



# GoodNews Toronto

OUR EVERYDAY HEROES



## TRAIL BLAZER MARCI IEN SEEKS TO INSPIRE YOUTH

By Nicole Georges-Bennett

For Canada AM News-Anchor Marci Ien, work may begin as early as 2:00am, as she scours the internet and monitors news channels to keep abreast with current affairs. The pre-dawn hours are difficult on the mother of one, but her work ethic and

sanguine personality lead her to greet each day as an opportunity to be a positive force in her community and city. "I love my job very much! I wouldn't be good at a job that didn't offer something incredibly different everyday, or didn't afford the chance to

tell people's stories and effect positive change," she confides to Good News Toronto.

Marci's amazing television career began at age ten, as a cherubic cast member on the Circle Square show. She says the experience was invaluable. "I always felt comfortable per-

forming in front of the camera. I met a lot of adults who had worked with the CBC, so I soaked up a lot of what they taught us. I also developed a serious work ethic. I've been groomed for television since age ten."

With such an auspicious start, a career in television would seem to have been the logical path for Marci, but she says it was not that simple. "You see, teaching is in my blood and I was headed to teachers college, although I had been working on Channel 11 off and on. I had to choose between the two professions, and it was one of the hardest decisions I've ever had to make. I love working with kids, so I make up for it by mentoring kids and speaking to kids at schools."

Marci is often flooded with letters from youths wanting her advice on their career choices. She not only responds to these letters, but has also invited many of her young fans to visit her at work. "I've built a relationship with these kids. Recently when I was awarded a Harry Jerome Award, I was able to invite some of these young people to attend, thanks to CTV and the Ministry of Citizenship sponsoring some tables."

The Harry Jerome Award is just one of many accolades Marci has won in her career,

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## YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR MOTIVATING YOUTH AROUND THE WORLD

By Shlomit Kriger

He's used sound effects, humour, and even proved he

could beat the World Record for being the fastest talker. Motiva-

tional speaker David Major knows how to entertain and engage his

audience, but the best part of his job is getting to inspire more than 100,000 youth to be the best they can be.

The room packed with hundreds of high school students grew silent as the baby-faced 5'4" man stepped onto the stage. Sporting a

casual T-shirt and jeans and his trademark "Motivate Yourself" bracelet, he held up a \$20 bill and in a booming voice asked, "Who wants this?"

The audience cheered in unison.

*Continued on 10*



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HEROES

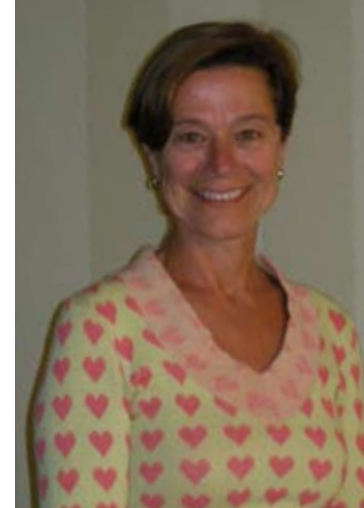
REPORT ACTS  
OF KINDNESS

WRITE YOUR  
STORY

GIVE US YOUR  
COMMENTS

## Dear Good News Reader,

I am so glad you have made the choice to read our sixth issue of Good News Toronto. I hope you had a wonderful



summer enjoying all the festivals and events in Toronto or wherever your travels may have taken you. I had a great time celebrating with all the diverse communities at Harbourfront Centre, in-line skating at the Beaches, strolling through Kensington Market on Pedestrian Sundays, and eating outdoors at many of our delightful restaurants.

September has arrived. For me, September used to be about letting go of the frivolity of summer and facing the heaviness of getting down to "serious" business. I needed

to do something about that self-imposed burden, and therefore decided to alter my outlook. September has now become another opportunity for change, to do something differently, to learn and experience something new.

Good News Toronto: Our Everyday Heroes is all about change. Yes, we do have a new look this month. We are very young, so change will inevitably be ongoing throughout our evolution. But I also hope that reading this newspaper will bring about an opportunity for change in you, my

dear reader. It is my hope that this newspaper brings about a new perception of Toronto for you, such that you can look at your city as one full of inspirational people, such as the everyday heroes gracing our pages this month. It is amazing how bright Toronto can look through different lenses, creating a measurable impact on our day. If this was already your view (yea!), then perhaps Good News Toronto can offer you a springboard from which to pursue that project you always thought about. Or if any of September's heroes

and their journeys connect with your heart, please let me know and I would be glad to help you start your own journey. Let September be about our first step towards change.

"A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step." -Lao-tzu, Chinese philosopher.

Fondly,

Eva Karpati

Publisher/Editor

evakarpati@goodnewstoronto.ca

## Dear Good News Editor

by Nina Bregman

About 13 years ago, I chose to stop watching television news or reading daily newspapers. At the time, I noticed that I felt less stressed, less anxious, less worried, and I supposed it was because I was no longer being exposed to so much "bad news."

Now it's been so long without all that bad news, that when I do happen to see the news on TV, I find it full of stories and particularly images of violence, death, and destruction. Also, the presentation seems to me to be designed to promote fear. So I continue to choose not to expose myself to it.

People sometimes question me about this, saying "How

can you not want to know what's going on in the world?" I tell them, "If it's important enough, I seem to find out about it."

"But that's reality," they'll say. Is the mainstream news really presenting a balanced view of what's going on in the world? I don't think so! What about all the good things that are happening? They don't seem to get much coverage in the TV news or national newspapers.

That's why I was so pleased when I first read a copy of Good News Toronto. Finally, a paper I can feel good about! It was the first time that I had ever seen a newspaper devoted

to the concept that we can all benefit from reading about people who are having a positive effect in the world. Intuitively, we know that's true, of course, because we all feel so much better when we read inspiring stories. That's what underlies the spectacular success of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series of books, which are full of "true stories about ordinary people doing extraordinary things." People want to be inspired and those books have tapped into that need.

