



ARIF VIRANI

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
PARKDALE-HIGH PARK



From my family to yours,
have a safe and joyous holiday season!

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Happy Holidays!

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Kathleen Wynne

MPP Don Valley West

NEW YEAR'S LEVEE 2022

Please join MPP Kathleen Wynne and MP Rob Oliphant
to keep up with our New Year's Meet and Greet.

This year's outdoor event will be
held at the beautiful and historic
Toronto Botanical Garden's Garden Hall Patio.

January 8, 2022 1:00pm-3:00pm

777 Lawrence Ave. East, Toronto M3C 1P2.
Proof of both vaccinations and wearing a mask is required.

RSVP: kwynne.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org /

(416) 425-6777

Constituency Office

795 Eglinton Avenue East
Unit 101, Toronto, ON M4G 4E4
416-425-6777 | www.kathleenwynne.onmpp.ca



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GARDENING

KEN BROWN



Gifts for gardeners

Gardening in December often means trying to keep a Poinsettia healthy and with the many new varieties that's easier than ever. Each year there seems to be a different shade of red or pink or something in between but the real advances in Poinsettia breeding are creating plants that hold on to their green leaves and red bracts for an extended period. That period is so extended that most of us wind up throwing it out because we are tired of it.

There are, of course, those among us that can't bear to toss a living plant in the compost but I usually remind those folks that they pay three times as much for a dozen Roses and have no compunction tossing those when they fade after a week or two. There's something about it having roots that makes us forget that it is a seasonal plant. Is it possible to keep a Poinsettia and get it to rebloom next year? Theoretically yes, but it is not easy to do in most of our homes.

If you are looking for something different there are other choices. Garden centres will usually have a range of colours in Cyclamen with their nodding blooms and they have lovely, patterned leaves as a



Cyclamen thrive in a cool climate.

bonus. They do have a slight problem as a houseplant. They thrive in a cool climate and that is usually cooler than we like to keep our homes. In a warm room their leaves will start to turn yellow and die off. If you can find a cool spot for them, they will grow and bloom for a long time and I don't get tired of them.

Gifts for gardeners are easy to find and for balcony gardeners it can often be a good gardening book. There are a variety of choices that are just wonderful reading during our long, non

gardening months and not, how to, books that are beyond the scope of our limited time and space. Carol J Michel's *Digging and Delighted: Live your best gardening life*, is a series of essays that will enchant you even if you don't have the space to follow some of her dreams. Ellen Zachos' *The Forager's Pantry, Cooking with Wild Edibles*, will encourage you to go for long walks in the spring to find some of the hidden treasures that she carefully gathers and eats. She outlines an amazing array of edibles that are easy to find once you know what to look for.

A more practical note is Darryl Cheng's, *New Plant Parent, Develop your green thumb and care for your houseplant family*. Darryl's advice is clear and sensible and covers a wide range of topics. For Hi Rise readers, he is one of you, living and growing plants in a Toronto condo. I know each of these authors and heartily recommend their books to you. ★

Ken Brown is a horticulturist with extensive houseplant and container gardening experience. He will gladly answer questions addressed to him c/o Hi Rise. He currently devotes his time to his website www.gardening-enjoyed.com

★Sign up to get a free copy each month.

E-mail: Valerie.dunn@bell.net
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James Pasternak
Councillor | York Centre - Downsview

*Merry Christmas,
Happy Chanukah &
Happy Holidays!*



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📠 416-392-7299
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Mimico Presbyterian Church

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9:00 am to 3:00 pm

Please visit our COVID friendly, masked, walk thru event. Remember to social distance while you visit us.

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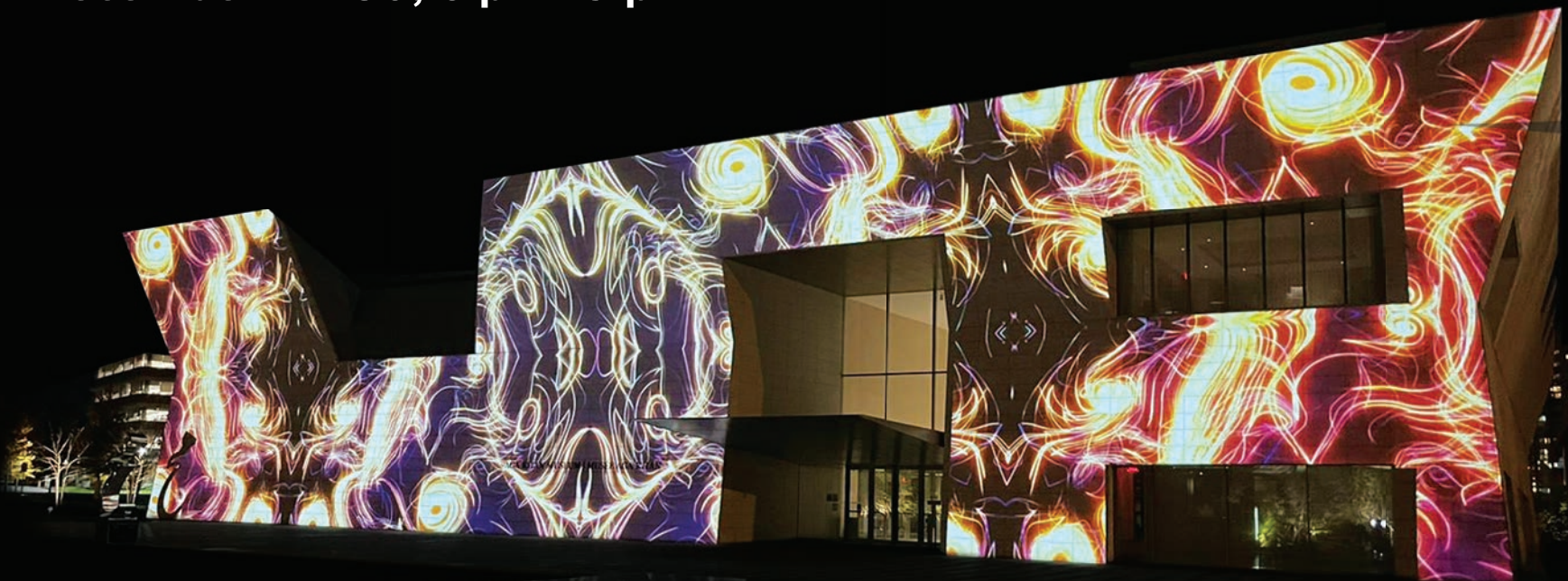
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The war amps key tag service celebrates 75 years

Returning keys and making a difference for amputees

The War Amps Key Tag Service is celebrating a milestone this year – its 75th anniversary. The service has not only been reuniting Canadians with their lost keys, it has been helping to make a difference in the lives of amputees, like Sima Culjak, of Toronto.

