, much less be capable of directing a leadership camp.”

Diana immigrated to Canada in Grade 6, making it difficult for her to make a connection as to how to become a future leader in a community like Toronto, with such diverse backgrounds and perspectives on issues. Diana was in her first year of university when her friend suggested that they attend Across-U-hub’s youth leadership training camp targeted towards high-school and university students. She said yes with not much thought beyond “at least it’s something to do this summer.”

The everlasting vision has been to let youth believe that they have the power to do anything when given a platform.

This leadership camp far exceeded Diana’s expectation of “just something to do.” Across-U-hub’s vision for youth leaders is not defined by academic strengths but by tangible skills such as interpersonal, team-building, and being a well-rounded individual. The camp always focuses on a current global topic, such as the Olympics theme in the summer of 2008, for young campers to become globally conscious citizens and make a positive impact on society. This year’s camp (Aug 29 – Sept 1) will focus on the G20 conference that just occurred in Toronto and its global impact.

Diana’s own experience in camp also came with self-revelation. Through high rope activities and team building games in camp, mentors challenged Diana and the rest of campers to step outside of their comfort zone, both physically and mentally. Campers formed trusting friendships, feeling comfortable enough to share their views on social issues and struggles in life. Encouraged by the leadership and passion Diana observed in the camp’s volunteers, the soon joined Across U-hub as a committed volunteer. The rest is history.

When Diana was asked for her vision of camp in the next ten years, she said thoughtfully, “The everlasting vision has been to let youth believe that they have the power to do anything when given a platform. I myself experienced this empowerment and was encouraged to start searching and chasing after my dreams. I still haven’t found it yet, but having the courage to search is something that I want others to experience.” As a volunteer working with Diana, I can testify to seeing Diana living out her passion everyday by helping youths realize their dreams.

Jennifer Yim is a university graduate in Biology from the University of Western Ontario and is currently volunteering at Across U-hub

Gaining Perspective

Each month Brian Baumal offers us opportunities to look at ourselves in new ways.

IDEAL OR AUTHENTIC—IT’S YOUR CHOICE

I run a reading group for parents, and one book we were discussing — Alfie Kohn’s Unconditional Parenting — has as a central tenet that parents should strongly avoid praising their children, and that if praise is given it should be short without being maudlin. As parents discussed their initial impressions of the book, many said something like, “After reading this book I immediately noticed how much I praise my child, so now I try to stop myself from doing it so much.” My question to the group was, “So, this book changed how you praise your children. However, I also hear you saying that avoiding such praise seems out of place for you. Which is better for our children: an ideal parent that follows advice from a book, or an authentic one that follows their own instincts, regardless of what others think?”

This, of course, has much broader implications beyond parenting. It applies to most any role we can think of — boss, employee, spouse, child host/hostess, etc. It’s not that being ideal or being authentic are diametrically opposed to each other, but as human beings, I think we struggle with this idea of ideal roles at the expense of our own authenticity.

Believe it or not, the ideal action is much less courageous and much less responsible than the “authentic” action. By attempting to be the ideal parent or boss, we are simply taking on pre-existing attitudes and behaviours that are not necessarily ours. We adopt a way of being that is not ours in order to “smooth things over” or to influence or control others. This often leaves us confused and disillusioned when things do not work out as we have expected them to.

In our culture it is much easier to read a book or internet site or watch TV to pick up ideal ways of being than it is to access our own emotions and feelings to determine what we really want. We are programmed at an early age to look to others more than to look at ourselves in terms of how we should behave. As such, accessing ourselves and our true feelings becomes a much more difficult process for us. Authenticity requires that we take responsibility for our own actions — no one else can influence how we really are authentic, and that it is a very tough burden for many people.

Moreover, being authentic requires much more from us in our contact with the outside world. If I authentically do not like something, wish to make a complaint, or even dismiss someone or something out of hand, I generally need to take responsibility for how my authenticity impacts the environment around me (not doing so gets into the realm of anti-social behaviour and is beyond the topic of this article). That means I need to “stick around” for the affects of my authentic behaviour.