We need to read about people who pursue their vision and create a better world, bit by bit, person by person, right here in our own city. Because inspiration feels better than fear, at least in my newspaper – it's like *Chicken Soup for the Toronto Soul*.



Illustration by Mahshid Fathi

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**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. [info@goodnewstoronto.ca](mailto:info@goodnewstoronto.ca) 416-661-2556

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## THE REAL TOOTH FAIRY

By Riva Gold

*Scarborough-based dentist travels across the world to provide free dental work in poor, remote locations*

With arguably the highest suicide rate among professions, you'd think being a dentist in Scarborough for 32 years would be hard enough. Not the case for Dr. Lawrie Giddens, though, who in his spare time also provides free dental care for impoverished people across the world.

For the last twelve years, Lawrie has travelled at his own expense to remote locations in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and many other places to provide gratis dental work for local residents. "It's very rough and tumble," explains Lawrie of his work abroad. "I go with volunteer professional

groups. Once we operated in a one-room cinderblock church, with animals roaming through the dental area."

The service comes as much-needed relief for hundreds of people who live far away from cities or who otherwise cannot access dental care. "People come by horse, or they come walking barefoot for hours just to have the work done," explains Lawrie. "Some of these people have been waiting for months. Most of the time all we can do is extract their teeth, or put in some fillings. We don't have an X-ray machine, so it's very touch-and-go."

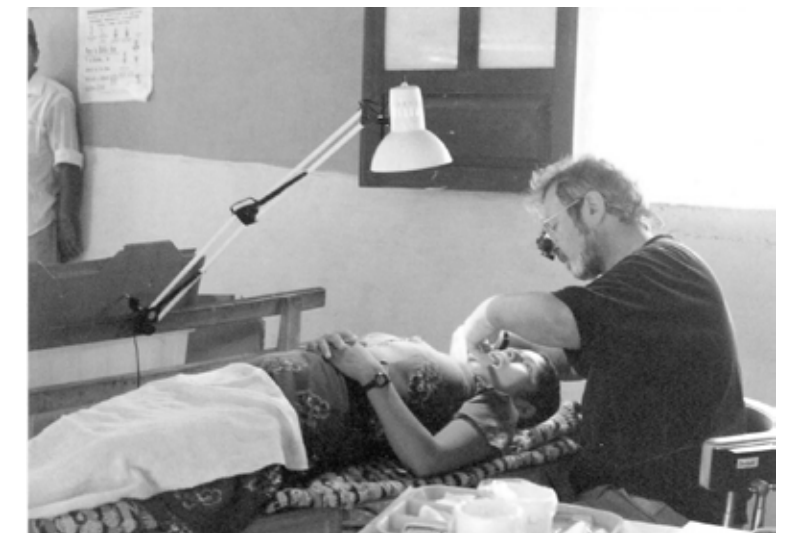
In many cases, the volunteers are unable to see all of the people seeking treatment. "We see about twenty people each per day – it's almost like triage. We treat the most severely wounded. Actually, it's whoever screams the loudest."

Lawrie is a member of several charity dental and medical

associations across the world that take part in this project. "I just google 'charity dentistry groups' and see who needs volunteers," Lawrie explains. "There are many fine and caring dentists and doctors who devote their time and energy to do this work all over – in India, Europe, and especially North America."

*"People come by horse, or they come walking barefoot for hours just to have the work done."*

Much of the dental equipment is donated by the dentists themselves or by charitable businesses. "For our Honduras trip, people donated an army-style mobile dental office: a dental chair you could slip into a bag, take-apart dental units in hard-shelled boxes, and equipment from roll-on suitcases," Lawrie explains. Often the volunteers are asked to bring their own equipment to



Dr. Lawrie Giddens at a clinic in Mexico

leave abroad, including boxes of needles, gauze, anaesthetics, and toothbrushes to share with the local population.

In addition to his dental expertise, Lawrie also serves as a useful language resource. He practises his Spanish weekly in preparation for his trips, and has even taken Spanish courses at Seneca College. "The oral surgeon on one trip spoke no Spanish, so we all pitched in to help. It's knowing basic things, like 'what hurts, for how long' – the stuff we need to do our jobs."

Across the board, there are hundreds of caring professionals and even non-professionals who devote their time and money to these volunteer projects. "One group was just me and another guy who wasn't even a dentist," Lawrie explains. "He had taken some missionary dentistry training in the US, and watched his friend do extractions. He's been helping on these trips for over a decade now."

*Continued on 4*

## HELPING HANDS

By Alexandra Yeboa

Justyna Rechberger is not the type of girl to sit at home all day and let opportunities pass her by, which is why when she heard about the Habitat for Humanity project in Guatemala she became overwhelmed with enthusiasm.

Justyna had been a student at Ryerson University, working on her Master's of Communication and Culture, and had been longing to travel and experience something more real and practical, which she knew couldn't happen in Toronto.

"I was tired of sitting in front of the computer. The [Habitat for Humanity] project caught my attention – I've got the travel bug, and I wanted to get away and do a good cause."

Ryerson University teamed up with Habitat for Humanity under a program called Alternative Spring Break (ASB); it happened to be the first year that Ryerson had undertaken such an initiative. The Alternative Spring Break program was created by Brianne Cole,

an Arts and Contemporary student at Ryerson, with the assistance of Social Work student Robin Wisken.

Justyna traveled with eleven other students from Ryerson University in February and spent ten days in Guatemala, six of which were spent working on three homes for three low-income families.

Through the Global Village program, Habitat for Humanity assists low-income families to build their homes by providing volunteer labour, donated materials, and no-profit, no-interest mortgages tailored to their income level. As mortgages are repaid, the funds are used to build more houses.