The War Amps was started in 1918 by amputee veterans returning from the First World War to help each other in adapting to their new reality as amputees. They then welcomed amputee veterans following the Second World War, sharing all that they had learned.

In 1946, the Key Tag Service was launched so that returning war amputees could not only work for competitive wages, but also provide a service to Canadians that would generate funds for the Association. Today, the Key Tag Service continues to employ amputees and persons with disabilities.

In the winter of 1985, Sima and her sister were just teenagers when they were walking from their village, in the former Yugoslavia, to visit their mom in the nearest town. They were underdressed for the harsh weather and got lost in a canyon.

After seven days without food or sleep, they were found by hunters and taken to the hospital.



Sima is the assistant supervisor in the Remittance Processing Department at The War Amps Key Tag Service.

Tel: 613 731-3821, ext. 2225
2827 Riverside Dr. Ottawa, Ont
K1V 0C4 waramps.ca

"My sister and I had frostbite and an infection in our lungs. In order to save our lives, doctors had to amputate both of our legs below the knee," she said.

In 1990, Sima and her husband moved to his native Canada. "My husband was the one who told me about The War Amps Key Tag Service," says Sima. "We knocked on their door and staff member Rob Larman, a leg amputee himself, welcomed us. Rob offered me a job on the spot

and when he asked when I wanted to start, I said "tomorrow".

Sima began working in production, stuffing envelopes for mailing. Today, she is an assistant supervisor in the Remittance Processing Department, where she trains employees and oversees the donations that come in.

The War Amps was founded on the philosophy of "amputees helping amputees" which continues today. "As many of my coworkers are amputees, we share a special bond," says Sima. "We support each other and show each other that the sky is the limit. I have always loved the water but I didn't think I could swim until another leg amputee at work told me that they were going scuba diving. Today, I take part in all sorts of activities like sailing, yoga, dancing and bowling."

The War Amps receives no government grants and its programs are possible through public support of the Key Tag Service. Sima said it is rewarding to work for an organization that is helping amputees by providing financial assistance for the cost of artificial limbs, advocating for the rights of amputees and providing employment.

Rob Larman, who today is the Director of The War Amps PLAY SAFE/DRIVE SAFE Program, says, "These war amputee veteran members created a legacy for amputees in this country through the Key Tag Service. The veterans went overseas during the Second World War, came back home missing limbs and decided to continue to provide a service for Canadians."

Sima adds that the Key Tag Service has provided her with more than just employment. "I feel fortunate to have come to Canada, an incredible country where I found my purpose and second family at the Key Tag Service. My life has truly come full circle," she says. ★

Martine Lépine is Manager
The War Amps, Communications
martine.lepine@waramps.ca



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Christmas Pageant - Dec 12
Christmas Music - Dec 19
Christmas Eve - Recorded
service only

Peace and blessings to all



Now what?

December is the season of light. Lights in the windows, on trees and in stores. Light that brightens our hearts and makes the darkness disappear. Even when we have been experiencing a prolonged period of darkness, dealing with Covid; perhaps not seen since the two world wars.

We look forward to sharing a holiday meal with others and perhaps, exchanging gifts.

Yet we know the enemy still lurks among us. We must be vigilant. People are steadily drifting back to restaurants, stores, events, places of worship. But we remain wary, and rightly so.

Perhaps now is a time to decide what is really important to us

It used to be easy to just fritter away our time. Now that we have become more aware of time and how we spend it, due to the Covid restrictions, will we just return to aimless use of our time?

If we are at all self-aware, we will not.

We have come to realize, time is precious. People we know, perhaps even a loved one, have had their lives unexpectedly cut short by Covid. Whether it was a young person looking forward to a fulfilling career. Or a senior who will never take that trip he planned for his retirement

What are the things you planned to do that were put on hold by Covid?

Sign up for that course you were thinking about taking.

Call that person you had a disagreement with and restore the friendship

Make time to visit that aunt you have not seen for many years

If you always wanted to go skydiving perhaps now is the time.

You have special objects you plan to leave to specific people in your will? Give them away now and let the intended recipients enjoy them as much as you have.

You thought some day you would adopt a dog or cat? Do it. Hundreds of animals are in shelters, waiting for love.

At this time of year, people who haven't been to their place of worship think of going. Do it.

You might even write a list of things you may have wanted to do but have put off. If Covid has taught us anything it is, life is precarious, and should not be wasted.

December is the season of light. Become part of it. Do the things that fulfill you. Experience joy. And let your light help chase the darkness away.

Wishing each of you, holiday joy.

Valerie M. Dunn

Valerie M. Dunn
Editor-Publisher



Toronto Celebration Church
190 Railside Road, North York
M3A 1A3
phone 416-497-2508
Services every Sunday, 10:30
a.m.
Reference to special arrangement info
on website or phone. www.ticc.ca

Wishing you and your loved ones a warm, safe and healthy holiday season

Happy Holidays

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Paula Fletcher
TORONTO WARD 14 TORONTO-DANFORTH
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www.paulafletcher.ca

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Managing alone-time during the holidays and loneliness



For many, the holidays are filled with friends, family and constant celebration. People put socialization on overdrive and seem to take no breaks. However, for others, the holidays can feel lonelier than any other time of the year. Not everyone has close friends and family to spend their time with during these cold few months. Some may have it reserved for extra alone time, and not by their own choice. Taking more time for yourself during the holidays is not unhealthy on its own, but doing so too much can lead to negative emotions and feelings of isolation.

