

High school entry #22: Toronto High School

THIS EXPRESS



PROUD: Barbara Smith with granddaughter Meleena Smith.

Dancer has whole world at gifted feet

By MELEENA SMITH

AT the age of 22 former Toronto resident Damian Smith has found international success in the ballet scene, with leading roles in productions across Europe and the United States.

The youngest of six children, who were interested in various sports, at the age of 10 Mr Smith began ballet tuition at Robin Hicks School of Dance at Toronto.

In 1996, after working for the Concorde Dance Company, based in Paris, and the Ballet du Nord in Roubaix, Mr Smith joined the San Francisco Ballet, said to be the oldest ballet company in the United States. In 1998 he was promoted to soloist then to principal dancer in 2001.

He has been cast in more than 50 leading roles and toured Europe. In 2002 he was featured on the front cover of the prestigious *New York Times*' arts section. He also appeared on a US postage stamp honouring the ballet company in 2005.

Proud mother Barbara Smith said that Damian "enjoys a very public and recognised profile in the United States and various other countries around the world".

Mrs Smith has a large collection of postcards, photographs, ballet programs and other memorabilia.

"I've even got a poster of him that appears on the sides of buses!"

Play no drama for teens

By EMILY INGLE and KIRA JOHNSON

FOR the third year running Toronto High School Year 11 students have won the MindPlay drama competition, held at the University of Newcastle on June 6.

Presented by the Hunter Institute of Mental Health, the aim of MindPlay is to get young people thinking about mental illness, mental health and wellbeing.

Students in high schools from all over the Hunter region are asked to research, write and direct a play with a mental health theme.

It is hoped that by getting students to carry out this process, the students learn more about mental health than they could from an in-school lecture.

The theme chosen by the students from Toronto was dissociative identity disorder, commonly known as multiple personality disorder.

After many weeks workshopping ideas, developing scripts and costumes, the class had to audition at the university to make it through to the grand final.

Using feedback from the audition judges, the actors further developed their play, *Who's there?*, to have the most dramatic effect on the audience.

In addition to practising the play in class, the students also



ON STAGE: Students from Toronto High School's Year 11 drama class perform.

rehearsed after school and during the school holidays, demonstrating the dedication and enthusiasm needed to become adept actors.

Several hiccups occurred on the way to the grand final, with one student away from school for several days with an allergic reaction and another nursing a sprained knee.

But, proving the old theatre

adage that "everything will be all right on the night", the performance ran smoothly.

Toronto received \$1500 in prize-money ahead of Bulahdelah Central, Lambton High, Dungog and Kurri Kurri.

"We could hardly believe it when we were told that we came first," group member Casey Wrightson said.

"The judges said it was a very

close competition.

"Our teacher (Miss Samara Balantyne) pushed us hard to help us reach our potential," Jenna Rudland said.

The winning actors were Kimba Bellamy, Kristie Butler, Josh Harris, Emily Ingle, Kira Johnson, Courtney Jones, Abbey Page, Sarah Radcliffe, Jenna Rudland, Buck Williams and Casey Wrightson.



SURPRISE: A Toronto High School student helps a CSIRO scientist conduct an experiment.

Science of playing with fire and ice

By MELISSA WILSON and EMILY CONLON

TORONTO High School Years 7 to 9 students have participated in the CSIRO's Lab on Legs Young Australia Workshop.

Experiments were conducted by a scientist from the CSIRO and student volunteers using liquid nitrogen, plasma, gas burners, balloons, flour and fireballs.

In one memorable experiment, liquid nitrogen was poured on the carpet, causing it to freeze.

"I enjoyed this experiment. I was sitting in the front row and it got very cold," Year 8 student Anthony Murray said.

Perhaps the most "explosive" experiment of the day involved flour, a large tube and a gas burner. The scientist blew flour from the tube which was then ignited by the

burner, held by a nervous student, causing a flame so large it almost touched the ceiling.

"The visit taught us how dry ice gets so cold, how solids become gases and how gases go to liquid or solid," student Thomas Toll said.

"My favourite part was when I got to blow a balloon up with dry ice inside. We could shake it and throw it around."



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Looking to balance future technology

Editorial

By DANIEL HARDY

IT seems that in the 21st century it is not only quality teachers that are essential in the academic achievement of students, it is also technology.

Teenagers growing up today are surrounded by technology and it has a large effect on their everyday lives. Waking up to phone alarms, watching pay TV on plasma televisions, listening to iPods, texting and emailing friends, surfing the net, blogging, watching YouTube, making friends on MySpace, looking up people on Facebook; it's no wonder that teens today are labelled "the wired generation".

The prevalence of technology has its much-discussed pros and cons. Students have access to more information today than well-known minds from previous centuries such as Einstein, Da Vinci and Newton. With this greater access comes a significant need to be able to understand and digest this information, to learn it rather than just plagiarise vast amounts of information in school assignments.

