

The York University Magazine

Winter 2017

Change Makers

How Janson Chan
and other York millennials
are making our world a better place

PLUS

How fruit flies chill Why citizens make good scientists When weather affects stocks



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The York University Magazine

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THE PRESIDENT



MAMDOUH SHOUKRI
PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

THE PAST YEAR has been a celebratory one for York University. In August, the University received a prestigious \$33.3 million grant from the Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF), which will support the Vision: Science to Applications (VISTA) program. CFREF ranked York among the top five universities in the world for its expertise in vision research, showcasing our leadership in the field. We are also having an impact outside the classroom: In November, the *Times Higher Education* World University Rankings placed York among the top five universities in the country for best preparation of students for the workplace – a rating that underscores the value of a York education and the positive perceptions of our graduates by employers.

Since we launched Impact: The Campaign for York University in April 2016, we have had an opportunity to spread the word about York's excellence around the world, and to celebrate the impact our nearly 300,000 alumni are having both locally and globally. In this short period of time, our alumni community has raised more than \$270 million of our \$500 million goal through volunteer and philanthropic efforts. Your ongoing support is helping us to deliver truly game-changing learning environments for our students and faculty.

As I enter my final year as president, I find myself not only reflecting on the transformations that have taken place across campus over the past decade, but also looking ahead to the major developments still on the horizon. In addition to new community partnerships with Cinespace Film Studios and the Regent Park School of Music, we are preparing to host the 2017 North American Indigenous Games this summer at our York Lions Stadium – the first time the Games will be held in Ontario. Our Markham Centre campus is slated to open in 2020, bringing key economic and innovation priorities to the region. We can also look forward to the completion of two new subway stations on our Keele campus, scheduled to open in December as part of the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension.

The future is bright for Canada's progressive university, as we continue to engage our global community of alumni, friends and partners, and build on our heritage of academic and social innovation.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GARY BEECHY

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PUBLISHER Roderick Thornton

EDITOR Michael Todd

ART DIRECTOR James Nixon

ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR Cindy Wilce

COPY EDITOR Lindsay MacAdam

CONTRIBUTORS

Adrian Azcurra, Gary Beechy, Jonathan Dolphin, Sam Droege, Mike Ford, McKenzie James, Jeff Kirk, Sofie Kirk, Phil Sach, Danielle Wu

CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING OFFICER

Susan Webb

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4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario M3J 1P3
Tel: 416-736-5979 Fax: 416-736-5681

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Back of the Book

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, but there's this old maxim that readers often flip through magazines from back to front – at least in print. But when digital only? Who knows? But, in any case, as the final (paper) proof of this issue lands on my desk before heading for pixelated immortality, I too pick it up and flip back to front to get a sense of what we've written about "this city called York University" during the past few months.

What immediately caught my eye is a short item on page 41 about three York grads – David Hein, Irene Sankoff and Natalie Bartello – whose musical, *Come From Away*, opened to rave reviews in Toronto and is currently Broadway bound (we'll be doing a full-fledged feature on them in *The Magazine's* Spring/Summer '17 issue). Hein and Sankoff were living in New York City at the time 9/11 occurred and changed the way North Americans thought about their safety and security forever. It's a story that needed to be told and we're glad that three York grads were part of telling it.

In this issue you'll also find "Change Makers" (page 24), a revelatory feature on how three York grads are redefining what it means to be a millennial while changing our world (for the better) one social program and app at a time. Also, if you don't have a PhD but always wanted to be a scientist – or at least participate in a bona fide scientific experiment – the good news is it's not too late! In "Citizen Science" (page 12), we tell the tale of how one York professor and a York postdoc are engaging non-academic citizens in scientific studies on our birds and bees.

– MICHAEL TODD



ON THE COVER

Janson Chan photographed by Jeff Kirk

View

OUTLOOK & IDEAS

Fruitful Discovery

This insect really knows how to chill

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MCKENZIE JAMES

TAKING THEIR TEMPERATURE:

Heath MacMillan (left) ponders
the biological thermostats of fruit flies

AN INTERNATIONAL TEAM of researchers, including a York University scientist, have found that fruit flies – those pesky insects that buzz around your bowl of overripe bananas – have a surprising ability to adjust to quick drops in temperature. They do this by radically altering their gene expression and metabolism in response to sudden temperature changes in their environment.

So, what's the big deal? Well, understanding how insects tolerate sudden changes in temperature could be a crucial step in both protecting and controlling insects worldwide, says Heath MacMillan, a Banting Post-doctoral Fellow at York. He led the study in conjunction with researchers in Canada, Switzerland and Japan.

With the world's unpredictable pattern of climate change, the need to understand how insects are affected by rapid temperature fluctuations is becoming increasingly important, since they make up more than 75 per cent of all animal species. "Temperature is one of the strongest predictors of the global distribution of insect species," says MacMillan. "This is because temperature affects all aspects of insect physiology, and limits the ability of insects to move, eat and reproduce."

Insects modify their physiology and behaviours to respond to temperature so they can continue to function, even at very low ones. This ability is necessary to survive cold winter months, but the process of how insects do it is not well understood.

While many insects are disease carriers, many others are

beneficial to crops (e.g. pollinators), so understanding insect physiology improves our ability to predict changes in insect populations as the Earth's climate continues to change rapidly.

For the study, researchers raised common fruit flies, *Drosophila melanogaster*, from eggs through to their larval or maggot stages, at room temperature (21 C). Once they were adults, half of the flies were transferred to live at 6 C.

"The flies responded to this change by changing the expression of genes and proteins in their bodies, which in turn impacts on the metabolic pathways they use," says MacMillan. "After six days of keeping the two groups of flies at 21 and 6 C, we sampled all of them and measured the expression of every one of their genes and the abundance of every metabolite, or chemical, in the flies that we could identify."

The researchers expected to see changes in the flies that were exposed to the cold, but were surprised by the extent of them. Nearly a third of their genes increased or decreased in expression, and the abundance of roughly half of their metabolites (the products of metabolic reactions) changed at the same time. Researchers plan to use this information to examine specifically how the genes and metabolites identified in the study contribute to insect survival in the cold.

The ultimate goal is complete understanding of cold tolerance. If scientists are successful, that could help with the development of new applications in the realms of agriculture and disease transmission. ●



CHILLING OUT: A male fruit fly stands on the steel surface of a cooling apparatus as York scientists study the physiological mechanisms that allow him to sense temperature changes and tolerate the cold



Busy Bee

*Prof's new book explores
the world's pollinators up close*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAM DROEGE

YORK BIOLOGY PROFESSOR Laurence Packer and wildlife photographer and biologist Sam Droege's new book, *Bees: An Up-Close Look at Pollinators Around the World*, takes a close look at more than 100 different bee species.

At any given time, while we eat, work and sleep, more than 20,000 species of bees are in constant motion pollinating plants of all types and keeping the natural world intact. In this new book, Packer and Droege explore how bees go about their lives, their characteristic adornments, body modifications and unique habits, including the "hairstyles" worn by different bees. The book also examines all seven bee families and some of the most spectacular members of each family, as well as rare species, such as the oddly named *Dinagapostemon sicheli* and the vectored sputnik.

Packer is the author and co-author of more than 140 research articles on various aspects of bee biology, and he and his students have together described more than 100 bee species. He has also written a popular book on wild bees, called *Keeping the Bees*, and a booklet on the bees of Toronto. Droege is a wildlife biologist at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland. His work cataloguing and photographing bees has been featured by National Public Radio, the Weather Channel and the National Wildlife Federation. ●



Flu Fighters

Why new vaccines need bespoke strategies

YOU'D THINK EXECUTIVES of entrepreneurial firms would have enough on their plates without having to worry about social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook or Instagram. But, according to research by Schulich School of Business Professor Eileen Fischer and Rebecca Reuber from the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, for those executives who take the marketing power of social media seriously, it might make a real difference to how people view their company.