There is a difference in taking some alone time to avoid others. "Taking some time alone is kind of like taking a break from a half-time of a football game," says Megan Williams, Director of Suicide Prevention for a mental health agency. "You've been chatting with people, trying to keep the conversation going for a couple of hours, and you need to take a 15-minute break to step away and recharge your batteries."

Alone time can be healthy as it provides time to focus on yourself and what makes you happy. There are several ways you can celebrate on your own:

START A NEW TRADITION: Try creating a new holiday for yourself, such as baking a holiday treat or watching a new holiday movie.

REDISCOVER AN OLD TALENT: Pick up that dusty old guitar, put on those dancing shoes, or do anything else that makes you feel like yourself.

DO SOMETHING OUT OF THE HOUSE: Go explore that museum you've heard so much about or, if weather permits, spend some time out in nature.

WRITE LETTERS AND MAKE PHONE CALLS: You may just be alone for the holidays because your loved ones are too far to see this year. Spend some time talking to them on the phone or writing them to stay connected. Even one short call can be uplifting.

While having meaningful time is good for the soul, it is important to know your limits and when you need to recharge socially. All people, introverted or extroverted, need some level of socialization to be healthy.

Being alone can become unhealthy when alone time turns into avoidance or prolonged isolation. Feelings of anxiety and loneliness can cause us to avoid social interaction altogether as a coping mechanism. This isolation can lead to depressive symptoms, which end up further increasing feelings of loneliness; it's a cycle.

OTHER WAYS TO COPE WITH HOLIDAY LONELINESS: One of the best ways to cope with the holiday loneliness is seeking out time with people. "If being around others could alleviate any loneliness you feel, seek social interactions out," says Megan Williams. "You can always take a break of limit those interactions as you see fit to ensure good self-care."

If you don't have loved ones nearby, this may take more initiative on your part.

LOOK FOR VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES: There are plenty of ways to help others, and opportunities only increase during the holiday season. Volunteering allows you to make a positive difference while socializing without all the pressure.

SAY YES: Accept invitations from friends and coworkers to do things, even if they're not people you usually spend much time with. You don't have to say yes to everything, but putting yourself out there in this way can help you feel less isolated.

If you are feeling sad and lonely, try to not exacerbate these feelings by comparing your plans to other. Stay off social media - it's only a "highlight reel" of someone's life and can make you feel small in comparison. Practice healthy coping strategies, and remind yourself what is best for you, even if that's spending some extra time on self-care.

The holidays can make people feel isolated and very alone. Know that you are loved and supported even if it doesn't feel that way.

On this holiday, there will be blessings all around. Just keep the door of your heart open so they can fill it up with peace, positivity, and love!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



Vegas has its odds, so does your job search

Job seekers mentally carry one of 2 narratives.

The first narrative is that "isms" (e.g., racism, ageism, nepotism) stack the odds against them. Fueled by a sense of entitlement, this is the limiting belief narrative the "I'm a victim!" crowd carries. This narrative is easy to adopt. It absolves the job seeker from networking, being responsible for how they present themselves to employers and acquiring the necessary education and skills to be competitive in today's job market.

The second narrative, which few job seekers embrace, is that you're in complete control of your odds of finding a job that ticks off most of your "would like to have." This narrative empowers job seekers.

Okay, "complete" may be an exaggeration. However, you have more control over your job search odds than you think you do.

Here are four ways you can stack the odds of landing your dream job with your employer of choice in your favour:



Networking will help you reach the hidden job market.

1. Non-negotiable: Create and maintain a professional network.

My current job, and my previous three, presented themselves to me via my professional network. The most obvious way to stack the odds of finding a great job in your favour is to NETWORK!

A professional network will serve you well during your job searches (You'll likely conduct several throughout your working life.) and your career. Those who network land the jobs you envy. Desirable jobs (aka. "plum jobs") and C-suite executive and above positions are rarely advertised, thus the existence of the "hidden job market," which I'm sure you're aware of.

Don't know how to network or where to start? I suggest you read the following two books:

- *Never Eat Alone: And Other Secrets to Success: One Relationship at a Time*, by Keith Ferrazzi
- *Taking the Work Out of Networking: An Introvert's Guide to Making Connections That Count*, by Karen Wickre

1. Deal with the hiring manager:

Sitting at home applying online is fooling yourself, believing you're "seriously job hunting."

Keep in mind, if the job opening is your dream job, then it's also the dream job for at least 100 others as well, who are just as qualified as you. Therefore, as much as possible apply directly to the person who can say "yes" to hiring you.

Find out who the hiring manager is (I know this isn't always possible, but often it is.) and apply directly to them. Not being part of the 100s, sometimes 1,000s, of applicants applying online for the one job opening increases your odds significantly.

Ideally, you're able to leverage your professional network to be referred to the hiring manager. However, supposing a referral isn't possible, then I suggest you apply online and send the hiring manager a brief email along the lines of:

Dear [NAME]:

I recently submitted my application for the role of [POSITION], which I'm very interested in, as well as joining [COMPANY]; therefore, I wanted to send you a copy of my resume. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss my [2-3 REQUIRED SKILLS LISTED IN THE JOB POST] skills related to the position.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
[YOUR NAME]

2. Look for your tribe:

The advice I give most often to job seekers: "Search for your tribe!" Seeking employers who'll most likely accept you, where you'll feel you belong, will significantly increase your odds. Think: "I'm not looking for a job; I'm looking for my tribe!" Before approaching an employer, ask yourself, "Will I (holistically) be a fit?"

I equate applying online to playing the lottery; you're hoping (fingers-crossed, praying) that a stranger will hire you. Why would you expect someone who doesn't know you to hire you over those in their network, referrals or from within their company?

3. Create a results-oriented résumé and LinkedIn profile:

In 2021 every employee needs to be an undeniable asset to their employer. Your résumé and LinkedIn profile need to answer the question all hiring managers have: What value did this person bring to their employers? (READ: *How did this person positively impact your employer's bottom line?*) Employers want to see a job seeker's potential value and therefore gravitate to job seekers who clearly communicate how their results positively impacted their previous employers.