The students were given hand-held tools and spent eight hours a day in the blistering heat building homes. The students' hard work paid off in that it had saved the construction workers two whole weeks of hard labour.

But Justyna didn't mind the hard work. "I'm all about getting dirty and working with

my hands, so it was nice to experience the physicality."

The largest portion of the donations that went towards this trip were made by Ryerson president Sheldon Levy.

Each of the students involved in the ASB program were in charge of different tasks. Justyna was in charge of the main fundraising. One fundraising initiative in which Justyna was involved was an art auction which showcased over a hundred pieces from artists in Ottawa, and which would have been enough to send at least one person down to Guatemala. The artists were given a choice as to how much of the earned money they wanted to donate to the Habitat for Humanity project.

Justyna recalls the warm welcome she received from the people of Guatemala, although she relates that the language was a barrier for both the students and the locals. "The people were extremely friendly and the kids were excited that [the students] were there. Smiling and simple gestures is the way we communicated."

*Continued on 4*



Justyna Rechberger building a home

*University student Justyna Rechberger uses her time off to get involved with Habitat for Humanity*

# A RABBI FOR ALL FAITHS

By Jordana Levine

*She strives to make sure that all people, regardless of their faith, feel welcome and important in a community*

realize that her Jewish faith is only one of many important things to pay attention to in the world.

"Synagogue is the home for all people, and I feel that God speaks through us all," says Rabbi Tina, who welcomes anyone interested in her synagogue to come and pray there, whether they are Jewish or not. "People who come to our door have things to say that absolutely belong to the divine," she explains confidently. "So they belong to a house of God."

Rabbi Tina is driven to find beauty in the world. "You look for a place where God manifests Himself in a beautiful way," she says. "Monet is in a world of debris, but that's not what he paints."

*Rabbi Tina is driven to find beauty in the world*

She recalls her own childhood, growing up in Kiev. "I came from nothing. One dress in the winter, one in the summer." Her childhood "looked like absolute poverty from the outside ... but it never felt poor." She acquired her love of books and education from her parents and her grandmother. "You had such vitality of spirit and intellect," she explains with a smile. It is apparent from the wall in her office of floor-to-ceiling books that this part of her life has grown stronger over the years.

There are many parts of Rabbi Tina's past life that she keeps with her and tries to

apply to her current life every day. She recalls the day she came from Kiev to Indiana as a young woman. "Upon arrival to the US [was] the first time I was faced with Jewish volunteers giving their time. There were perfect strangers in the airport saying, 'We are your family.' They were busy ... had lives, struggled. I'm still doing my best to live up to this. I bring it to my work and also [to] my life in general."

Along with taking a profound interest in people from every religious background, Rabbi Tina strives for integration of all sorts. "My goal in life, if I look at it from the future back, of someone delivering a eulogy of me, would [be to] see that it's the same woman at home with my son as with the congregation, that it's integrated." She wants her family and her congregation to see her in the same way: as a caring person with wisdom and kindness, but also someone who isn't perfect, who obsesses over things and yells sometimes. "I have a partner who shares my love for learning ... I have a beautiful child ... a real life, messy life, up to my elbows in chicken, but I seek integration between my home and my Darchei Noam family."

"[It's a] very natural fusion and completion," she says. "It's very whole. I am extremely, profoundly satisfied."

Jordana Levine is a Torontonian studying Journalism at the University of King's College in Halifax.

Rabbi Tina Grimberg of Congregation Darchei Noam sits behind an antique wood desk in her office. She is a small woman with a warm smile and sparkling eyes who immediately suggests moving to the couches and armchairs and intimate arrangement for the interview.

Although Rabbi Tina is the leader of a Jewish community, it is a Reconstructionist community, focused on egalitarianism and inclusion. She has a greater goal that combines both her past experiences as a therapist and her current situation as a rabbi, mother, and wife. She strives to make sure that all people, regardless of their faith, feel welcome and important in a community.

"My deep spiritual journey started not only with the first rabbi I met, but with a Christian woman I met," she says. "I was so moved by her demeanour." The woman made Rabbi Tina



*Sharing the joy of community*

## Tooth Continued from 3

For Lawrie, doing charity dental work is well worth the effort. "It's very sobering, very centering," he notes. "It aligns you with your core values. In Judaism, we have something called 'Tikkun Olam'—it's an obligation to repair the world. Sometimes the charity work I

do is in churches, but volunteer work is volunteer work — this is my contribution to Tikkun Olam."

"When I come back, I realize how lucky we are," Lawrie reflects. "You relish the thought of a warm shower, or even a flushable toilet."

Charity dental and medical groups are currently seeking

doctors, dentists, dental assistants, nurses, translators, and many other skilled workers. To get involved, Lawrie recommends the good old fashioned research method: Google.

Riva Gold is a third year Philosophy Student at McGill and an avid fan of lentils



*Rabbi Tina Grimberg of Congregation Darchei Noam*

## Hands Continued from 3

The people there know how to be content with what they have and with the conditions under which they live. "People are happy and sweet even though they don't have the same luxuries as we have here."

This is an experience Justyna feels she would like to

have again, but she hopes to get more out of it the second time around. "I would like to go back for longer and do a lot more, but I would like to know the language better."

Alexandra Yeboa is a first year journalism student at Ryerson.

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# LEGAL AID IN LIBERIA

By Kate De Freitas

*Jim Dube is not your typical retiree: this successful lawyer from Toronto is making a difference in war-torn Liberia by offering his experience and knowledge to Liberian attorneys and lawmakers to help better the nation and give back rights to the people*

A successful civil litigation lawyer at the Blake Cassels & Graydon LLP Law Firm in Toronto since 1969, Jim Dube wanted to make a difference in the lives of others. In September 2006, he began considering what he would do upon retirement in 2008. He could not have imagined then that just six months later he would be updating law codes and training attorneys in a once war-torn country on the other side of the world.