The researchers tackled what they called the "debatable" benefits of social media channels to reduce that uncertainty and enhance differentiation.

Fischer says we can think of a company's social media communications as a "communicative stream" that encodes signals lacking narrative cohesion, is only fleetingly accessible and is minimally customized. So, how effective is it? That's what the researchers wanted to find out.



THE TWITTER CHALLENGE

Can 140 characters make your company stand out?

To solve the puzzle, Fischer and her colleague used qualitative research methods to compare the communications effectiveness of eight firms that used Twitter to pursue growth. While many of these firms were also using Facebook, it was considered a more personal channel – for friends or family. Fischer's study showed that the more effective firms mixed their tweets about institutional and product quality with tweets that thanked or praised their customers and stakeholders, plus tweets that conveyed the company's unique "brand personality."

While the researchers say Twitter lacks the "heft and persistence of a unified narrative text," such as a press release or a news article, their study demonstrates that "firms can harness the medium to convey signals of quality ... and distinctiveness, and can use it to convey positive affect." ●

A ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL vaccine strategy developed to treat a flu epidemic isn't the most effective, a York University study has found. Instead, vaccine strategies need to change depending on the specific characteristics of each infected region in Canada, and how easily the particular flu strain spreads.

"The window of time around the onset of an epidemic is going to be vastly different between a remote population and an urban one," says York researcher and the study's lead author Seyed Moghadas. "This is something public health officials need to pay attention to when developing vaccines. Different populations require different vaccination policies to minimize the impact of the illness."

Research showed different age demographics of remote and urban populations have a significant impact on the outcome of vaccinations. Many remote areas of the country have a higher percentage of children, who are key transmitters of the flu virus, compared with urban centres, which generally have fewer children, but more young and middle-aged adults.

The study analyzed how the different areas responded when the flu vaccine was given – in either a single dose or two doses – before, during and after the start of the epidemic. The study revealed that for most vaccine strategies, the attack rates of the virus in the urban population were lowest for children under five; in the remote population, adults older than 50 had the lowest attack rates. However, those rates varied depending on when and how the vaccinations were given.

Early vaccination leads to the best outcomes, from both a public health and a socioeconomic perspective, he says. It reduces the rates of infection, hospitalization and death, along with resource stress on the health-care system.

This research is significant, especially in light of new technologies that promise quicker production of flu vaccines than the current egg-based technology, which takes four to six months.

"In the case of epidemic emergencies, that's actually a very long process," says Moghadas. "A timeline of six months for vaccine production means it is basically the end of the epidemic by the time we get the vaccine." ●

TRACKING DISEASE:

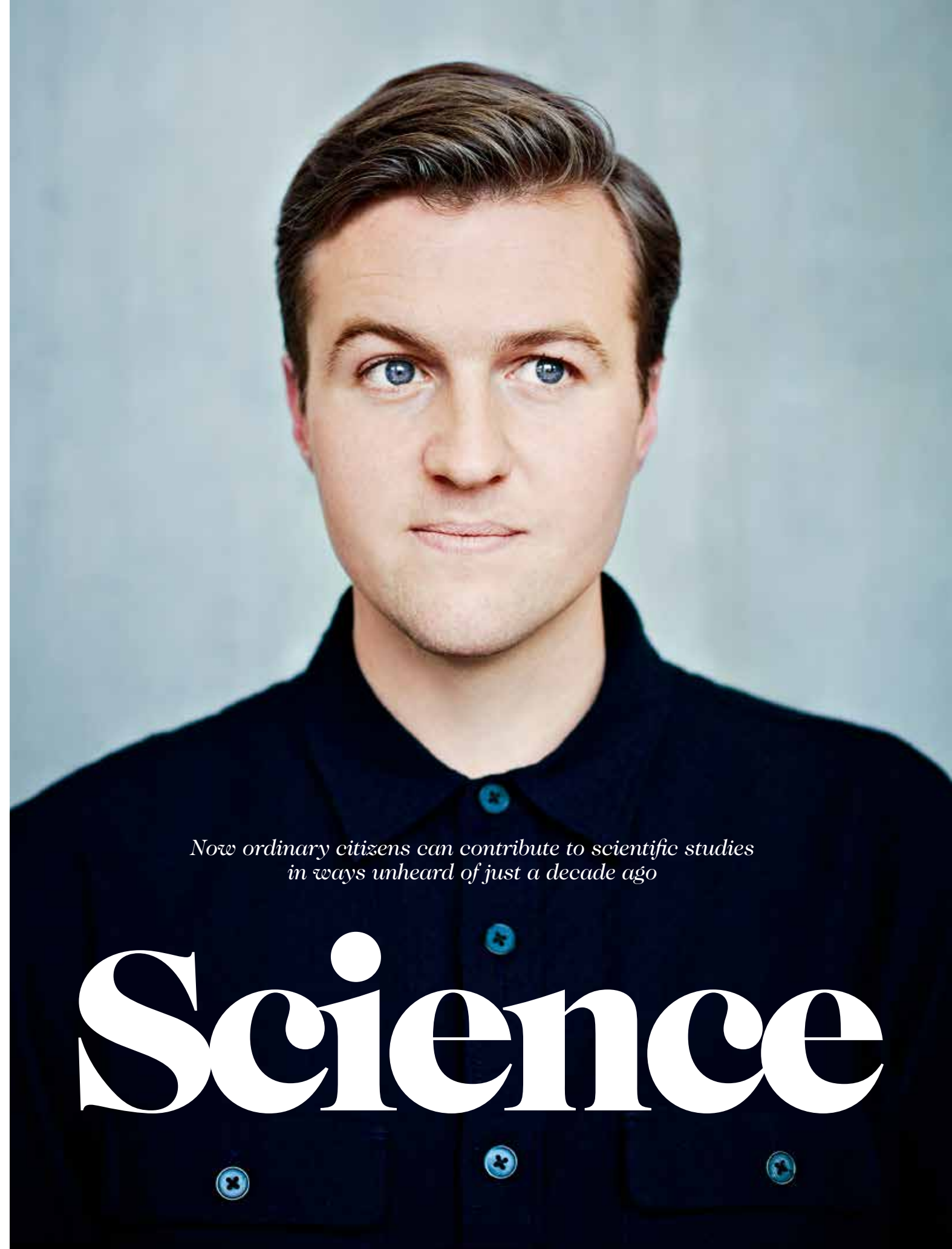
Seyed Moghadas on the best flu vaccine strategies

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MCKENZIE JAMES

Citizen



BY MICHAEL TODD PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE KIRK



*Now ordinary citizens can contribute to scientific studies
in ways unheard of just a decade ago*

Science

IT USED TO BE that you needed a PhD to be cited as a contributor to experiments or reports in major scientific journals. But those days are gone. Welcome to the brave new world of citizen science, where ordinary people from all walks of life work closely with bona fide scientists to collect data; submit photos of flora, fauna or phenomena; or assist with 24-hour binge field surveys to catalogue the biodiversity of threatened natural areas. If you're not familiar with the term "citizen science," it has been defined as crowd-sourced or civic science.

Part of this renaissance in the role citizens have to play can be attributed to today's technology. Cell phones, email, databases and personal computers have given citizens the power not only to store data and photos but to send it to central research repositories at universities from remote locales all over the world – anywhere, in fact, where there is a wire running to a telephone pole or a satellite capable of receiving and transmitting information.