In Las Vegas, there's one certainty: The house always comes out the winner in the end. That's because all casino games are designed to provide the house with odds in their favour. Design your job search activities so the odds are in your favour.★

Nick Kossovan, a well-seasoned veteran of the corporate landscape, offers advice on searching for a job. You can send him your questions at artoffindingwork@gmail.com

CHRISTMAS @ the MANOR,
Manor Rd United Church

240 Manor Road East

In person or online

Sunday December 19, 5:00 pm
Christmas at the Manor, living Nativity outdoors with live animals

"Once Upon a Star"
With Dr. JJ and the Cornerstone Band and the Choir @ the Manor

Friday December 24, 4:00pm
Carols by Candlelight Family Service

"A Child is Born"
With Dr. JJ, The Corner Stone Band and the Choir @ the Manor

RSVP
Dr. JJministermruc@gmail.com
or phone 416-809-6044

Proof of Vaccination Required.

<http://manorroadunitedchurch.com>

St. Mark's
Presbyterian Church
Don Mills

1 Greenland Rd, off the Donway East
(east of the Shops at Don Mills)

stmarkstoronto.org

Access is through the
website or You Tube.

Sun. Dec. 5 - 10:30 am -
Advent II - Holy Communion

Sun. Dec. 12 - 10:30 am - Advent III -
Service of Lessons & Carols

Wed. Dec. 15 - 7:30 pm - Service of
Solace (in the sanctuary only)

Sun. Dec. 19 - 10:30 am -
Advent IV - Worship

Fri. Dec. 24 - 7:30 pm - Christmas Eve

Sun. Dec. 26 - 10:30 am -
First Sunday after Christmas



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★Ads in print edition also appear online at no extra charge.

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READY TO HELP

Is the stress of isolation and all the rest getting you down? Perhaps you have a spiritual concern?

Clergy from the following churches will be happy to chat with you. Just call the church of your choice.

Some church offices are still closed.. If you get voice mail, please leave your name., phone number, and the best time for your call to be returned

Christ Church St James,
Etobicoke, 416-251-8711..

Don Mills / Thorncliffe United
Churches, 416-938-7762,

Highway Gospel Church,
Scarborough, 416-267-1189.

Integrity Worship Centre
Church Don Mills Eglinton,
416-421-1754.

Manor Road United Church,
mid-Toronto, 416-809-6044.

Stone Church, Davenport Rd.
Toronto, 416-928-0101 x103.

St. Luke's Anglican Church,
East York. 416-421-6878 x 22.

St. Timothy's Anglican
Church, Agincourt, Scarborough
416-293-5711 x 1.

Spread Holiday Joy 'Year Round!!

Hi-Rise Community Newspaper

Connects and Shares

with the Wider Community!

Remember a relative with a community note!

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Advertising Rates/Distribution areas on website!



IDA
FEDOR-BAAN



"The hand-drawn glimmer of hope"



My grandfather, S. Lajos Baan, left grandmother, mother and I, two beautiful gift amulets to strengthen our faith in God, and hope, in the goodness of mankind, not always apparent. For me, these items are reminders that everyone is always protected by an unseen, higher being. Grandfather gave these to us before he died of a heart attack after a painful medical examination in 1984—ironically suffered in the taxi ride home.

One amulet he always carried was the metal chain with the pictures of The Holy Mother Mary, holding the Christ child found in the Murmansk, Siberia mud.

The other item was the pencil picture of St. Judas Tadeus (shown) – the Patron Saint of Hope, grandfather carried, as well, in his wallet. It was hand-drawn, on paper, by a Soviet camp guard over 75 years ago, in Murmansk, Siberia, where grandfather, along with thousands of other Hungarians were interned, as World War 2 drew to a close. Thousands of Eastern European men became prisoners of war, carried off to the most horrific death camps in Siberia, by the Soviet army. Unprepared for winters unimaginably cold, at -50 C temperatures, prisoners were forced to wrap their feet and hands in layers of clothing, to

avoid frostbite. Diets consisted of rotting potatoes and water (surrounding ice melted).

Grandfather wondered about the religious "St. Judas Tadeus" picture – drawn by the Communist guard. The camp guard quietly advised grandfather that he was once a Russian Orthodox priest and an artist. After the 1917 Russian Revolution, religion was banned and Communism became the new "faith".

With this drawing, a kinship was found between the two: Grandfather, Hungarian. The Guard: Soviet. Grandfather was a talented artist, businessman (painter and hardware store owner). And, I was told both were remarkable chess players.

Grandfather carried this picture of St. Judas Tadeus in his wallet, to his dying day. It now sits atop my table turning brown with age – a comforting memory of my grandfather and assurance that he, along with St. Jude and the "Higher Being" are with me, and everyone, always; a "Glimmer of Hope".

To those who celebrate it, Merry Christmas and Happiness, Hope, Joy to everyone.

Ida Fedor-Baan is Hi-Rise Community Newspaper designer, advertising sales representative, 1984-2000; 2017-present Ida is also a freelance magazine production artist, dressmaker/alterationist and can be reached at 437-855-4022, 10idafedorbaan10@gmail.com.

TALK OF THE TOWN

If I had a magic wand



DON COLEMAN

A magic wand is a long thin rod that magicians and fairies wave when they are performing tricks and magic. We've all thought to ourselves, what if I had a magic wand. What would I do with it? How could I make the world a better place?

We live in an amazing place! However, if you had the chance to be the boss of the planet, what would you change? What would

you improve? What would your perfect world look like? The changes that you would like to see may want be complex. Pretend that you have a magic wand and that you are able to make all the changes that you want, in minutes.

The first thing I would do, is bring my mom and dad back to earth, give them both a big hug, and spend as much quality time together as possible. The second thing I would do is eliminate all diseases, make sure that everyone has clean drinking water, healthy food and a safe place to live. The third thing I would do is banish money from the face of the earth, and make all goods and commodities free. I would eliminate greed and make sharing willingly and equally, an unwritten law that was exercised by every living person. The fourth thing that I would do is make war and

Christmas at Saint Stephen-in-the-Fields

Friday, December 24

First Mass of the Nativity, 7 pm
(on-line: facebook.com/ststephen103)

Christmas Eve Mass, 11 pm
(in-person)

Saturday, December 25

Christmas Day Mass, 10:30 am
(in-person)

We welcome donations for our Christmas Eve drop-in dinner for homeless/underhoused community members. Visit www.saintstephens.ca.