In 2006, Jim's wife Wanda discovered the organization International Senior Lawyers Project (ISLP), an American Organization that offers the services of experienced lawyers to promote democracy, human rights, economic development, and the rule of law in third world nations. With the

support of his law firm and his family, Jim submitted his resume to volunteer for this cause and was accepted that same year. A short while later, in February of 2007 and again in April and May 2007, Jim found himself in war-torn Liberia offering his experience and knowledge to Liberian lawyers and lawmakers, in an attempt to better the nation's legal system and build the capacity of lawyers in this West African nation.

Liberia is a nation that endured 25 years of civil war, leaving all aspects of their society damaged. Most Liberians were excluded from participation in their government and court systems, and thus needed guidance, structure, and knowledgeable lawyers to teach their current attorneys (many of whom had little if any legal background) basic legal practices. A civil litigation lawyer in Ontario, in Liberia Jim wrote legal briefs in murder and rape cases, trained County Attorneys, drafted legislation to ban firearms and to create a special court to try rape cases, and worked on a Liberian Constitutional case involving the prosecution of the former Head of State. When asked how he feels about leaving his comfort zone and offering advice to Liberians on issues that differ from his practice in Canada, Jim says, "The needs there are so great that any lawyer with a reasonably good mind has much to offer."

Liberian lawyers are anxious to learn the best legal practices, including cross-examination, dealing with objections, and how to run a criminal case. Jim explains, "You could see these attorneys reaching out, wanting to learn, and it was worth it."

He returned to Liberia in April and May 2008; it was during this period that he worked on drafting a law to

create a Rape Court in Liberia, particularly to deal with the problem of child rape. "Children are petrified to face the courts," explains Jim. By coming up with ways to eliminate this fear and create an environment that enables children to speak about these encounters freely, Jim and the colleagues with whom he worked in Monrovia hope to bring justice to the people taking advantage of women and children.

When asked why he does this, Jim answers, "If you are prepared to take the risks to leave your comfort zone, the rewards are awesome." Through his work, Jim has met many fascinating individuals, including Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf — the current and first female president of Liberia, and the Solicitor General Tiawan Gongloe, whom Jim describes as his hero.

*Most Liberians were excluded from participation in their government and in their court systems*

Jim is courageous enough to step out of his comfort zone to help provide justice for people who need it. His dedication to helping those in need outweighs his fear for the unknown. Through the hard work and dedication of people like Jim and many other Non-governmental Organization (NGO) volunteer workers in Liberia, the country is now on the long way back to rebuilding its legal system and giving back rights to its people. What a remarkable feat!

Kate De Freitas is a freelance writer



*Solicitor General of Liberia, Tiawan Gongloe, and Jim Dube*

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*Please share the Good News - Pass it on!*



*President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, and Jim Dube*

# Children's Heroes

Submitted by campers at Banbury Kids Camp



My Hero is Doctor  
by Anne  
My Hero is God, he comfort my heart when my heart is Broken.  
My two other heros are My perents Because when I have problems my Mommy and Daddy help me solve them.  
My sister is my hero to, Because when I'm sad my sister Brings me my favourite toys.

Anyo  
My hero is my sister, because when I am sad she helps me feel better, and I love her.



My hero is the fire  
My hero is my four year old brother, because he helps me when I feel sad. His name is Sammy. He is also my hugging hero, he always hugs me.  
Pixe Leah



Bryn

My hero is Hellen Keller. She is a hero because she helped people that were deaf and blind. She was deaf and blind. She like the people she just helped. A picture of her when she was young was in a magazine.



MY DENTIST IS MY HERO

## A Lesson in Friendship

By Robin Bond

In kindergarten, we're taught that friendship is easy. We never seem to notice if someone's eyes are a different shape, or if someone's skin is a different colour. Friendship is based on who shares their toys, who takes turns on the big slide.

There's innocence, which, by the time we are old enough to notice it, has disappeared.

As we approach adolescence, friendship becomes about more than who shared their chocolate bar. We flock towards those we can relate to: those who look like us, share the same dreams or goals – or lack thereof. In high school, we probably change friends more than we change our dirty jeans, and, for the most part, our relationships become about self-discovery.

Best friends become rivals through gossip or striking good-looks appearing from beneath acne. Geeky friends

become cool, trading their glasses for contacts. Those to whom we divulge our secrets and rant about our parents become, in a sense, our identity. We begin to dress like them, talk like them, act like them.

Then, something miraculous occurs. Some ultra-cosmic, out-of-this-world transition takes place: Adulthood.

As we sign each other's year books, we promise to keep in contact, but we have already secretly decided with whom: one is a good listener, one has a car, one is going to college with you ... Some will become pictures in our photo albums or memories in the back of our minds. Some we may never see again.

Suddenly life has become about more than late-night make-out sessions in the park, or even self-discovery. It has become a journey of self. Nothing is as important as landing the dream job, finding the dream mate, or having the dream family. Friendship becomes a rarity – an elite few

that we must find the time to squeeze into our busy days.

Friendships have become more like books in our home libraries – within reach, but



often left on the shelf, rarely ever used.

A friendship that has withstood the trials of time and made it through to this important stage should be treated with respect. Though to you life may now be simply a journey of self, these special people have journeyed alongside you, and you beside them.

As we go about our daily hustle and bustle, many of us never thank those who surround us. Selfishly, we view them as lucky to be in our cha-

thank them – for not only hiking alongside you through your journey, but for allowing you to be a part of theirs. Make the time to set up a date, and follow through in seeing them. Not only have they helped create who you are, but they also secretly decided that you made the cut – through innocence, self-discovery, and, most importantly, that most selfish phase of adulthood.