Science is now in the hands of citizens globally and has never been more accessible to the average person. Simply put, citizen science is research conducted, in whole or in part, by amateur or non-professional scientists. For instance, in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) there's a Canadian group devoted to encouraging public participation in scientific work (citizenscientists.ca) – a volunteer-run not-for-profit that focuses on ecological monitoring, environmental training and education. The organization has been monitoring stream health at various sites throughout the Rouge River watershed in Toronto and the GTA since its establishment in 2001.

Not only do citizen scientists provide valuable information about our natural world, but they are also often an important human and economic resource, since many experiments can be vast in scope, both geographically and in terms of equipment needed. In some cases, citizen scientists also help fundraise for the equipment needed to undertake some experiments, in addition to contributing through observation and collection of data.

Time is also an important factor. Most research projects out of universities involve a handful of academic researchers who simply can't do all the work necessary by themselves, let alone cope with the travel required in, say, studying migratory birds (which necessitates data collection all over North America). So, citizen science enables researchers to cover wider geographic areas and, in many cases, carry out studies over longer time periods than their restricted budgets might otherwise permit.

Citizen scientists can do environmental monitoring while walking to work or on vacation, and the ready access to

fingertip technologies to store and transmit data means professional scientists can receive timely, accurate information in quantities unimaginable 20 years ago. You can find a citizen science group for almost any research area imaginable, including FrogWatch, Ice-Watch, PlantWatch, the Common Loon Monitoring Citizen Science Project, monarch butterflies – and even a project called WormWatch.

York University has a number of professors who run studies on projects in the field that regularly employ the skills and hard work of citizens who are interested in science and conservation, and who relish being outdoors.

IN 2015, BIOLOGY PROFESSOR

ROBERTO QUINLAN from York's Faculty of Science and Paul Frost, a professor at Trent University, worked with the Earthwatch Institute to offer a citizen scientist training session at York's Keele campus for the institute's FreshWater Watch program – a US\$100-million global partnership between HSBC, Earthwatch, WaterAid and the World Wildlife Fund.

Quinlan talked to volunteers about river and pond ecosystems, and outlined issues threatening the quality of freshwater resources. "Citizen science programs are a powerful tool for environmental scientists," says Quinlan. "Multiple pairs of hands can collect more data from more sites than even the most hard-working and dedicated scientists could ever hope to do on their own."

At Stong Pond at York's Keele campus, participants received hands-on training on how to correctly sample and assess the water quality of a local pond or stream.

Once trained, the citizen scientists headed back to their communities to collect local data on ponds throughout the GTA, including taking water samples for chemical analyses. Their samples were sent to lead researchers for analysis and inclusion in a global database of freshwater quality.

BRIDGET STUTCHBURY, a York University biology professor and graduate program director, along with her collaborator



THEY'VE GIVEN UP
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ELABORATE PURPLE
MARTIN HOUSES WERE
VERY FASHIONABLE IN THE
19TH CENTURY

BIRDS OF A FEATHER:

Purple martins find a home (left);
volunteer citizen scientist Nanette Mickle helps
track martins (middle); York biology Professor
Bridget Stutchbury and feathered friend (below)



and former postdoctoral fellow Kevin Fraser, runs a world-renowned project tracking the migratory patterns of the purple martin (the largest North American swallow) by attaching miniature geolocators to the birds' bodies as tiny backpacks. Stutchbury was the first person in the scientific world to use this technique on songbirds.

"Purple martins are capable of traveling incredible distances – from North America to Brazil – sometimes in just a matter of days," she says. "We use geolocators, like a GPS but using solar data linked to latitude and longitude, to track the migratory patterns of these 50-gram birds. We want to see what routes they use and where they rest on the way and eventually overwinter in the tropics. Some populations are declining more steeply than others. That may be because some routes and overwintering areas may expose them to more predators, or perhaps their food resources are not quite so abundant depending where they go."

One theory is that northern populations of purple martins may be overshooting their regular Amazon wintering grounds and landing instead in areas like southern Brazil. "The latter is a totally different area from the Amazon – it's deforested, it has more towns with agriculture and pesticides and the people don't want birds sleeping in their parks by the thousands, so birds get harassed."

To map out where the purple martin breeding population is going across the entire northeastern section of North America, Stutchbury says geolocators and citizen scientists are a must. "Their breeding range is huge, and if we want to fully map out where they go and get a complete, overall picture, we need to do studies in all these different places and there's no way in the world I could raise enough money for the travel and equipment and try to do this all by myself."

One fact that makes purple martins the ideal bird for citizen scientists to study, says Stutchbury, is they have completely changed their nesting behaviour over the past 200 years.



"They've given up nesting in natural crevices or tree cavities and now nest solely in bird boxes. Elaborate purple martin houses were very fashionable in the 19th century, for instance. And over time, the birds developed dense colonies and now nest 100 per cent in artificially created homes. And so, because purple martins are in these bird houses and because they are numerous as backyard birds, non-scientists have started programs where they do nest checks – put leg bands on adult birds, band the nestlings, and keep track of how many young are being born and survive and what birds return, and so on. Then they report all this data to the banding office and conservation organizations that keep track of reproductive success, such as the Purple Martin Conservation Association."



BEE KEEPERS:

York grad Scott MacIvor (left) and citizen scientist Deborah Chute (right), who helped MacIvor with his bee experiments

geocator program (anyone who works with wild birds needs formal training and a permit to do so).

"Marlin Perkins, host of the TV show 'Wild Kingdom,' was my hero growing up. And ever since, I've always been interested in biology even though I have a business degree and not a science one," says Mickle, who figures she has spent thousands of hours collecting data and observing her birds. "I don't regret a minute of it."

What motivates her? "I think in addition to loving what I'm doing, I'm always learning new things about the birds that could possibly help me to save them from decline."

"If people want to get involved, they can join a bird club like the Bluebird Society that monitors nests. And you can always take classes on bird banding and volunteer at banding stations. There are also lots of opportunities to do weekend bird spotting or the Christmas bird count or use new mobile app tools like eBird to help collect scientific data every time you see birds. And it's always nice to have your contributions recognized in published scientific journals."

SCOTT MACIVOR recently completed his PhD at York under biology professor and bee specialist Laurence Packer, doing his research in Packer's "bee lab." He is now pursuing postdoctoral work

in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Toronto Scarborough. While at York, MacIvor's research reflected his interests in urban ecology and, specifically, the ecology of cities.

What attracted him to bees for his doctoral studies, he says, was that there was just "something" about bees that makes them perfectly suited to living in the urban landscapes they nest in and forage around.

"Gardening is the No. 1 hobby in North America, and in Toronto there are a lot of gardens and green spaces, so the opportunity to study how bees nest in them is perfectly suited to this environment," he says. "In fact, our lab has determined Toronto and the GTA is one of the most bee-diverse regions

VOLUNTEER CITIZEN SCIENTIST NANETTE MICKLE is one such person. Mickle lives in northern Virginia and learned about Stutchbury's work in a roundabout way when she attended a lecture given by her at a Purple Martin Conservation Association conference in 2008.

A long-term and proud overseer of her own purple martin colony, Mickle wanted her colony to participate in the geocator research, which was then in its first stages of development.

Mickle says she has no science background per se, but she has had an abiding interest in birds in general, and in her purple martin colony in particular. She had even taken a bird handling course before she heard about Stutchbury's

THEY WERE HOSTING A BEE DAY AND TALKED ABOUT THESE BEE “CONDOS,” AND MENTIONED THAT YORK UNIVERSITY WAS DOING A STUDY, SO I LOOKED INTO IT

in southern Ontario and in all of Canada, with 360 species recorded,” he says.

