

## Oh, Brother!

Comic co-created by local artist Jay Stephens starts in the Mercury today  
life, B3

## Smile, you're happy

Guelph has been rated one of the happiest places to live in Canada  
local, A7

# Guelph Mercury **wednesday**

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## Cash collection 'outright fraud'

### Toronto charity says it didn't receive money collected at Guelph Santa Claus parade

Scott Tracey, Mercury staff

**GUELPH** — The president of a Toronto-based charity says none of the money collected in the charity's name during Sunday's Guelph Santa Claus parade has found its

way to him.

George Marton said he has conducted his own investigation since it was revealed approximately a half-dozen people, wearing Kare for Kids name tags and carrying plastic pails with the charity's logo emblazoned up-

on them, collected cash donations during the parade.

"So far, I have hit a roadblock," Marton said Tuesday afternoon. "Everyone I have talked to have denied being in Guelph on the weekend."

Marton earlier reported Kare for Kids' fundraisers are specifically prohibited from participating in parades, and said he did not recognize the name — Margaret Beattie — on one of the collectors' name tags.

➤ SEE PARADE ON PAGE A5



## U of G studying space bees

Stephen Humphrey, Special to the Mercury

**GUELPH** — Say you had a greenhouse on Mars. Would you also have bumblebees there as well?

Erika Nardone, a graduate student at the University of Guelph, admits she wasn't sure her instructor, Dr. Peter Kevan, was serious when he first posed the question.

"To be honest, I thought he was joking," she says.

Nardone was intrigued when she realized Kevan was not only sincere, but had an experiment in mind to test how one of the world's hardest bees might cut it on other planets.

"She picked up the idea and ran with it," says Kevan.

➤ SEE BEES ON PAGE A5

NICK IWANYSHYN, GUELPH MERCURY

## Downtown optimistic despite challenging year

Rob O'Flanagan, Mercury staff

**GUELPH** — Optimism pervaded the annual general meeting of the Downtown Guelph Business Association, despite a challenging year for downtown commerce.

More than 100 people attended a meeting that featured the new Business Recognition Awards and saw the election of a new board of directors.

Downtown Guelph executive director Audrey Jamal said the organization, and the more than 450 downtown businesses it represents and serves, recognized that 2010 was going to be unlike any other year.

"The business environment is evolving," said Jamal. "We've gone through a recession, and I think

### Business Recognition Awards winners:

**Emerging Entrepreneur Award:**

B-Chocolate

**Green Business Award:**

Planet Bean

**Stewardship Award:** 133

Wyndham Street North, Tom Dowd,

Stoneleigh Properties Ltd.

**Anchor Award:** The Bookshelf.

our federal and provincial governments have worked us through the recession by nature of bringing large construction projects to the city."

➤ SEE DOWNTOWN ON PAGE A5

## U of G chooses alumnus to supply turf

Greg Layson, Mercury staff

**GUELPH** — A former University of Guelph hockey coach won the bid to supply the university with its recently installed synthetic multi-purpose field, used for rugby and field hockey. And he now has the inside track on supplying the school's next set of fields.

Todd Cox, who was OUA coach of the year in 1998, owns Centaur Products Inc., the country's only supplier of high-end, brand-name Polytan turf.

Cox beat two other contractors and won the bid for the \$1.8-million field installed in August.

Associate vice-president of student affairs Brenda Whiteside said a six-person committee, which knew of Cox's connection to the university, reviewed three manufacturers of synthetic turf. The committee ranked each



GUELPH MERCURY FILE

Players hoping to make Guelph Gryphons' men's soccer team practise on the new artificial turf at the university's Varsity Field.

based on playability, warranty and reaction to climate, among others.

"All six picked Polytan," Whiteside said. The university, so im-

pressed with the turf and not wanting to waste time in the next tendering process, specifically called for Polytan.

➤ SEE FIELD ON PAGE A5



Births-Deaths B10  
Classified B8  
Comics B2  
Cryptoquote B9

Editorials A8  
Life B1  
Horoscopes B3  
Lottery results A2

Oh, Brother! B3  
Scoreboard B4  
Sports B5  
Sudoku B8

**GuelphMercury.com**  
From the Editors blog, news and views from inside the newsroom

**A LOOK AT TOMORROW'S WEATHER**  
FULL FORECAST, PAGE A2

H: 5 L: -3

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# People soliciting didn't register with parade

► PARADE FROM PAGE A1

Parade organizer Dave Thompson said the collectors did not register as entrants, and likely joined the parade route from the crowd.