They shared with you, listened to you, let you dress like them. They fought with you, danced with you, and cried with you. They decided you were, and are, well worth it. Let them know they are too, for you never know when it will be too late to do so – you never know when that friend may simply not be anymore.

"We are all travellers in the wilderness of this world, and the best we can find in our travels is an honest friend."

–Robert Lewis Stevenson  
Robin Bond is a mother, freelance writer, and aspiring author

## A ZEST FOR LIFE

by Pam Churchill



Ruth Mechanicus off to help African Grandmothers

Ruth Mechanicus continues to campaign for support for grandmothers in Africa with vigour and determination

Take off the helmet and goggles and you will find Ruth Mechanicus, the face of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. On the other hand, with the helmet and goggles on, what you see is the spirit that drives Canadian grandmothers to support their African sisters. Ruth played a key role in the founding of the Togo Grannies of Bloor Street United Church, one of the groups that support the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign of the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

She was nearing eighty when, in response to an article in the paper about the plight of heroic African grandmothers, she wrote to about twenty grandmothers in her congre-

gation to ask if they would join her in forming a group to help these grandmothers. In May 2006, she organized an information meeting about the Stephen Lewis Foundation, the Grandmothers Campaign, and the underlying philosophy of the organization. Ilana Landsberg Lewis, the Foundation's Executive Director, invited other women from across the GTA to attend. Many came and Ilana told them that she was planning to bring grandmothers from Africa to meet with Canadian grandmothers in August.

Ruth was fortunate to be among those who participated in what became the birth of the great grandmother's revolution. As a result, today there are over 200 groups across Canada spreading the word about the AIDS pandemic and raising money to fund projects that support the grandmothers and the children under their care.

Ruth's group was quick off the mark as a fundraiser. Beginning in December of 2006, it held its first concert

in Bloor Street United Church and raised about \$20,000 for the Foundation. Last year, the success was repeated and the third Benefit concert is planned for this November. The concerts have become a signature event – a remarkable achievement for a group of about twenty older women.

From the beginning, I found Ruth intriguing. I first met her in the Walk for June Callwood, and we bumped into each other later at a Hot Docs film where she told me that she had exchanged her moped for a scooter. She was there when I attended regional meeting of grandmothers, and later when we marched on Parliament Hill for Grandparents Day.

Ruth was born and raised in Holland. Living there through World War II, as she says, "is not a happy part of my life story." She chose law as her career, and would have stayed on that track if she had not followed her physicist husband first to the USA and then to Canada. Later, when they sep-

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## GIVING IS IN HIS BLOOD

By Lynn Koza

*"Anyone can do it ... and everyone should!"*

For police officer Garry Styles, the desire to help others doesn't just stop at the end of his work day. Garry donates blood platelets, and his commitment to this program has allowed others to lead normal, healthy lives.

"I'd been a blood donor for many years," says Garry, a staff sergeant with York Regional Police. "One day, I heard someone from Canadian Blood Services talk about the need for platelets as well as whole blood. At that time, the son of a co-worker was dealing with cancer, and I understood firsthand how platelets could be used to help someone. I've been donating platelets for about eight years now, and I even convinced my co-worker to start donating as well."

Approximately every minute of every day, someone in

Canada needs blood. Patients undergoing surgery require blood. Passengers in car crashes need life-saving transfusions. People with severe anaemia depend on red blood cells.

There's also an equivalent need for platelets, one of the four components that comprise whole blood. People receiving cancer treatment or who have bleeding disorders require large amounts of platelets as part of their medical care. Unfortunately, platelets are fragile and have a shelf life of only five days, and it may take up to six donors to get a sufficient amount for one platelet transfusion. Obviously, the need for donors is significant.

Platelets are collected in a similar method to whole blood donation, using a needle inserted in the donor's arm. However, with a method called apheresis, the blood is separated into its smaller components of red blood cells,



Platelets donor Garry Styles at his apheresis appointment.

white blood cells, plasma, and platelets. The platelets are retained in a collection bag, and the remaining blood components are returned to the donor through the same arm.

Some donors are on a regular two-week appointment schedule, while others are contacted as the need arises. Sometimes donors are matched to a specific recipient in need, and that connection becomes all the more critical. Garry manages to fulfill his donation requirements

roughly every two weeks, as his policing duties allow.

"My employer has been incredibly understanding," Garry says. "There are times when CBS phones with an urgent need, and I just drop what I'm doing and go. Platelets donation is so critically important, and yet so few people I've met know about this program." By both his words and his actions, Garry is certainly spreading the word about apheresis and its role in saving lives.

Lynn Koza is a freelance writer and a volunteer with Canadian Blood Services

"When my kids were growing up, I did all the regular parent volunteer duties like hockey and baseball. While I don't do those things anymore, I can still volunteer and help children – and adults – this way. It's an easy thing."

In his role as staff sergeant, Garry uses every opportunity to share his platelets story with his team and to encourage them toward regular donation activity as well. He says that after 31 years with the police force, he might start to consider planning for retirement in the next few years. When he eventually nears the upper age limit for blood donors, Garry says that he might explore other volunteer opportunities with Canadian Blood Services.

The motto of the York Regional Police is "Deeds speak." Platelets donor Garry Styles is a powerful example of those words.

## Personal Story

By Jennifer Hicks



Illustration by Mahshid Fathi

What sent me over the edge? Unresolved feelings about my dad's suicide when I was two? A recent car accident? A terminal illness in the family? Emotional conflict about my upcoming wedding?

To cope with building anxiety, I exercised. A lot. I began restricting what I ate, and was labelled "depressed." After serious weight loss, I was diagnosed with anorexia. I began shoplifting, hoarding food, dressing eccentrically, stockpiling clothing, and propositioning sex in public. Despite injuries, I exercised incessantly, even in the middle of the night, needing little sleep. Ironically, the control that I sought was exactly what I lacked.