MacIvor wondered why some species of bees do particularly well in an urban environment and decided to use bee nest boxes – something rather like a birdhouse except for bees. Specifically, MacIvor was interested in cavity-nesting bees: “They’re a very specific group who nest in holes in plant stems, wood, but also live in nail holes and cracks in brick and mortar.”

A nuanced way of sampling these species was to artificially create habitats. “In the past, we learned we could house these bees and move them around, which is great for alternative agriculture pollination management,” says MacIvor. “But now these actions are becoming a part of gardening as more people are becoming more concerned about declining bee populations.”

MacIvor recruited interested citizens from around the city who would allow him to put bee boxes in their backyard gardens. “This way I could leave them there for six months and then collect them, open them up and take a close look at the nests, bee diversity, the pollen collected, parasites, sex ratios and much more. It’s amazing just how much data comes out of these boxes.”

The bee nest boxes – 200 in all, hosted by volunteer citizen scientists, who also contributed to observations – allowed MacIvor to sample more bee sites over a more diverse range of habitats than would normally be possible for field work in cities, limited by congested traffic and access to private space. “The role of the citizen scientists who worked with me was essentially to protect the boxes and maintain them,” he says.

He found willing recruits through talks he gave at public events on bees, at gardening clubs and at community gardens. Bee box locations spanned the city, with sites at Humber College in Etobicoke, at the Scarborough Bluffs, in downtown Toronto and in neighbourhoods north of the core to Richmond Hill.

“I certainly couldn’t have done it without the support of citizen scientists such as Deborah Chute, who offered up her garden for a bee nest box,” says MacIvor. “Cities are made up

primarily of private land, so if I want to study bees’ diversity patterns – as I did – it was important to get permission to use people’s spaces. I had access to all

these backyards across the GTA where we located our boxes.

“Scientists are becoming increasingly dependent on larger and larger sets of data, so using citizen scientists to significantly increase the number of observations is invaluable. Today, most people have access to a camera and the internet, which enables citizen scientists to participate when before it would have been very difficult.”

For her part, Chute says she was more than happy to participate in MacIvor’s three-year study. “I’m in Richmond Hill,” she says. “My whole yard is garden and about 85 per cent of it is filled with native species. I’d seen a lot of wild bees around and I was interested in encouraging them. I learned about Scott and his work through Evergreen Brick Works. They were hosting a bee day and talked about these bee ‘condos,’ and mentioned that York University was doing a study, so I looked into it.”

One of the primary motivators for Chute to participate in MacIvor’s study was her knowledge that wild bees are under threat. “I’ve always been interested in natural things,” she says, “and planting a native species garden in turn attracted a great variety of fascinating insects, especially wild bees. As I began to realize that, I started researching what kinds of insects were attracted to various kinds of plants and then my growing interest in bees developed as part of that. I never actually thought of myself as a citizen scientist, despite Scott citing my contributions in his research papers. I really just thought that if I could use my garden as a way of helping bees and helping the researchers who study them at the same time then that would be a great opportunity. And I’ve learned so much through my affiliation with Scott, who helped me identify various wild bee species and encouraged me to send him photos of specimens I was curious about.

“Would I encourage people to get engaged in citizen science? Absolutely! I think the spinoffs are so varied and you learn a lot. Also, it encourages a feeling of responsibility for the environment.” ●

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Cold Cash

BY MICHAEL TODD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE KIRK

*Want better stock returns?
Pay attention to the weather*

IF YOU WANT A BIGGER RETURN on your investment dollar, you might want to watch the weather channel and digest some insights into stock behaviour from Ming Dong, an associate professor of finance at York University's Schulich School of Business, and PhD student Andréanne Tremblay.

Their research, recently featured in *The Economist*, offers up some interesting observations on how global stock returns and the weather may go hand in hand.

"Economists have long known that sunshine is good for stock markets, perhaps because nice weather makes people more optimistic," notes *The Economist*. Now new findings by Dong and Tremblay suggest cold weather can have an upside too.

They hypothesized that weather's effects on mood depended on climate, so they investigated the relationship between stock returns and each variable, for each temperature region and each month. The researchers then summarized the patterns of the weather effects across climates and seasons. "We uncovered many interesting patterns ... but one thing that stands out is that the weather's effects on mood appear to be stronger during seasons when individuals expect to spend more time outdoors," says Dong. "This is of course quite intuitive because if we stay indoors we won't be much impacted by the weather."

The Economist reported that Dong and Tremblay "used data

from Thomson Reuters' global equity indices to examine the effect of local weather on the main market index in 49 countries from 1973 to 2012." They investigated the effects of five weather conditions: sunshine, wind, rain, snow depth and temperature.

"It is true that there is already research about stock market seasonality, such as the length of daylight affecting market cycles," says Dong. "But we examine a different kind of effect: how short-term, day-to-day fluctuations of conditions affect the market.

Seasonal variables such as length of daylight are perfectly predictable, but we examine the effects of daily weather variables for different climates and seasons."

The researchers found that the effects of weather on returns were indeed contingent on climate and season, and more pervasive than previously documented. According to *The*



INVESTED: Professor Ming Dong tracks weather's effects on the stock market

Why that would be so is not entirely clear, but according to *The Economist*, the researchers surmised that "cold stimulates risk-taking, referring to psychological studies in which participants reported increased aggression as temperatures dropped below -8 C."

Dong and Tremblay suggest a hedge strategy that exploits the daily return predictability of the weather generated up to 25 per cent annualized out-of-sample gross profits during the period 1993-2012 and that the patterns of weather effects across climates and seasons suggest weather does indeed influence investor psychology.

"The systematic patterns of weather effects across climates and seasons, together with the relationship between the strength and timing of weather effects and individuals' seasonal propensity to spend time outdoors, suggest a plausible mechanism through which weather-induced mood influences index returns," says Dong.

"We are not the first to look into the relation between weather and stock returns, but this topic is rather controversial because markets are supposed to be only affected by financial news, and weather is hardly related to economic fundamentals. This is an area known as behavioural finance, which posits that markets are affected by investor psychology and emotion, in addition to fundamental news. Our hypothesis is that when good weather leads to an upbeat mood, investors will be more likely to buy stocks, and vice versa."

Dong admits there are many challenges to the angle his study took. He notes that stock returns are driven by many factors, primarily by financial news.

"Today's weather may be nice, but if the markets worry about North Korea's hydrogen weapons, stock prices may fall," he says. "Therefore, we need a very large sample of observations to cancel out non-weather effects. Second, it is hard to predict what specific weather conditions lead to good or bad moods, or people's risk-taking tendency. Even psychologists debate on how various weather conditions influence people's moods." ●

MARKETS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE ONLY AFFECTED BY FINANCIAL NEWS, AND WEATHER IS HARDLY RELATED TO ECONOMIC FUNDAMENTALS

Economist, they learned that "warm weather sends prices higher (such as in September in the cold region), but too hot weather causes the relationship to break down." It may seem counterintuitive, but a striking finding by the researchers was that while weather and investors can be fair weather friends, very cold weather can also be good for market returns.

When Glendon College's founding Principal Escott Reid gifted funds for a scholarship in his will, he enabled ambitious students like Natalia Ladyka-Wojcik the opportunity to pursue her dreams and make a difference in the world.

A Legacy Story

"I want to thank the late Principal Reid and all York supporters, on behalf of the entire York University student body, for the opportunities and connections that you have made possible and without which many students would never realize their dreams, their goals and their futures."