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December 19

4 pm Nine Lessons & Carols

December 24

3 pm Family Service | 9:30 pm Recital | 10 pm High Mass

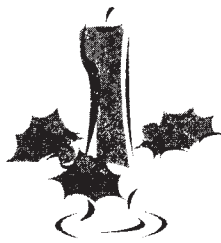
December 25

10 am High Mass

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Lighting up the New Year!



Happy Holidays from Everyone at Hi-Rise Community Newspaper!

aggression a thing of the past, by removing it from our psyches. I would wave that wand and instigate an immediate clean-up of all of the garbage that exists on land and in the seas and oceans.

I would also bring back every species that has gone extinct, except maybe the dinosaurs, because most of them are gargantuan and kind of scary. Wow! That would be a big magic wand.

I realize that all of this gibberish is impossible to achieve. However, let us imagine and pray and hope for a better world, where we can strive for any kind of improvements for the betterment of humankind. Like the three musketeers said, "one for all and all for one."

Thank goodness that most people are kind and have good hearts. The world truly is a great place full of caring folks who wouldn't hurt a fly

Karma is an important part of the energy of the earth and it acts

like a boomerang. Have you ever noticed that the nicer you are to other people, the better the universe treats you? Karma is about punishment or reward. It makes a person responsible for their own life, and how they treat other people. The "Theory of Karma" is a major belief in Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism.

It's fun to imagine and dream about a better place on earth. We all have an opportunity to contribute to improving our surroundings. Random acts of kindness and good deeds. Picking up some garbage in our neighbourhood or helping a neighbour in need. Cheering up a person who is distressed or helping a stray and hungry cat or dog.

Let's all think about at least one thing we can do today to make the world a better place, and make it happen. The outcome

of this exercise and mindset, positivity, happiness and a sense of accomplishment. Don't ask what can this country do for me? Ask yourself, what can I do for this country. ★

Don Coleman is a writer, songwriter, vocalist, public speaker, entertainer and humanitarian who is endorsed by Gordon Lightfoot, acknowledged by the Jeff Healey estate, President Bill Clinton, HRH Prince William and recognized by the iconic musical group known as AC/DC. Contact/Story Ideas: donvalleydon@rogers.com

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Christmas Eve - Friday, December 24

7pm - Family Service - 11pm - Candlelight Service

Christmas Day Service - Saturday, December 25, 10:30am

Wednesday, December 29 at 7pm

In Person Evening Prayer

This is a guided prayer service to learn to pray, speak with God, and hear from God in day-to-day life.

Let's make this year a green Christmas

Christmas is a time for celebration. Whether a religious festival or a wonderful chance for families and friends to celebrate, these if us who do, look forward to the season and the festivities. And while it may involve much spending and new "stuff", it also can be a chance to make our celebration greener.

Christmas trees are a perennial issue. That wonderful symbol of the season is often a source of some heated debate. Will that be real or artificial? Should we cut down trees just to serve for a few weeks as a Christmas decoration? Could an artificial tree be any better when one considers toxic plastics and carbon emissions involved in getting that tree into our homes?

The short answer is that actual trees are not a big environmental issue. Tree farmers produce them just like any other crop. Each spring, farmers plant several trees for every one harvested, to assure

the next crop. Mostly, farmers plant them on land not suitable for other forms of agriculture. And in Toronto, the city recycles old trees into mulch for Toronto parks. They return to nature and don't end up in the waste stream. However, growing, distribution, and recycling all have a carbon footprint.

Artificial trees indeed contain plastics we cannot recycle currently, including PVC. Those discarded trees may take decades to disintegrate in landfills. As the plastics disintegrate, they release toxic materials. These plastics are also a potential health concern: they contain lead, especially toxic to young children. The factories ship them thousands of miles to us, adding to their carbon footprint.

On the plus side, they can be reused in our homes for a decade or more.

On balance, there is no simple answer. Both have environmental



Choose a living Christmas tree.

benefits and downsides. Real trees have a slightly greener edge, but there are several better options.

Living trees are available. Some nurseries offer living potted trees. After Christmas, put the tree outside in a sheltered area until spring. When the ground is soft enough, you can plant your Christmas tree and enjoy it for years to come. However, you cannot keep living trees indoors for very long. That disrupts hibernation and may kill the tree.

Norfolk pines are another option. These evergreens are subtropical and are perfectly happy indoors. That makes them ideal Christmas trees. After the celebrations, they live on as indoor greenery. Over the summer, place them outside on a sheltered patio or balcony. Next Christmas, use them again.

Be choosy with your tree decorations too. Decorate in an environmentally friendly way. Instead of glass or plastic decorations, consider natural or recycled materials. Kids love making garlands of popcorn or

cranberries or gathering pine cones for decorations. Let them cut out pictures from old Christmas cards, hanging them as tree ornaments. Gingerbread cookies can be great decorations and fun to eat afterwards too.

And do remember, some decorations, especially tinsel, are dangerous to your pets. Pets love to chew on strange things. While modern tinsel is not particularly toxic, it can cause serious problems if trapped in their bowels.

There are other options too. Have the kids make a large cardboard Christmas tree shape to hang on a wall. They can decorate that any way they like. Not only will the results to be recyclable, they will provide hours of creative fun for younger kids.

It's not always easy being green, but it is always worth the effort. Have a safe, fun, green Christmas.★

Best wishes for a wonderful holiday season and a fantastic new year!

Hon. Marco Mendicino, MP for Eglinton-Lawrence
T: 416-781-5583 E: marco.mendicino@parl.gc.ca

CONDOS

Q. We wish to put a Christmas wreath on our front door and decorate our balcony as well. Since we just moved in recently this is all new to us. My neighbour doesn't have a clue either because she was asking us if we needed permission to decorate. There is nothing written in our rules or bylaws. Who should I consult?

A. Each condominium corporation will have different policies depending on the type of condo. For instance, townhome condominiums will usually have more freedom to decorate. Especially if they pay their own hydro that will power all the Christmas lights they display. I have seen many townhomes decorated to the nines with many different displays in front of each home.