Throughout this time, I was able to work, maintaining my reputation, pretending nothing was wrong.

It took about a year before I woke up to the fact I was struggling. I began attending Sheena's Place, worked with a nutritionist, psychotherapist, numerous doctors, and had too many psychiatric evaluations to count.

I felt guilty, and sensed that I was being scolded for not "smartening up." The antidepressants I reluctantly took caused bouts of frightening rage, causing me to burn my own body.

I began missing work, unable to control outbursts, shower, or even change my clothes. I slept on the floor or outdoors, away from my husband, who remained deeply committed, determined to help me find peace.

Before long, I was asked to take a leave of absence from work. I felt guilt, worthlessness, and humiliation. I was fully out of control.

This is when I began to realize that I knew what was best for me. Despite what others thought, I decided that I could choose how to get better. Choosing not to enter a hospital, I created my own program where I was the leader of a team including my therapist, my family doctor, my naturopath, a music teacher, philosophy teacher, meditation leader, and peers with mood and eating disorders.

Then I decided to travel to India. It seemed insane, yet my husband agreed to come with me, trusting that this trip would somehow be an important part of my rehabilitation.

Once in India, although still depressed and anorexic, I found myself at peace, tolerating the chaos of my inner and outer worlds. I experienced the healing power of self-love and unconditional acceptance. I learned that we have control once we have faith in our own potential.

Back in Canada, I became a Nia fitness instructor. Here I was, still battling an eating disorder and exercise addiction,

now a fitness instructor. But because of Nia - a fitness practice that blends dance, healing arts, and martial arts. I began to feel and appreciate my body, Nia's philosophy, "Through movement we find health" helped my body to become more alive and allowed me to take care of myself by eating, reducing exercise, and gaining weight.

Three years after my struggles began, I was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder. A huge sigh of relief, along with the dissolution of blame and guilt, came with that diagnosis.

Continued on 10

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## LICENCED TO HELP

By Andy Réti

*Even with a busy acting career, Harvey Atkin finds the time to give back to his community in many ways*

Harvey Atkin is an international star of stage and television and is the voice of many characters in movies and advertisements. He is a very funny man. According to him, he did his first three minutes of comedy for his mother when he was delivered. He was born in Toronto and graduated from Northview Collegiate, where he was enrolled in the drama club. He is a versatile actor in both comedy and drama. His repertoire includes roles in movies such as Meatballs, and he has appeared in television shows like Cagney and

Lacey and Law and Order, among others. He is the voice of Super Mario and countless other characters.

Currently, he is involved in an attempt to create a television show in which he will play the role of Toronto detective Gabe Garshowitz, a character based on books by local author Alvin Abram. Like James Bond, local hero Harvey has many licenses, but his are all geared to help. He is a certified auctioneer, pilot, powerboat operator, motorcycle rider, and licensee of intellectual properties. He considers himself an ordinary guy but admits to being recognized in public, which can pose restrictions on his privacy. He is very philosophical about it, saying, "The public is paying me and it's just part of the business."

He is married to a child Holocaust survivor, Celia, and

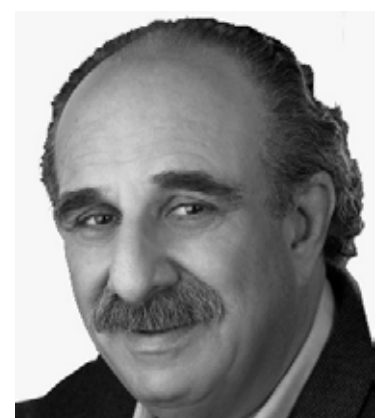
is keenly aware of the blessings that Canada offers not only to him but to everyone who lives in this wonderful country. Revealing his humanistic and benevolent nature, his reason for giving and helping, he states, "I received a lot from Canada, which is good to me, and you can't just take things without putting some back in."

*I received a lot from Canada, which is good to me, and you can't just take things without putting some back in*

The list of his charitable activities is almost endless. When asked how he finds time, his answer is very modest: "I don't keep track of them, I just do it." His charity work

includes the Jewish National Fund, the Unicorn Foundation, the Orillia Foundation, helping Toshiba in aid of Bloorview Kids Rehab and Sick Kids Hospitals, Magen David Adom in Israel, and being the master of ceremonies and host for celebrity auctions. When asked which was his favourite, his modesty was once again revealed. He feels that all help is important, but he does have one project that is memorable because his wife was with him. It was the "Paper Clip Ride" in 2006 to Whittwell, Tennessee, a fundraiser given by his motorcycle club the YOWs (Yidden on Wheels) and other clubs to help the school in Whittwell to run their Holocaust Education project. He rode the 1,400 kilometres on his motorcycle, while his wife and other participants were on a chartered bus behind the bikers.

Although his work requires him to travel a lot and he winters in Florida, Toronto is



Local hero Harvey Atkin has many licenses

where his heart is. He and his wife have a son and a daughter and five grandchildren between 12 and 17 years of age. He is on the go all the time – even during the interview the phone did not stop ringing. Due to having grandchildren, he feels that his charity work is like insurance for future generations. We agree.