"They were definitely not in the set-up area," Thompson said Tuesday after checking with volunteer marshals.

Thompson said that in the past, city by-law officers have been summoned to deal with unauthorized vendors trying to sneak

into the parade, and the same might need to be considered for those soliciting donations.

"It's raised the flag," he said. "This is definitely something (organizers) will be discussing."

Guelph Police Sgt. Doug Pflug said Tuesday he was not aware of any complaints being logged with police over the unauthorized collection.

But Pflug said because Kare for Kids is a registered charity, it might be difficult to

take action even if the canvassers could be identified. "We don't even know necessarily whether a crime was committed. It's possible these people are going to forward the money to the charity."

Marton isn't holding his breath. "I haven't heard from anyone who would admit going to the parade or (who has) tried to hand over some money," he said, "so that makes it an outright fraud."

Pflug said the case is a good example of

the importance of doing some research before handing over money.

"If you're not comfortable with a purchase or a donation, you always have the luxury of time," Pflug said. "No donation ... needs to be done right at that moment. If you feel that you want to support the charity, take a day or two to do some research and then send it in if you're comfortable with it."

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STEPHEN HUMPHREY

University of Guelph space bee researchers Erika Nardone and Mike Stasiak.

## Bees key for Mars missions

► BEES FROM PAGE A1

Months later, Nardone now has around 60 hours of video to analyze of bees inside a hypobaric chamber within the university's space research facility — known as the Controlled Environment Systems lab.

She observes how their ability to work changes when ambient pressure drops within the chamber.

Enclosed by metal and glass, bumblebee workers fly back and forth, intent on blue paper disks that mimic flowers. They keep returning to extract brownish syrup that works does in a pinch for nectar. All the while air vents noisily from the chamber.

As pressure reaches 30 kilopascals, about the density at Everest's peak, the insects falter. One bee fails a takeoff, landing flat on its back. Another plummets from its perch on a wall of mesh. Others climb to the 'flower,' deciding they'll walk to work. Ten minutes later and they can't even do that.

It doesn't worry Nardone much. After all, the bees function fine at a denser 50 kPa, half normal walking-around pressure for earthlings. They botch a few landings but succeed overall. "The fact that they can still fly and pollinate at this level is pretty impressive," says Nardone.

Plants, meanwhile, can grow at pressures as low as 10 kPa. This fact presents huge savings for off-world greenhouses.

Researchers think future space travelers should grow much of their own food. The less food spaceships carry, the less liftoff weight. Low-pressure greenhouses reduce costs further, explains Guelph scientist Mike Stasiak, who helped design the experiment.

"The lower pressure we can grow a plant the less structure we need for a greenhouse, less mass," he says. "The biggest thing is

how to get things off the planet."

Pollinators must negotiate thinner air to work the automated, inflatable greenhouses astronauts might bring to the moon's powdery grey valleys or the rust-red dunes of Mars.

Bees on board is a game-changer for sure, but it seems their tolerances must be considered, since many plants on a Mars mission roster won't do well without them.

Mike Dixon, the lab's founder and overseer, says he was surprised when Kevan suggested that where tomatoes go bumblebees should go also.

"It came out of a casual coffee conversation," he notes.

Bees are famously masterful at transporting pollen grains from flower to flower while foraging for their young. This transfer is needed to create robust fruits.

Bumblebees, in particular, are experts at shaking pollen from tomato flowers with the motor-like muscles that make them buzz. In fact, certain bumbles are commercially bred to pollinate greenhouse tomatoes in Ontario communities such as Leamington.

Nardone and others have much more ahead to discover, including how long bees can sustain the more vigorous wingbeats required in low pressure.

Stasiak points out that the study's bees are first adopters. He wonders how the next generation might adapt.

"It would be interesting to see if their offspring would be better at it since they grew up in that different pressure," he says. "I suspect they would be."

Stasiak makes an interesting point. Maybe first true newborns in space won't be human.

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## New projects will boost core

► DOWNTOWN FROM PAGE A1

The infrastructure projects, she said, are welcome and will help intensify business activity in the downtown. But those projects have come at a cost to businesses in the city's core.

"That construction period has really extended the recession in some cases for small businesses," she added. "That has been the challenge of this year, working through having road closures, and experiencing changes to people's consumer behaviour."

