

ETOBICOKE

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INSIDE
Falling into
fashion
Page 46

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Parents, grandparents, guardian relatives, youth workers — anyone who wants to make a lasting difference in a hurting youth's life — can gain some mentoring skills at a conference next week.

Sponsored by nine local agencies, the conference is being billed as "practical follow-up" to Boston-based preacher Dr. Eugene River's impassioned challenge to Toronto in January that the city's black community must take responsibility for its children, with fathers — or other black men in the absence of fathers — mentoring young men.

"I think there won't be real change unless it's one-on-one — parent-son, grandparent-to-grandchild," said Nick Hill, director of the conference.

"We're all excited about Dr. River's challenge. The question becomes — how do we do that in everyday life?"

"At Risk: Bringing Hope to Hurting Youth" conference takes place Saturday, Oct. 28 from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Rexdale Alliance Church, 2459 Islington Ave., three blocks north of Hwy. 401. Registration takes place that morning from 8:15 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. Cost is \$10 to pre-register, \$15 at the door.

Pre-register for the day-long conference by visiting www.atrisk.ca or calling 416-747-1207.

Conference speaker is Boston-based Dr. Scott Larson, a highly requested speaker and trainer since 1986 to people worldwide who work with at-risk youth.

Larson is president and founder

Ward marked by voter apathy

>>> From page 1

quickly turned to crime.

"I can buy drugs at 9:30 p.m. right behind this building. What can you do to make the area safer?" asked one resident.

Mulhall said "residents have no hope" which results in crime. She added that the only way to reduce crime is to provide gainful employment. If elected, she pledges to lobby businesses to set up shop in Rexdale. However, Lucas said the war on crime demands a multi-faceted approach that relies on community involvement.

PATROL NEIGHBOURHOODS

Lucas said he supports unarmed community-support officers to patrol neighbourhoods and interact with residents and shopkeepers.

Neighbourhood patrols would build trust and confidence in citizens and will serve as a deterrent to those who choose to commit crimes, said Lucas.

Lucas also endorses closed-circuit surveillance cameras in high-crime areas.

Berger followed up, and said "education is the key component" to fighting violence adding youths must have access to facilities in the area.

Verma said she supports a plan of action that includes better lighting, opening up confined spaces that breed crime, and she too endorses surveillance cameras.

Ahinful, a Jamestown

resident, said members in his community have fought crime by joining forces, a plan he said could be expanded across the city.

"We took back the community with (group) walks. We know who is standing in every corner," he said.

Hall said she was instrumental in getting a new 23 Division police station built, and she said she supports more police presence in the area combined with preventative measures.

CRIME ANSWERS

The candidates' crime answers were brief, as the format only allowed them to speak for 90 seconds, but it was evident that many in attendance were there to hear the candidates' positions on crime.

"I am interested in the issues and what everyone has to say about them," said resident Alex Fortais, who added her No. 1 concern is crime.

According to a study released by Ryerson University, the Jamestown area has one of the lowest voter turnout rates in Toronto, and attributes this to the area's high immigrant population which traditionally does not vote.

However, despite voter apathy the event hosted by the Thistletown Village Association is necessary, said organizer John Anga.

"As a ratepayers' group, what else can you do? It's in our constitution," he said.



Guardian photo/GRAHAM PAINE

DEBATING THE ISSUES: Ward 1 municipal candidate Sonali Verma gives her opening statement as one of her opponents Ted Berger takes notes at an all-candidates meeting Tuesday night.

Crime a concern in Ward 1

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High crime rates and the perception that neglect has created "seedy" areas in the community were among the issues raised Wednesday night at an all-candidates meeting for

Ward 1 in the run-up to the Nov. 13 municipal election.

About 100 people turned out for the meeting, held at the Thistletown Multi-services Centre, which was also attended by incumbent councillor Suzan Hall and challengers Francis Ahinful, Ted Berger, Andre

Lucas, Rosemarie Mulhall, and Sonali Verma. Brian Prevost and Anthony Caputo did not attend.

As the meeting began, Hall soon became the centre of attention as the floor was opened to questions from the audience and the focus

>>> WARD, page 3