Is holiday decorating permitted?



Decorating can be fun but check with the condo board first.

Those who live in hi-rise buildings with balconies may be tempted to display lights by stringing them all along their balcony. They may also wish to display additional holiday decorations around the window area adjacent to the balcony.

The reader should contact your board of directors or the management company if you cannot find the decorating information in your condo documents. Alterations to the

MARILYN LINCOLN



common elements, even minor ones are governed by the Condominium Act of Ontario.

No matter which style of condo you live in, it is imperative that all owners seek board approval prior to any decorating in order to avoid any costly mistakes. Decorating can be a great source of fun and does promote good community spirit. I hope all owners work together to create a joyous and peaceful community, not only during the holiday season, but all year round.★

Merry Christmas/Happy holidays

Marilyn Lincoln is a condo owner, director and author of "The Condominium Self Management Guide 2nd ed. Email marilyncondoguide@hotmail.com with questions.



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Blue Christmas Service
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Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
December 24 at 6:30 p.m.



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- ★ DEC. 5
WHY A VIRGIN BIRTH? (MATTHEW 1:18-25)
- ★ DEC. 12
CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO RIVAL KINGDOMS (MATTHEW 2:1-12)
- ★ DEC. 19 (FAMILY CHRISTMAS SERVICE)
THE HUMBLE KING IS PLACED IN A ... FEEDING TROUGH? (LUKE 2:1-7)
- ★ DEC. 24 (CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE; 6:30 P.M. ONLY)
- ★ DEC. 26 (11 A.M. ONLY)
THE RESPONSE OF THE FIRST WITNESSES (LUKE 2:8-20)

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CAT OF THE MONTH

Meet Joey



Our Christmas poster boy is Joey, a very handsome 2 1/2 year old neutered male, vet checked and vaccinated. Joey turned up in a neighbourhood along with one very pregnant female and another older male. The neighbours told the rescue team that they had seen them around for a few months and were feeding them. They think he and his companions had been abandoned pets as they were not scared of people, like ferals. Sadly, the little female lost her babies but is in good hands right now.

Joey is doing well in his foster home. He loves playing with the other cats and would do best in a home with other cats for company. Joey is very energetic and loves playing with toys, especially the laser pointer. He is a bit shy at first, which is understandable as who knows what he experienced on the street. With some patience and time to adjust, his confidence will return. Toys and treats are the way to his heart. Please note that an adoption fee applies. For further information, please

contact Katherine, on behalf of the Scarborough Bluffs Cat Relief at 647-476-4797 during business hours.

Raffle

Our group is having a raffle to help raise funds for 15 new cats we've taken in from a lady we knew that passed away. She was also a rescuer, which is why we felt we had to help. The cats are all very malnourished due to lack of proper care from her relatives. Many kittens with eyes glued shut from infection and upper resp, of course. All ages, some not fixed. They desperately need to put on some weight before we can do anything else.



Tickets are \$5 each or 3 for \$10. One gift basket is filled with human treats, like scrumptious cookies, toffees as well as Christmas tea towels and even a murder mystery game. The second is for Cat Lovers, That includes 2 matching cat mugs, cookies, napkins, tea towels and tree ornaments. Choose which basket you want to win. We'll accept phone orders call 647-476-4797 or by email to: Katherine Stern: getset2001@gmail.com

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TENANTS

KARLY WILSON

Landlords, Collections and Credit

Q: I moved out of my last apartment without paying all the rent that I owed my landlord. I never went to a hearing at the Landlord and Tenant Board, but now my former landlord is threatening to report me to a collection agency. Is this legal?

A: Unfortunately, the short answer is yes, it is legal for a landlord to report a former tenant to a collection agency right away. Generally, collection agencies do not require an order or a judgment before they begin attempts to collect a debt, they just need some evidence that the creditor (in this case, the landlord) has a right to pursue the debtor (the tenant).

This means that you can be contacted by a collections agency even if you have not received a notice of unpaid rent from your landlord or an order from the Landlord and Tenant Board. Having a debt "go to collections" can have a serious, negative impact on your credit score, affecting your ability to get approved as a tenant by future landlords, apply for a mortgage, or access lower rates for credit cards.

Just because you are being pursued by a collections agency does not mean there is nothing

you can do to protect or restore your credit score. *Credit Counselling Canada* can connect you with a credit counsellor that can explain your options either for free or at a low cost. You can contact them by calling 1-866-398-5999 to be connected with a non-profit credit counsellor in your area.



Credit counseling may help you avoid the collection agency.

It is possible that fewer landlords will be reporting tenants to collections agencies without a judgment in the future. Previously, landlords had fewer options to recover money from a tenant that left a unit with unpaid rent owing. The landlord would need to file a claim with Small Claims Court if they wanted a judgment against a former tenant. Many landlords would prefer to skip this step and instead engage a collections agency.

With changes brought in by Bill 184: *The Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act*, landlords can now

file an application with the Landlord and Tenant Board for unpaid rent for up to one year after the tenant has left the unit. This change, like many brought by Bill 184, creates many challenges and potential risks for tenants. However, it also gives tenants the opportunity to attend a hearing, raise concerns about the tenancy, and possibly argue the amount owing. If you vacated the rental unit after September 1, 2021, this new law could apply to you.

Regardless of whether your landlord chooses to pursue you via a collections agency or an application with the Landlord and Tenant Board, the important thing to know is that moving out does not make unpaid rent disappear. If you owe your landlord rent, there are resources available and actions you can take to pay the rent that you owe and preserve your tenancy. ★

If you have any questions about this or any other landlord and tenant matter, contact your local community legal clinic or the Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations.

Karly Wilson is Staff Lawyer, Don Valley Community Legal Services, Unit #1, 1 Leaside Park Drive ON M4H 1R1
Direct: 416-441-1764 ext. 40. Fax: 416-441-0269 Wilsonkl@jao.on.ca
www.donvalleylegal.ca

REFLECTIONS

JOHN JOSEPH MASTANDREA



Put on the Holly

These are the times, in this season we put on the Holly. Before holly was hung in houses to accompany Christmas trees, it was considered to be a sacred plant by the Druids. In contrast, hanging the plant in homes was believed to bring good luck and protection. Holly was also thought to protect homes against lightning strikes.