Retail businesses thrive on consistent consumer behaviour, she explained. When those patterns are disrupted, good, loyal customers can be lost.

During her presentation to the meeting, Jamal said a number of ongoing projects in the downtown will, when complete, greatly enhance the look and life of the core. Market Square on Carden Street, she said, will be one of the most unique public spaces Guelph has ever seen.

But again, businesses along Carden have paid "a hefty price" for that ongoing construction.

The proposed new intermodal transit terminal on Carden will transform the street further, and will mark the redefinition of St. George's Square, which has long served as the transit hub.

The new site of the Guelph Civic Museum on Norfolk Street will be "tremendously important" to the downtown and the entire city, she said.

"I feel incredibly optimistic about it," she said, speaking of the time when the many projects will be completed.

"I think bringing an intermodal transit

terminal and a world-class Market Square to your city's core can only be positive for business. The economic development value that offers in terms of attracting intensification into the core is going to be fabulous."

Downtown Guelph will launch a major marketing campaign in 2011 welcoming residents back to the downtown "to enjoy these incredible amenities that are being built," she added.

During the meeting, business people were encouraged to take advantage of a Downtown Guelph project that uses Environics developed market research to enhance business opportunities.

Downtown Guelph market research committee chair Doug Minett, owner of The Bookshelf, and John van de Kamer, owner of Knar Jewellery, said postal code collection is an effective way to better understand where customers are coming from, and where to target marketing campaigns aimed at specific demographics.

"When spending marketing dollars, it is the best guess," said van de Kamer, speaking of postal code collection, which has been used effectively by large chain stores to improve marketing.

He and Minett explained that by collecting postal codes at the till, businesses can then inject this data into the Environics program to gain valuable and varied information about their market.

Chris Ahlers, Lorenz Calcagno, Charles Davidson, Tony di Battista, Caroline Harvey-Smith, Doug Minett, Jean-Marie Nijs and Mark Rodford were elected to the board.

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## Focus on 'high-quality sports complex'

► FIELD FROM PAGE A1

"It just doesn't make sense to do that again for the next proposal," Whiteside said of reviewing any product other than Polytan.

That's why all bids must include Polytan as the turf to be installed.

But an anonymous letter sent to the university and Guelph Mercury claims the request for Polytan eliminates all other contractors from the bidding process.

Whiteside said that isn't true.

She said bidding contractors can subcontract the field turf portion of the bid to Centaur.

The letter also claims Polytan is two to three times the cost of any other similar synthetic turf.

Whiteside doesn't dispute that Polytan is one of the most expensive products available.

"Absolutely, it's more expensive.

"But we're trying to develop centre of excellence for soccer.

"And that's good for

Guelph and the province," Whiteside said.

"This field is not just for intramurals."

Whiteside said the committee of six which decided on Polytan felt the product is of better quality, will last longer and better withstand the harsh winter than any other product.

"We are pretty committed to what we want to build: A high-quality sports complex," Whiteside said.

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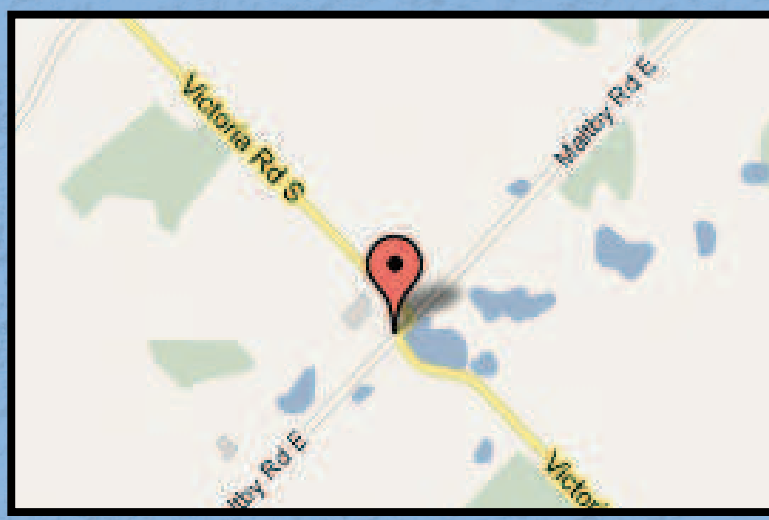
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