Natalia Ladyka-Wojcik is a 4th year York International Studies and Psychology student, recipient of the Escott Reid Entrance Scholarship and an international volunteer.

To learn more, contact Marisa Barlas at 416-650-8221 or legacy@yorku.ca

myyorklegacy.com



*How three York millennials are
making our world a better place*

CHANGE MAKERS

BY LINDSAY MACADAM
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KIRK



GOOD SHEPHERD:

York grad Deanna Lentini is on a mission
to humanize homelessness

MILLENNIALS, Generation Yers, echo boomers or digital natives – call them what you will. But don’t believe everything you hear about those born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s, often labelled as narcissistic, lazy, wasteful and irresponsible. York University students and alumni are among the growing number of ambitious young visionaries who are on a mission to change the world for the better, and a few of them recently sat down with *The York University Magazine* to share their stories.

Humanizing Homelessness

DEANNA LENTINI (BSC ’16) REMEMBERS IT WELL, the childhood moment that would forever shape the course of her life. Entering the grounds of Toronto’s Canadian National Exhibition at the age of six, her tiny hand clinging tightly to her father’s, she couldn’t help but notice the people sitting outside the gates, so obviously in need of help but being completely ignored by passersby. “As a little girl, you see that and you feel something because you don’t have any of those stereotypes instilled in you,” she says. “You don’t see ‘homeless people,’ you see people, who are homeless.”

From that day forward, Lentini couldn’t pass people in need without pulling out some money. “The outside pockets of my jackets would always have loonies and toonies in them so I could give them away,” she admits.

With social justice as her raison d’être, Lentini went on to do a lot of volunteering in her high school years, including making beds and lunches at the Good Shepherd Ministries in Toronto. But it wasn’t until she was about halfway through university that she thought up a new way to help the homeless. She decided to start giving away gift cards that she had received – that way, she could hand out more than a dollar or two at a time and it wouldn’t actually cost her anything. “Gift cards are a form of social currency,” she explains, “because you can feel like everybody else when you order your food.”

Lentini began urging her friends and family to participate, and soon she realized this donation model could really have potential. Since people always have odds and ends left on gift cards, it only made sense to collect them and use the combined funds to make bulk purchases for homeless shelters.

First, she called her initiative the “ReGiftcard Program,” but she soon renamed it “Fix the 6ix” in hopes that it could become a larger movement encompassing other poverty alleviation initiatives. Just as Lentini was dreaming all this up, York’s Faculty of Health serendipitously announced its Agents of Change program, which rewarded startup money to fund worthy projects addressing the social determinants of health. Her application was successful and a Fix the 6ix pilot campaign was launched at York’s Keele campus on March 7, 2016. “Honestly, without that \$500 grant this project would not have happened,” she says.

She used the money to buy 18 gift card donation boxes, which she placed across campus. In just four weeks, the program had collected more than \$2,400.

After the success of the pilot campaign, Lentini decided to adopt her friend Matthew Mikhael’s 100 for the Homies program into Fix the 6ix, since they share a no-cost donation model and both benefit Toronto’s homeless population. Whenever the Toronto Raptors score over 100 points at a winning home game, all tickets for that game are valid as Pizza Pizza vouchers for the next 24 hours – so 100 for the Homies collects post-game ticket donations, packages them up and delivers them to shelters the next day.

Since the launch of the original ReGiftcard Program last spring, Fix the 6ix has held drives across the city, at storefronts and summer festivals, and at other university campuses, collecting more than \$3,500 to date.

Most of the gift card donations are used for big purchases of food, clothing and toiletries for local shelters. “We did all the grocery shopping for a women’s shelter in Scarborough for their Thanksgiving dinner,” says Lentini. “We do Sunday brunches and monthly tickets to the movies for a youth shelter.”

To help achieve the social mission of the program, which, as Lentini puts it, is to “humanize homelessness,” some of the gift cards – ones for values between \$5 and \$10, for fast food – are given directly to individuals in need, and the interactions are shared on social media every Wednesday. The team’s

photographer takes a photo of the gift card recipient, asks for his or her name and a quote, and posts the moment on the organization’s Instagram account (@FixThe6ix). Scroll through the feed and you’ll find artful images of Toronto streets and beautiful portraits of the people who call those streets home – people whose faces we don’t usually take the time to look at, whose stories we don’t often hear. “We’re trying to put names and faces to these people,” says Lentini, “to help end the stigma.”

Working full-time and juggling Fix the 6ix on the side, with plans to start graduate studies in the fall, Lentini wouldn’t be able to continue to execute her vision without the help of her hard-working team: Awo Dirie, a third-year English student at York; Justin Miceli, a fifth-year student in York’s Schulich School of Business; Monica Shafik, a second-year student in York’s Law & Society program; Adrian Autencio, the photographer, who is a business student at York; and Mikhael, who is helping the team from afar while teaching English in Madrid.

Fix the 6ix recently took part in Launch YU, York’s entrepreneurship program, and was awarded funding to help pay for a lawyer to get the organization into a trusteeship with West Neighbourhood House and become a volunteer-run committee within the charity. This change will allow the team members the freedom to focus on finishing school without having to abandon their passion project entirely. The hope is that down the road, Fix the 6ix can incorporate as an independent non-profit and eventually grow into a charity of its own.

Spirited Software

YORK UNIVERSITY IS OFTEN PRAISED for its multicultural community and interdisciplinary approach to academics. It was those two critical factors that drew Alejandro Mayoral Baños (MA ’16) here from his home country of Mexico. With a seemingly unconventional background in both computer science and aboriginal issues, he wanted to bring his two specialties together in his postgraduate studies, but faced skepticism from his peers back home.

After doing a small research project in 2011 comparing the Mi’kmaq in Antigonish, N.S., to the Totonacs in Mexico, he realized how many similarities there are between the countries’ indigenous cultures: “They are facing the same challenges: poverty, isolation and depression.”

He knew Toronto was a hub for indigenous people and as an international student, he found York’s diversity appealing. He decided to embark on his master’s in interdisciplinary studies at York, and ended up staying for his PhD.

According to Mayoral Baños, there are approximately 250 aboriginal students enrolled at York every year, yet York’s Centre for Aboriginal Student Services only sees around 30 to 35 students on a regular basis. He believes many don’t want to identify themselves as aboriginal because they are afraid of the discrimination they might face if they do. Also, many of these students have to work while they are studying, so their schedules may not allow time for connecting with their cultural community on campus. Whatever the case, he is concerned about the higher rate of depression and suicide among aboriginal youth due to discrimination, harassment, post-trauma from the residential school system and the like. He stresses that it’s not just a problem in isolated northern communities – it’s a problem in cities, too.

As part of his master’s studies, Mayoral Baños wanted to help indigenous youth, and he figured the best way to reach them would be through the one thing they all use: mobile phones. There were already a lot of indigenous apps on the market, but none of them offered a truly safe space. So he set out to create one – the Indigenous Friends App, which is now available and free to download via the Apple Store and Google Play. The process began by consulting with indigenous staff, faculty and students at York, as well as alumni and aboriginal elders – 20 people in total – to determine the needs of the University’s aboriginal population. His intention was to use what he calls an “indigenous software methodology”: making every decision with indigenous values in mind and working with the community every step of the way. “When we started developing the app, we had a ceremony for it,” says Mayoral Baños, “so the app has a spirit within the community ... so the community believes in and owns this app.”

In addition to the app’s chat feature, which provides a directory of indigenous people at York that users can connect with, the app also provides access to traditional indigenous

counselling, emergency services, forums for group discussion, answers to frequently asked questions, event listings, campus information and links to aboriginal resources in the area – all tailored to York's indigenous people and their particular needs.