These are the times where we witness the lightning strikes, every day that is the frequent broken tales that are told. Holly is the hope in our times.

Holly comes from the ancient story of the Holly king and the Oak king.

The Oak king ruled from March 21 to September 21 while the Holly King reigned from September 21 to March 21.

The Oak king draws the light from the sun. The Holly King draws the light from within.

In the season we witness the daylight diminish and call on the season of illumination for candles, Christmas lights and greetings we offer each other.

These are the times, that we might recall the Dickens tale of a Christmas Carol with the broken, miserly life of Ebenezer Scrooge. He is the ionic shadow character whose heart has become shackled by chains of indifference.

Recall the warning call from his late friend Jacob Marley in the voice of three spirits; the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future.

We need to look at our past and listen to the road closures, the detours, the washed-out bridges. So many people are remembering the pre-Covid era as a Utopian era with a deep desire to return. No matter what happens we will not be going back.

We need to look at our present reality and take notice of what is in the ditch beside the road, what is discarded and waiting to return or discovered again. We need to

take a second look at the footsteps we make and take stock of the here and now.

These are the times that we want to see people again, to listen to the voice of people again in real time.

In November we attended a Toronto Raptors basketball game with family. Overcoming the fear of attending a mass gathering was a great milestone. The greatest was having conversations in real time with my niece and nephew about real time issues, tales that are told in the present moment. We need to gaze at the mountain range the horizon ahead and ponder what does lie ahead.

For Ebenezer Scrooge there were two outcomes, one of shadow and the other filled with light.

We need to hold onto the bright light in our lives in the season where we put on the Holly again. These are the times that the Holly and the Ivy, the past and the future, the sunrise and sunset, the despair and great hope is ignited when we confirm the location of the potholes in the broken road and navigate the way forward. In the spirit of A Christmas Carol, "God bless us everyone."★

The Rev. Dr. John Joseph Mastandrea
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manorroadunitedchurch.com
jmastandrea@gmail.com
416-809-6044.

WANDERLUST

CHARLES SCHWARTZ AND SUZANNE HARRIS

Travel in the moment, close to home

by Charles Schwartz

Some of my most cherished travels were experienced without packing a single bag and being close to home -- on my way to work or perhaps a family outing to an amusement park on public transport. Sir Paul McCartney reminded me of this when discussing his creative song-writing process during an interview about his new book, *The Lyrics 1956 to the Present* (refer to note Note no. 1), describing how public transport facilitated his ability to observe and create in the moment, undistracted.

The Beatles' Magical Mystery Tour (2) is reminiscent of some of today's bus tours in the UK bringing participants to an undisclosed destination during a day's journey, transported without the distractions of self-driving, affording camaraderie, laughter, eating, singing (and perhaps a wee dram or two). Being in the moment to observe, discover and enjoy without a care as to how you get to the destination -- and back -- is part of the magic. Trolley parks in the 1920's, too, offered relaxation by a lake, a picnic area or a small amusement park. Nineteenth Century, New York City had one at the northern end of Manhattan (3.)

As a teenager, I could choose from Rockaways' Playland and Rye Playland, (the latter a 1928, gem featured in the movie, *Big*, starring Tom Hanks), Palisades Amusement Park or Coney Island.

Palisades Amusement Park was across The Hudson River, from Manhattan in New Jersey. It claimed to have the world's, largest, salt-water pool, complete with machine-created waves and offered dancing and well-known entertainers. Public Service Bus was the way to go, the advert being: "Skip the hassle and skip the fuss; take a Public Service Bus".



Steeplechase Park ticket.

Coney Island was my favorite. All I needed to do was take the subway to the end of the line to enjoy a day at the beach, take a 76m parachute jump or visit several, great amusement parks. Steeplechase Park (4), and specifically "The Ride" (a horse race on roller-coaster type rails where I was one of the jockeys) was my favorite. For the 15¢ subway fare and a Steeplechase, \$1.10 ten ride-card, I had a full-day's enjoyment on Coney Island,

imagining I had travelled to an exotic destination and still be home for supper.

My work commute was by railway, subway, bus and walking, lasting six hours, during which I could observe a daily sampling of millions of New Yorkers coming and going. I would read, meditate and invent solutions to work problems. I could have driven, but that would have been exhausting and detrimental to my peace.

Travel comes in many forms: the exotic which takes you to the other side of the world and new cultures and the local where you explore the delights of your own back yard. Ultimately, all travel is the travel of your mind.★

Notes:

1. The Lyrics 1956 to the Present: 2021. Liveright Publishing Corporation. 500 Fifth Avenue Corporation.
2. Magical Mystery Tour: the album and the movie - 1967
3. Fort George Amusement Park: <https://www.mcny.org/story/fort-george-amusement-park>
4. Steeplechase Park: <https://www.heartofconeyisland.com/steeplechase-park-coney-island.html>

Charles Schwartz is a native New Yorker, geographer and an avid traveller who has visited all seven continents.

Suzanne Harris lives in the west of England and is a writer and traveller. For more information about Suzanne's writing, see her Amazon page here, <https://tinyurl.com/SuzyDHarris>

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Sunday Dec. 12	10:00 am & 11:00am - Zoom - Advent 3 - Sunday School Presentation
Sunday Dec. 19	10:00 am - Zoom; 11am: in-person - Advent 4 - Lessons and Carols
Friday Dec. 24	4:00 pm - in-person - Christmas Eve Family Service 7:00 pm - in-person - Christmas Eve Communion Service 8:00 pm - Zoom - Christmas Eve Communion Service
Sunday Dec. 26	10:00 am - Zoom - Christmas 1 Service
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"Happy Holidays! Wishing you all warmth and light during this festive season, and may you have a joyous New Year!"

Honourable Marci Ien, M.P. for Toronto Centre

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REBOOT YOUR LIFE

FEMI DOYLE-MARSHALL



How to focus on yourself

Why self-development is a requirement

Everybody I have spoken to in the past year has mentioned their desired success.