Andy Réti is a retired pensioner involved in writing, lecturing about the Holocaust, and motorcycling



Illustration by Jerry Silverberg

## DAWN

*When I rise early  
the day unfolds as it should,  
the sun gently golden-  
ing the trees,  
the air thick with lilacs  
and bird song.*

*All is possible.  
Anything could happen.  
Breathe in the wet grass  
and the dew on the green leaves!*

*I stand on the cusp of day  
taking in the world  
like a five-year old  
with a net  
by a creek full  
of frogs.*

© Marsha Barber, 2008

## SMALL THINGS WE CAN DO TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Next time you get a two-for-one deal give the second item to a food bank or shelter

If you are suddenly out of one item for your recipe, ask your neighbour, make the connection and save on gas, help the environment

Get back to the old adage "if you cannot say anything nice do not say anything at all"

Mentor a student

Research one of the charities or causes in Good News Toronto that interests you and get involved

## Toronto Tidbits:

- Today over 2.2 million trips are made on the TTC daily
- About 25% of films produced in Hollywood are actually filmed in Toronto, making it North America's 3rd largest TV and movie production venue
- There are over 50 ballet and dance companies, 6 opera companies and 2 symphony orchestras
- 49% of Toronto's population was born outside of Canada

*Please share the Good News - Pass it on!*

**Marci** *Continued from 1*

that has taken her through several media houses and programs: CHCH-TV, CTV Newsnet, Canada Tonight, and CTV, where she has worked for the last eleven years. She won the Canadian Radio and Television News Directors' Award in 1995 for her news serial *JOURNEY TO FREEDOM, A LOOK AT THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD*. However, the Harry Jerome Award for Media, has special meaning for her. "I'm always conscious of being a woman of colour in an anchor position; it drives me, I want

to make sure young people know that it is possible." Marci reveals that she has encountered incidents of racism but is philosophical about those moments. "I am reminded that Jackie Robinson broke barriers. This is a huge responsibility and I entirely embrace it. The Harry Jerome award means the most because it's appreciation from my own community, saying you represent the best of us, that's astounding."

Marci's family supports her fully. "My husband named our daughter Blaize because he believes she will be a trail blazer like I am," Marci's quick

smile flashes. "They are very supportive, although Blaize prefers to watch Backyardigans than mommy on TV," she laughs. She credits her husband Lloyd with helping her to pursue her dreams, while running a busy career of his own. "I threw balance out of the window, sometimes the house isn't as clean as it should be, I just do the best as I can. We've decided not to have a nanny." The couple keep their romance alive by having date nights. "We're quite the team, he's a fabulous dad. I couldn't do what I do without him," Marci acknowledges.

As a mother of a four-year old, Marci is very concerned about the state of young people, and has a heart for children and youth issues. She is involved with several child-based agencies and organizations including The Children's Miracle Network; a North American network of children's hospitals, and World Vision. Marci also sits on the Board of Healthy Generations; the foundation of the Canadian Pediatric Society, and also on the Advisory Board for the Centennial College Journalism Program. "I've tried to focus on areas I feel I can make a dif-

ference in. If I'm going to have a message and a goal and effect change, I want to do it really well."

Her message to her beloved young people is simple, "I know it sounds corny, but dare to dream big, persevere and make it a reality." It is Marci's passionate belief in this maxim that helps her face her early mornings, full of anticipation and optimism.

♣ Nicole Georges-Bennett is mother to Justin and Dominique, and is a freelance writer

**Young** *Continued from 1*

He then crumpled the bill, threw it on the floor, and began stomping on it. "I hate you! You're a failure! You'll never amount to anything!" Regaining his composure, he held up the bill again and asked who still wanted it. The students cheered even more loudly.

"Lesson number one," said 27-year-old David Major. "No matter what I did to this bill, you still wanted it, because it still has the exact same value. As you go through your lives, people are going to stomp on you, tell you that you're not good enough, that you can't make it. But that doesn't mean you can't. [...] You have to always remember to listen to the big voice up here [points

to his head] that tells you that you can."

Major, a Toronto resident, is currently in his ninth year as a motivational speaker. He has performed across Canada, the United States, and China at high school assemblies, international leadership conferences, fraternities and sororities, award banquets, and more, entertaining and motivating more than 100,000 youth.

"I think it's hard to find jobs like this where at the end of the day you feel like you have moved the world a step forward," said Major in a recent interview. "You're not just spinning your wheels doing a mundane job that needs to get done. You're actually making a positive impact on people. I always say in my speech, 'Be

the change you want to see in the world,' and I think that's what I'm accomplishing."

Major isn't your average motivational speaker. He uses sound effects, monologues, rants, and comedy in his speeches, always ensuring that he engages with his audience. In previous speeches he performed the tune to "Baa Baa Black Sheep" with his armpits.

Immersed in his job, his schedule changes from week to week. Some months he's on the road a lot, hitting various speaking engagements, while other months he spends most of his days in front of his computer at home, corresponding with students, educators, and other business contacts.

Major also produces Student Leadership Activities Magazine (SLAM!), an online publication written by and for students. He aims to use the magazine as a medium to help create an online community through which students can share leadership ideas and learn from each other. He also plans to write a book on leadership.

Having spoken with thousands of youths over the years, Major has found there is a major issue common among almost all teens.

"There is this overlying stress that they feel, saying 'my parents want me to do this,' or 'my girlfriend wants me to do that,' or 'my teacher said to do this,'" he said, "and I think most teens – most peo-

ple, to be fair – don't see the overlying picture. They don't realize that one night's worth of homework doesn't make the end of their world. Even if you do fail one time, life is not over."

For others thinking of pursuing a career as motivational speakers, Major said it's important they enjoy the job, are willing to put in the hours needed to succeed, like to travel, and are okay with facing rejection. "You get rejected a lot more times in this job than you get accepted. You have to get a little bit of thick skin with it."

♣ Shlomit Kriger is a Toronto-based freelance journalist and creative writer.

**READER REQUEST:**

*George Shepherd, member of favorville.com and volunteer site administrator is asking Good News Toronto readers to participate in a true gesture of good will and pay-it-forward. This website founded by two Torontonians is about asking for a favour, doing a favour, and thus... People Helping People*

those that emphasized equality for women and a better world for all."