Emergency buttons provide instant access to support for people in crisis. "We were talking with a lot of people who have experienced crises, and they said when you are having a crisis you cannot think," says Mayoral Baños. "You cannot remember numbers, you cannot even remember names."

The people he spoke to said if they were able to access emergency lines, they found there was a noticeable lack of experience with aboriginal youth, so they would hang up. This led to Mayoral Baños' decision to include a network of indigenous elders within the app who can be contacted in emergency situations at the touch of a button. If one elder is not available, there will be a second option, a third option and a fourth option. "The elders know if they receive a call, even if they do not know the number, they have to answer because it is a commitment."

The last emergency service is a button that says, "I need help now," for urgent crises. If you click it, your GPS coordinates will be sent to the elder you selected when you set up your profile within the app. When the elder receives the message, he or she knows to call 911 and say there is someone in that area in need of immediate assistance.

Instead of having developers, administrators and users like a normal app, Mayoral Baños explains how the Indigenous Friends App uses seven different roles, each one with unique responsibilities: "Wolves are the staff members, and they are the ones in charge of making sure all the spaces are safe. They can remove people from the app who are harassing others. Bears are alumni or students in their fourth or final years. Turtles are first-, second- and third-year students. Beavers are the developers. Owls are the faculty members, who you can talk to if you have an academic question. Eagles are the elders. And Martens are the non-indigenous people who are allies – they can only join if they are invited by an approved user."

To ensure safety within the app, no one can register without first obtaining a free access code from the aboriginal office at their university. This extra layer of security, encouraged by the indigenous community, helps users feel more com-

fortable in this digital space. And despite pressure to include advertisements in the app, Mayoral Baños is determined to maintain his non-profit model: "The moment this [project] starts being for profit it will have a very negative impact on the community."

Although he has moved onto his PhD in communication and culture, studying how mobile technologies can decrease the suicide rates in aboriginal youth, Mayoral Baños has no plans to halt the development of the app he created as part of his master's program – quite the contrary, in fact. He has received a lot of interest in his app from other academic institutions, including OCAD, Seneca, the University of Manitoba and Lakehead University. Even Indigenous and Northern Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett has met with him about the app and says she sees its potential for Canada's remote North – once you download the app, you don't need to be connected to the Internet to use the crisis buttons.


Besides bringing the Indigenous Friends App to other universities and colleges throughout Canada, Mayoral Baños also hopes to create a separate app for indigenous youth in Mexico, and one specifically for aboriginal women: "We really believe we need another space especially for women, because the threats and the problems they are facing are different."

Safe Haven

JANSON CHAN (BSCN '15) ALWAYS KNEW his brother Joshua was different. He had trouble making friends and expressing his feelings, and he was bullied because of it. Joshua has autism.

He had a lot of treatment growing up and his family was there to ensure he was always safe and had friends around him. "We had reason to believe that through therapy and support, Joshua could be a productive member of society – contribute and thrive and live up to his full potential," says Chan.

But when the funding was cut for Joshua's after-school program – where he had spent two evenings per week during his high school years, found acceptance and met his best



When we started developing the app, we had a ceremony for it, so the app has a spirit within the community ... so the community believes in and owns this app



Some of the parents say this is the highlight of their child's week, or they woke up specifically talking about coming to ATP

DIFFERENT FROM YOU:

Janson Chan created a social program for autistic teens

friend – it made Chan realize how critical these types of services are for autistic teens. As Chan sees it, children with autism are well supported until the age of 12, and then the supports drop, right when these individuals are most vulnerable to mental health issues, isolation and depression. And that's when, he says, the for-profit agencies often step in and take advantage.

During his undergraduate degree at Western University in London, Ont., Chan decided to take matters into his own hands. He started an autism awareness club with a teen night, where parents and their kids with autism could get together to socialize. When Chan started his nursing program at York in 2013, he knew he wanted to continue his efforts. He applied for funding through the Faculty of Health's Agents of Change program – the same one that helped launch Fix the 6ix – to establish the Autism Teenage Partnership (ATP) with fellow nursing student Jillian Ferreira (BScN '15), who has a sister with autism, and Brendon Wildfong, who Chan knew from his undergraduate studies at Western.

He wanted to create a social program that could be run on a modest budget – one where teenagers could come in, be themselves and build a support network of friends their own age. "We really thought this could be a proactive way to support teens with autism who are falling between the cracks of the government agencies and the for-profit organizations," says Chan.

The funding was approved and he launched the program shortly thereafter. Initially intended to be a brief two-month stint, just once a week, Chan quickly realized the impact the program was having on the participants and their parents, so he decided to keep it going. Within the first year of launching, ATP received a \$25,000 grant from the Laidlaw Foundation through its Youth-Led Community Change Program. Since then, the team has also taken part in the York Entrepreneurship Development Institute, which provided essential knowledge, skills and mentorship.

ATP is completely youth led and directed, and everyone involved is under the age of 25. It is also 100 per cent volunteer-based, with about 25 students and young professionals helping out on a drop-in basis. "Everybody has an emotional connection with autism, whether it's a family member or a close friend," says Chan. "It's truly a multidisciplinary team that has a common goal and understands the difficulties families go through, and that's what drives our initiative."

The program runs on weekday evenings for an hour and a

half. It is free of charge and open to everyone, promoted mostly through word of mouth, with some help from partners like Autism Ontario. At a typical session, attendees will have discussions, play board games, go to the park, go for walks or go on special outings – this past summer they went to the aquarium, and it was free for the participants. "The challenge we face working with youth with autism is that the autism demands some kind of structure, but at the same time they don't like structure," explains Chan. "We let the people who come to the program shape the structure, so if they prefer having more activities then we tailor it to that.... We work really hard to make sure everyone is getting something from the program."

Chan knows the programs offered by the government and other organizations are usually on a shorter-term basis, and there's often a massive waitlist. He wants ATP to be something teens can depend on, that's there during all those in-between times. "There are people who have been with us since the beginning," he says. "They love it. Some of the parents say this is the highlight of their child's week, or they woke up specifically talking about coming to ATP today, which is really heartwarming and validates why we do it."

The program currently serves more than 85 teens across Ontario and their families. Since its inception in July 2014, Chan and his team have launched ATP in two other locations: they worked with parents in Kitchener-Waterloo to open a location there, which is now independently run; and they opened one in Richmond Hill and one in Scarborough. They're currently working on their next location in downtown Toronto.

Even though Chan now works full-time as a public health nurse with York Region Public Health and his brother Joshua is no longer a teen, but rather a flourishing fourth-year music student at the University of Toronto, Chan's commitment to this program has never faltered. "Young people have a lot they can contribute and they have the ability to make real change," he says. "I think we've proved that with what we're doing right now, and we hope to continue."

In May 2016, Chan was awarded the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers for his indefatigable work with autistic youth. He sees ATP as a system that can be implemented across Canada and the world, and he's determined to make that happen. "What we're working on right now," he says, "is a toolkit we can use to empower other groups interested in supporting their teens." ●



Campaign Update

BY AMY STUPAVSKY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADRIAN AZCURRA



Red & White All Over

Fanfare welcomes York's fundraising campaign to campus

C **ANDY-CANE STRIPED SCARVES** flapped in the wind. Signs emblazoned with “This is Impact” were hung from Steeles Avenue to Keele Street and across York University’s Keele campus. A familiar chant rang out: “Deep in the heart of the York U jungle, you can hear the Lions rumble.”