What is worthwhile to note, however, is that authentic behaviour is the best way to inspire confident behaviour. When people know that their behaviour is grounded in who they truly are, they tend to become more empathetic and confident in the actions that they take. People begin to exercise what is truly within them, and while what is truly authentic may not be completely ideal, when behaviour is accompanied by empathy, compassion, and confidence that comes with authenticity, we end up making the world a much more ideal place anyhow.

Brian Baumal is a Gestalt Psychotherapist practicing in Louisville. He can be contacted at 416-907-6085 or through www.TorontoTherapySite.com

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Good news
Toronto
August 2010

Food and Culture
Continued from page 1

Italy after the war. He met my
mother thanks to Fr Ricardo at St
Francis Church who introduced
them. My father serenaded her
with his mandolin and flowers
until she relented”, says Roberto.
How romantic!

His father owned a number
of barber shops and encouraged
his children to embrace the Italian
culture and language.

So how did Grano come
about? Well, Roberto’s first job
was as an aftercare officer at a
catholic school and later as a
corrections officer at the Vanier
Centre for Women. Then he
became involved in food and
wine importation. He married
Lucia in 1985 and opened Grano
the following year, starting off
small and evolving into the
restaurant that it is now.

Roberto’s work has not
gone unnoticed. In 2006 he
won the Jane Jacobs Prize,
which celebrates Toronto’s
“original, unsung heroes”

And so, like his father, Ro-
berto feels it’s important to keep
the Italian culture fresh and alive
in Toronto and runs Language
and Linguine courses, wine
maker dinners, and concerts. The
restaurant’s motto is ”Non si vive di
solo pane,” which means,”One does
not live by bread alone.” Grano
itself means grain — they make
their bread there.

It’s not only the Italian
culture he wants people to engage
in, it’s culture in general and
what’s happening in the world.
The Grano speakers series is
now in its 6th year where leaders
in business, government, aca-
demia, and the media can meet
to discuss world events. They are
also embarking on a number of
discussion series for the autumn
of 2017 to celebrate Toronto’s
150th anniversary.

While I was chatting with
Roberto, I asked about the way
the restaurant is decorated. The
walls have wonderful paintings,
Italian movie posters and
colourful Italian plates. He tells
me that his wife Lucia is an artist
as well as the chef (very talented
in both) and they also encourage
artists to put their work up free
of charge. Their payment is
celebrating art and the art keeps
their walls decorated.

There is a lovely fountain in
the courtyard and there they have
a private room that community
organizations and social and
cultural groups can also book
free of charge.

Roberto’s work has not
gone unnoticed. In 2006 he
won the Jane Jacobs Prize,
which celebrates Toronto’s “original,
unsung heroes.”

Next year the restaurant
celebrates its 25th anniversary and
you can see why it’s a success:
from the moment I walked into
their restaurant I felt welcome. As
a successful owner of a popular
restaurant, he could have been
arrogant but he wasn’t. He cares
about food, culture, Toronto,
and, most importantly, people.

So how is Grano going to
celebrate its big birthday? Well,
Roberto is already planning a
big party.

“We’re going to have a
smaller dinner discussion series
and then we are having an open
house in May where we will invite
the city to come and say hello,”
says Roberto with a smile.

Aisling Riordan is an award-winning
journalist from Ireland. Currently, she
works as Program and Marketing
Coordinator with Diaspora Dialogues,
an arts organization in Toronto

Toronto Tidbits

• Did you know that there are
Tree Tours of Toronto? http://www.
treetours.to/self-guided-tree-tours

• Did you know that Toronto is
as far south as the French Riviera?

• Did you know that Toronto has
the only real castle in North America?
http://www.casaloma.org/Main/
MainDyn.asp

• Did you know that one quarter
of Canada’s population lives within
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