Ruth has a zest for life. Intergenerational projects hold a special attraction, and her children and grandchildren are central to her. Travel, gardening, and music also fill her with joy. The scooter remains her favourite mode of transportation. She sees the Grandmothers Campaign not only as a way to help grand-

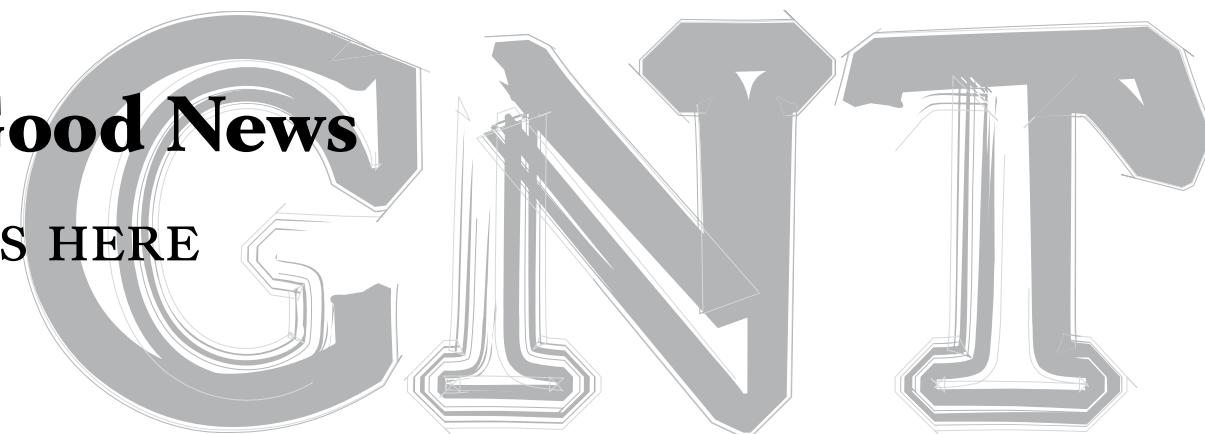
mothers and children, but also as a way to meet interesting women and be involved in the wider aspects of society. As she says, she "feels blessed to be involved."

♣ Pam Churchill is past Chair of Older Women's Network and currently GTA Chair of Women 4 African Grandmothers.

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**Speaking Out About AIDS**

Interview by Alexandra Yeboa

*Shamin Mohamed is the co-founder of the Children's AIDS Health Program and has been an inspirational speaker to thousands of youth across Canada promoting the message that youth can truly make a difference. The Children's AIDS Health Program (LetsStopAIDS) is a registered Canadian Charity that helps provide treatment for children and youth infected or affected by HIV and AIDS. It is a youth-driven organization that focuses on peer education to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS.*

**GNT:** When did you start the Children's AIDS Health Program?

**SM:** Children's AIDS Health Program (LetsStopAIDS) was founded in 2004, by myself and a few other students.

**GNT:** What motivated you to start the Children's AIDS Health Program?

**SM:** HIV is a topic that is not highly discussed in my community. There were events relating to other causes, but none specifically relating to HIV. I wanted to do something about this. I gathered support from a great amount of friends and community supporters, and the motto "all it takes is one action to make one dream a reality" came about, which motivated our team and myself to know that

we can definitely take on any challenge and show that youth can help other youth and play a key role in international and national development.

**GNT:** What process did you have to go through to get the program up on its feet? What were the challenges you encountered?

**SM:** It takes a great deal of effort to get an organization like Children's AIDS Health Program up on its feet. It takes a lot of courage, determination, and, believe it or not, a stubborn attitude. You have to see your vision and not give up on what you want to see it be. I want to see LetsStopAIDS become the go-to charity that could allow youth easier access to information relating to HIV and greater opportunities to be involved in their communities. The charity was started when I was 15. They finally accepted [us] once we gained the support of numerous individuals who were of age. LetsStopAIDS constantly faces challenges, ranging from volunteer management, country/mission planning, public relation issues, all the way to donor support – it's something that motivates me to improve our charity to ensure that we can battle any barriers that stand in our way.

**GNT:** What assistance did you seek to get the Children's AIDS Health Program started?

**SM:** Support. It is way more valuable than any significant number. We received and still do receive support from the DAREarts Foundation, which aided in providing their network, support, and assistance to ensure our events ran smoothly. Their assistance has greatly allowed our charity to grow in a professional and reasonable manner. They have become a mentor to our organization – always there to support our initiatives and projects.

**GNT:** How do you juggle your schoolwork along with your administrative duties at the Children's AIDS Health Program?

**SM:** It's definitely a challenge, but you can ALWAYS make time for things you are passionate about. Being a charity of our size, there is a significant increase in governance and administration – we are still very grassroots, and proud to say that. We are developing and growing to ensure sustainability and stability. Time management plays a key role, along with support from friends and community members.

**GNT:** What are your future goals for the program?

**SM:** I have a lot of faith in LetsStopAIDS. One idea has



Shamin Mohamed

expanded to have members from coast to coast. My future goals for LetsStopAIDS is to develop our core team and ensure greater visibility and awareness across Canada. I believe that LetsStopAIDS can be one of the leading charities relating to issues directly affecting Youth and HIV.

**GNT:** How do you feel about what you've accomplished?

**SM:** I am super psyched at what we have accomplished! We have to date been featured on every national Canadian media outlet, been mentioned by Bill Clinton and Bill Gates and the XVI International AIDS Conference, developed and expanded our core leadership team to ensure sustainable growth, and have connected with youth across Canada!

**Story** *Continued from 8*

I now live with bipolar disorder, and through a combination of medication and Nia, I am no longer under the stranglehold of anorexia or an exercise addiction. Through Nia, I work on self-compassion, body-esteem, and self-healing, and my experience has taught me that although every crisis carries the seed of destruction, there is also the possibility of renewed strength.



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**Next Issue**  
**October 7**





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