York’s indomitable spirit ushered in the on-campus launch of Impact: The Campaign for York University, a \$500-million fundraising and alumni engagement initiative – the largest in the University’s history. Coinciding with Red & White Day, a semi-annual celebration of York pride and accomplishments, on Sept. 29, 2016, the festivities focused on the impact York has on its students, alumni, faculty and staff, and the positive impact they in turn are making on the world.

Although the Impact Campaign kicked off publicly in April 2016, the on-campus launch provided the opportunity for a more intimate, community-oriented celebration of the University and its vision for the future.

“The success of this campaign depends on an inclusive effort, and the campus campaign launch encourages our on-campus community to celebrate York’s impact in a way that is relevant to them,” says Jeff O’Hagan, York’s vice-president of advancement. “York is experiencing momentum on so many levels, and this campaign represents a tremendous opportunity for the future. York’s achievements have been made possible by the strength of its community – its students, alumni, staff and faculty. Our on-campus community sustains and strengthens the York experience on a daily basis.”

More than 1,000 attendees gathered at the York Lions Stadium for the keystone event of the campaign launch, the spirit rally, which featured performances from WIBI (the Winters College a cappella group) and the Hip Hop Dance Club at York, as well as celebratory speeches from members of the faculty and administration.

“Impact starts with you, the people who make our university what it is,” said President and Vice-Chancellor Mamdouh Shoukri to the crowd. “Thank you for helping to make this Red & White Day our biggest and best celebration yet. We have accomplished a lot in our 57 years, but York University’s true impact has only just begun.”

The rally culminated with a highly anticipated appearance by alumna Lilly Singh (BA ’10). Better known by her alias IISuperwomanII, Singh is a vlogger, actress, comedian and rapper whose YouTube channel boasts more than 10 million

STANDUP STANDOUT: YouTube star (and York grad) Lilly Singh headlined York’s spirit rally in September



PHOTO OPS:

Crowds, dance and Lilly Singh selfies with York students



**THIS
IS
IMPACT**

subscribers and has accumulated more than 1.5 billion views. Among her long list of triumphs, she recently visited with First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House to discuss female empowerment, worked alongside actor Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson and made a cameo in big-screen comedy *Bad Moms*.

“When you graduate from this amazing school, you can do whatever you want to do,” said Singh. “I would never have imagined in my wildest dreams that I would be texting The Rock, going to the White House and doing all these incredible things. I’m going to encourage you in whatever you want to do to not just believe in it, but to work really hard to achieve it – I truly believe that you can do it!”

Her self-made success story exemplifies progressive ways of thinking and new career possibilities open to York graduates, which resonated especially well with the students at the event.

“Knowing that she graduated with the same major from the same school where I’m studying makes me feel that I can do anything,” said Anila Malik, a second-year psychology student in the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies, who has been a fan of Singh since discovering her YouTube channel in 2011. “She inspires me to reach as far as she has, and makes me really proud to be a part of York.” ●





THIS IS IMPACT

Pictures of You

Photo contest highlights
York community's stories of impact

BY AMY STUPAVSKY

A PICTURE MAY BE WORTH a thousand words, but words still played an integral part in the photo contest for the on-campus launch of Impact: The Campaign for York University.

Nearly 20 volunteers took to York's Keele campus on Red & White Day armed with white boards and cameras to capture and collect stories from students, alumni, staff and faculty about how the University has made a difference in their lives and what the Impact Campaign means to them. Participants were photographed holding the messages they had written – they were heartfelt and humorous, inspiring and perceptive, each embodying a part of York's remarkable spirit.

Participants posted and tagged their photos on social media for a chance to win one of three \$100 gift cards. Of the 135 entries received, one winner was selected from each of the student, alumni and staff/faculty categories.

For more photos, visit impact.yorku.ca/yorkuimpact-is

Interested in sharing your story? Visit impact.yorku.ca and click on "Submit Your Story."



Classes



LEVER, BERNICE (BA '71, MA '75) had her 10th poetry book, *Small Acts*, published by Black Moss Press in the fall of 2016. She credits Irving Layton's poetry class of 1971-72 for the inspiration. In 1990, while she was teaching college-level English, she created an English grammar guide called *The Colour of*



Words. It is now available as a free PDF and is sent to many Third World students to help improve their English skills. Lever is now retired on Bowen Island, in her home province of British Columbia.

1969

FORBES, PETER (LLB Osgoode) has retired from his practice in Brantford, Ont., and now resides in Port Dover, Ont. He continues to sit as a deputy small claims court judge.

1985



MULLEN, CAROL (BA Spec. Hons. Winters) is a professor of educational leadership at Virginia Tech.

She received her master's degree in 1990 and her doctorate degree in 1994, both from the Ontario Institute for

Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. During her U.S. Fulbright project work in China in 2015, she discovered examples of creative education and innovative schooling within a changing authoritarian structure. This led to her new book, titled *Creativity and Education in China: Paradox and Possibilities for an Era of Accountability* (Routledge, 2017), which introduces a creativity paradox – a twist on high-stakes testing accountability. She recently presented aspects of this scholarship at universities and conferences in Toronto. In 2016, she received the Jay D. Scribner Mentoring Award from the University Council for Educational Administration and the Charles E. Clear Research Award from the Virginia Educational Research Association.

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1986



ROSS, KARYN (BFA, MFA '90) co-wrote *The Toyota Way to Service Excellence: Lean Transformation in Service*

Organizations, which takes the tried-and-true "Toyota Way" principles of respect for people and continuous improvement and applies them to service organizations through an enhanced 4P model of philosophy, process, people and problem solving. With numerous case studies and stories from a wide range of service sectors, this book will help any service organization fulfill its purpose and differentiate itself by delivering service that delights customers and exceeds their needs.

1987



BHALOO, KARIM (BSc Vanier) graduated with a bachelor of science degree, after which he pursued a

career in laboratory sciences and soon obtained a diploma in cytogenetics. He worked in the prenatal laboratory at Toronto's Surrey Place Centre for a number of years, and then moved on to North York General Hospital's prenatal department. While there, he had the opportunity to take on the role of director, investigations and hearings at

the College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Ontario. In that role, he educated members of the profession about the Regulated Health Professions Act (1991), conducted investigations and prepared reports for the executive committee. From there, he moved on to the cancer laboratory at University Health Network. He has completed courses on alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in health care and health law through Osgoode Hall Law School, as well as the ADR certificate through the University of Windsor. He is a certified inspector/investigator through the Council on Licensure, Enforcement & Regulation, and has taken health management courses at Ryerson University. In 2010, he joined the Ontario Society of Medical Technologists Board representing District 5 (Toronto), and is currently director-at-large and vice-president of that organization. Last year, he passed the Law Society of Upper Canada's paralegal exam and is now busy building a small boutique practice.

1992



BERNEZ, DIANNE (BA Atkinson) was named head of global philanthropy for North Highland

Consulting, an Atlanta-based global consulting firm. Her work will focus on economic empowerment for underserved communities.

2010



Rio 2016 Olympics – her fourth time working the Games.

YEGANEH, MONA (BA Bethune) worked as a broadcasting interpreter and reporter on location at the

2013

RUPRAI, SHARANPAL (PhD) recently accepted the position of assistant professor in the Women's & Gender Studies Department at the University of Winnipeg. She completed her PhD in humanities at York University and is also an acclaimed writer. Her debut poetry collection, *Seva*, was short-listed for the Alberta Literary Awards Stephan G. Stephansson Award for Poetry in 2015.



RIDDLE, CHRISTOPHER (MA '06) recently published his second book with Palgrave Macmillan, titled *Human Rights, Disability, and Capabilities*.