Greater access to communication technology such as mobile phones and products such as MySpace and Facebook gives teenagers more opportunities to share their thoughts, feelings and ideas with others, and to find acceptance in these online social networks. The downside of this

leap in communication can mean there's little down time to just relax alone or with friends in the "real" world. As in any other social situation, communicating online can also reveal the darker sides of human nature, with kids being bullied on the internet or by text message, which can often escalate into physical violence in the playground.

Despite all its problems, technology is not at fault. It is the users of that technology, us, who are ultimately responsible for what we say and do online. Technology has just as much power to help as to harm, especially in the classroom.

With the growing dominance of technology in the lives of 21st-century teenagers, there is a growing need for schools to adapt their methods of teaching and their facilities to engage the e-literate students.

Talk of an "education revolution" needs to be more than just talk. More and more classrooms need to be fitted with information technology like SmartBoards, video projectors and computers so that teachers can use technology to enhance the learning outcomes of students, to better prepare them with the IT skills that will become as much a part of their working lives as faxes and typewriters were to earlier generations.

Students need to become aware of the benefits and dangers of technology and the need to act responsibly online and offline. Access to technology, while increasingly a necessity, is also a privilege. Let's look to the future, one in which technology is a central part of teaching and learning.



FUTURE IS HERE: Student discuss robotics with teacher Mr George Kapitanof.

Robot group rocks and rolls

By CARL HERMANN and KRISNA SIV

AFTER Toronto High School introduced robotics as a Year 8 elective subject for the first time only this year, the school has won a regional competition and competed at state level.

After winning the regional RoboCup junior competition at the University of Newcastle late last term, the students then finished in the top five at the State RoboCup junior competition at the University of NSW in August.

After several anxious moments the Toronto team - Alex Knee, Krisna Siv and Carl Hermann - made it into the

state finals with five other teams and finished just outside the top three entries.

"We encountered robotics in our first term of electives," Carl said. "We slowly learnt how to construct, program and interact with the robots."

"The robots were LEGO-based and we found them easy to work with," Alex said.

Their entry, THS MetalliCar, danced to *Iron Man* by Black Sabbath.

"At one stage we had trouble with the car's battery but it was fixed on the day," Krisna said.

"The experience was great and Carl is already thinking about next year's entry," Krisna said.

Moodles of fun in online learning site

By KATIE JENKINS

TORONTO High School students are experiencing 21st-century education through a free software e-learning platform developed in Australia, with tens of thousands of sites and 17 million users in 193 countries.

The aim of Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) is to help teachers create online courses for students to supplement classroom learning.

"The idea is to give teachers another tool to help engage their students," teacher and Moodle co-ordinator Mr George Kapitanof said.

"Teachers can upload online activities such as tests, quizzes, assessment tasks, web quests and reading. Students can securely access the content anywhere they can get online and receive feedback from their teachers as well.

"A day sick at home no longer means having to catch up when you get back to school; students can keep up with their class work via the internet."

Several classes are trialling the site and having success. Students have said that it was "very easy to use" and "was a good place for teachers to clarify information with students".

Teachers are being trained how to create content and put it on the site for students to access in class and at home.

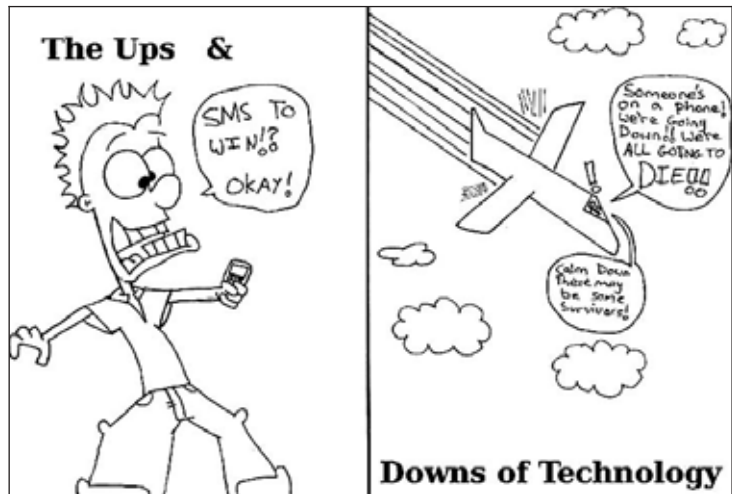


Illustration by Trisha Conroy

Empty lot provides some food for thought

By DANIEL HARDY

THE future of a former service station site in Toronto remains unknown despite demolition and clean-up work now taking place on the lot.

Inquiries to Lake Macquarie City Council and an online search of development applications lodged with the council in the past five years revealed that there were currently no development applications for the old service station site in Cary Street, opposite McDonald's fast food outlet.

But the area is fenced off and is being cleared of rubble and waste.

Local resident Jonathon Turnbull said he had heard another fast-food chain outlet might be built.



WATCH THIS SPACE: The former service station site in Toronto. - Picture by Daniel Hardy

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