Noteworthy

Food for Thought

How two York PhDs cooked up a one-of-a-kind culinary program for George Brown's kitchens

IT WASN'T JUST THRIVING careers in culinary design that brought York University grads Ryan Whibbs (MA '07 and PhD '15) and Mark Holmes (PhD '14) together. It was also their York education and entrepreneurial desire to share their knowledge with chefs and business people alike. The result? They've created a unique new program for the George Brown College Chef School where they both teach.

The Honours Bachelor of Commerce in Culinary Management program is the first of its kind in Canada. Scheduled to start in September, it will provide students with the culinary skills and business acumen needed to succeed in today's food industry.

While enrolled in an apprenticeship program before he began his university education, Whibbs was hired as a cook at Kylemore Abbey in Galway, Ireland – one of the island's most popular tourist destinations. The following summer, he worked as a cook at the historic Chats-

worth House in Bakewell, England. His international work also included stints in Scotland and France, experiences that eventually led to his studies at York, focusing on the history of food and the shifts in cooking styles throughout time.



Holmes spent several years working in full-service restaurants – including roles as a cook at The Keg, a shift manager at Wendy's and a line staff at Little Caesars – while completing his bachelor of commerce in hospitality and tourism management at Ryerson University. As part of his doctorate in environmental studies at York, his dissertation examined Niagara's wine industry.

Whibbs and Holmes both feel York positioned them well to develop new approaches to the restaurant industry and the culinary arts, and played an important role in preparing them for non-traditional employment paths.

"York's willingness to embrace new, unique and unusual research topics – food and wine included – was key to providing a platform for us to harness our interests into something that was needed within the culinary education setting and the wider food service industry," says Whibbs. ●

STOVESIDE: York grads Ryan Whibbs (above) and Mark Holmes (left) dish it up

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES/KRIS CAETANO



Come From Away

Three York grads return to campus to share their theatrical success story

BY ALEXANDRA LUCCHESI ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE FORD

ARAPT AUDIENCE of bright-eyed students gathered at York University's Sandra Faire & Ivan Fecan Theatre in November to hear first-hand from the creators of the new Broadway-bound musical *Come From Away* – York alumni David Hein (BFA '97) and Irene Sankoff (BA '99), pictured above, along with co-producer Natalie Bartello (BFA '04).

Based on the aftermath of the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001, when the terrorist attacks in the United States forced 38 planes to divert to Gander, N.L., *Come From Away* tells the tales of the small-town residents who "opened their hearts and homes" to the 6,579 stranded travellers. Their stories resonated with much of the world – and especially with Hein and Sankoff, who were living in New York City at the time.

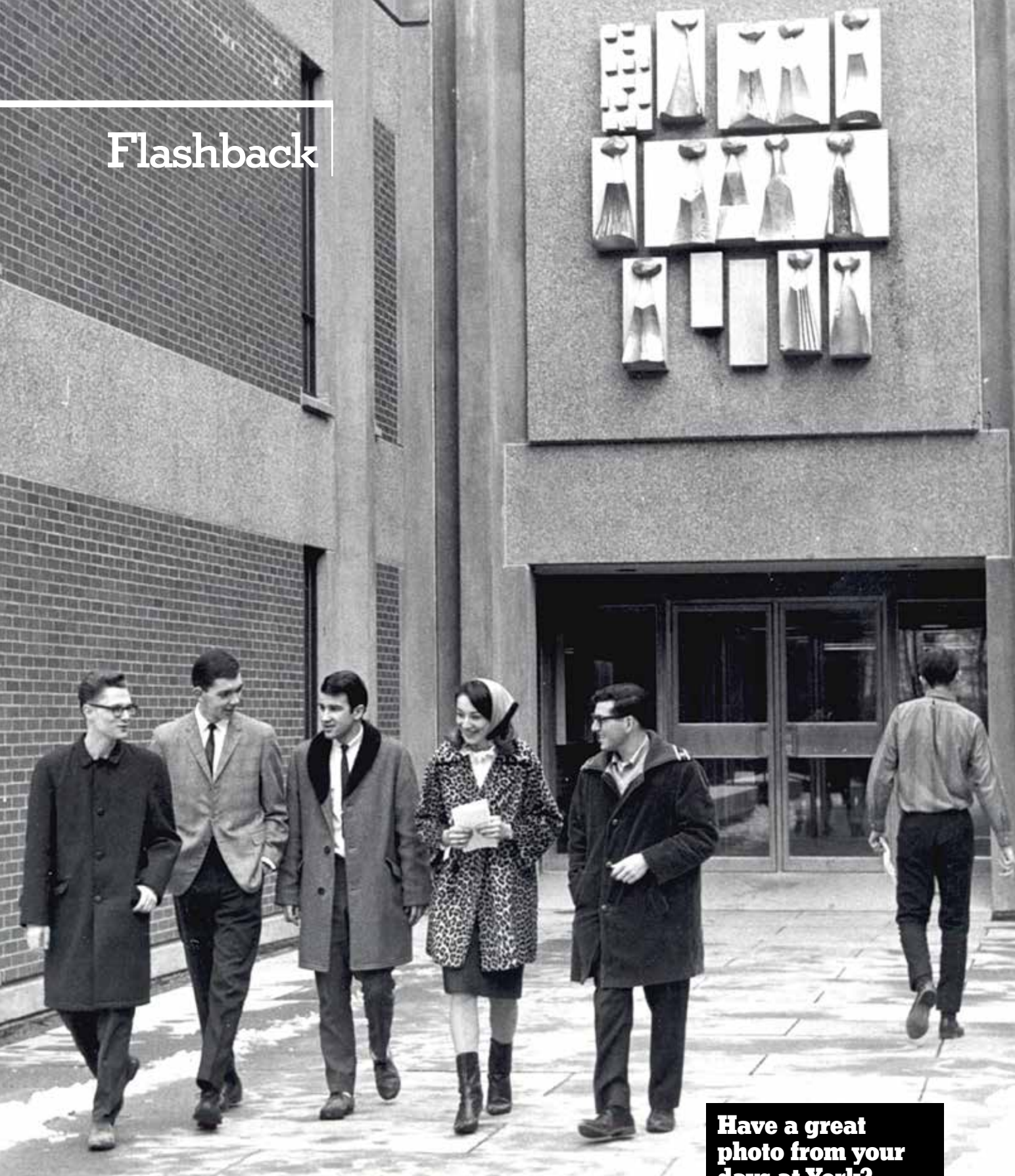
The musical has been a tremendous hit on its tour across North America, playing in San Diego, Seattle, Washington, Gander and Toronto. In March, it will become the fifth Canadian-written musical in history to make it to Broadway.

Speaking at York about the show's success, Hein and Sankoff said they can hardly believe how much the musical has touched audiences. "It's humbling and a real testament to the show's power that the story resonated in Washington, on the opposite side of the continent, which was directly affected by 9/11," said Hein. "We then brought it home to Toronto, where we first started writing the show, and where we get to share it with friends and family."

Part of the Department of Theatre's Prime Time event series, the intimate on-stage interview was moderated by York theatre Professor Peter McKinnon, who taught Hein, Sankoff and Bartello. The discussion provided fascinating insight into their individual university experiences and their journeys following graduation.

"David and I were unrepresented artists," said Sankoff of their early days in theatre. "We had to put on our own show, do our own lights and do the cast's laundry at the end of the night. We had to be our own two-person production team, and without that background in our first year at York, we wouldn't have been able to do that." ●

Flashback



**Have a great
photo from your
days at York?**

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YORK STUDENTS stroll, circa 1965, outside Founders College (one of the first campus buildings to be completed). Tie and jacket optional. ●



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