Some want change in finances while others may be dedicated towards health. Yet in each conversation what seems to be the focal point is change.

Wanting change.

Wanting progress.

Wanting improvement.

In these conversations talking to coaches, consultants and entrepreneurs alike what is rarely mentioned is the consistent need for personal growth to help with the desire of success. The more you work on yourself the more momentum you gain in any significant area of your life.

It's never too late.

In this short article I am going to unpack a few things that can help you navigate the path to personal breakthrough for self-development.

Find the Peaks and Valleys:

A peak in this discussion is an area of your life where you are at the highest level of development. Some may find that the peak can be noted as an area that you've given the most attention or have the greatest interest in. These are good to know so you can begin to find what you love, like and hate

more rapidly. Spending time on the things that lead you away from fulfillment can become a slippery slope. Staying on your peaks is the best way to avoid the fall.

Valleys are the areas which have the least amount of development. They may be points where you are not as skilled or are not as interested in. You can also choose to improve this or not. Everything is based on what your vision of success is and what tools you may need to move you forward.



RX IMPACT THOUGHTS:

Knowing the peaks and valleys will help you decide where you should be putting your time, energy and money at various points in your life. Don't disregard the value of learning this information.

Amplify Action:

When you know what's working for you have you thought about what would happen if you amplify it? This one approach in development can help you speed up experience and fast track the growth you may want. Some things you have done in the past are working. Some things are not.

Observing what each of them are can aid in you deciding what needs to be done and amplifying the actions that can translate to you being successful, whatever that may look like to you.

Successful patterns leave clues.

Being able to spot them gives you an edge to amplify your results and focus more on you being better every single day.

RX IMPACT THOUGHTS:

Know the actions that have helped you move forward in your business, work and life. Start to observe what skills, habits or interests are the ideal ones to amplify to get you what you want.

Know Yourself:

Only you know you. The more time you take to reflect on your needs and your wants the better you will be at taking the right steps. You can't force favor yet you can focus on what needs to be done.

Ask yourself what needs to be done for me to be okay and succeed in life on my own path. The answers will show themselves to you with time.★

Femi Doyle-Marshall is a serial entrepreneur, author, and REBOOT advisor. He's also the Founder and Education Director of REBOOTX Academy for Coaches & Entrepreneurs. To learn more about him visit www.REBOOTX.com

MONEY

SONNY GOLDSTEIN



How do you define hope?

I waited until after the throne speech to write this column, hoping I would feel positive about the future of our country after an election that brought the same bunch of politicians back to our parliament, knowing that the electorate wanted them to work together to improve our country.



Certainly, the throne speech gave a lot of lip service to those aspirations, talking about defeating the pandemic, making life affordable for all segments of our population and reconciling with our indigenous people, the treatment of whom continues to become even more abhorrent with each new-found grave of children who died in residential schools. The next day, those same politicians were back at the name calling, back biting and accusing their opposites of anything bad they could conjure up, acting like little children taking sides in a playground skirmish. Do I still have hope?

For the last couple of months, the provincial parties have started to campaign for the upcoming election scheduled for next June. All I have seen so far are the attack ads from each of the parties, again name calling and accusing the leaders of the other parties of all kinds of terrible actions they have taken in the past. As disgusting as I find that kind of campaigning, what is even worse is the prospect that we will be subjected to seven more months of that kind of political behaviour. What happened to the old adage, "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all."? I guess that doesn't apply to politics or the people each of the parties have elected to lead them and for one of them to lead our province. No matter who wins the next provincial election, I doubt that I will still have hope.

So, what do I think will happen to our economy in the coming months, with a federal government at the mercy of whichever opposition party they have to turn to in order to remain in power? My observations, and many of which are shared by some of the top financial analysts with whom I have the privilege to consult, is that the politicians will have very little effect on the economy. Yes, infrastructure buildout will play an important role on both sides of

the border with our southern neighbours, who have finally just agreed on a huge spending bill to carry out that build-out. Yes, affordable day care for families will be important across our country and in this province as soon as the Prime Minister and Premier stop politicizing the process and get on with implementing it. Six more months of aid to the businesses and people most severely impacted over the last 20 months of the pandemic and the shutdown of certain parts of the economy is the right way to help them get through their own recovery. All that being said, it is the profitability of the businesses listed on the North American stock exchanges that really determines how well our economy does. That is where I have hope.

Corporate profitability comes from being able to make or buy products and sell them at a profit. The handwringing over inflation and supply chain problems and ineffective port situations and shortages of everything from microchips to fresh food is all just noise that has always been around markets and always will be. Corporate profitability has been increasing at record levels and that is why we are seeing the stock markets at record levels, and it is not about to suddenly stop. Yes, those corporations will have to deal with increasing wages, but they have always had to do that. Central banks may well have to do something about inflation and their only weapon is to raise interest rates, but history tells us that more than 75% of the times in the past that interest rates have gone up, stock markets were not negatively impacted, and when they were, it was for a very short time. I still believe we are in the late middle stages of a secular bull market that, like most others, will last for about 20 years. This one started in 2009 and I believe has another 8 or so years to run. We will see dips and maybe even minor corrections, but one of my most trusted analysts sees the S&P500 reaching the 8,000 level five years from now. That is 70% above where it is as of this writing, or continuing returns of about 14%, as it has done for the last 12 years. Again, for me it is a benchmark against which to measure the performance of our best U.S. fund managers, and they continue to outperform that benchmark.★

Sonny Goldstein, a Certified Financial Planner, is the President of Goldstein Financial Consultants and "Creative Ideas in Financial Planning" For more information, any questions, or a free consultation, call (416) 221-0060, or in writing at #1850-5160 Yonge St., Toronto, ON M2N 6L9

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Client, customer or?



Buying or selling what you should expect from, your realtor?

Chances are that when buying, selling or leasing a real estate property you would be dealing with a Real Estate Agent or Broker. For the subject of this article, we would be referring to such agent or broker as a Registrant – referring to them being registered and licensed with the *Real Estate Council of Ontario (RECO)*.

Even though you would normally be dealing with an individual or individuals your relationship is with the Brokerage (the company that the Registrant is working for). Your contract is with the Brokerage and the registrant is representing the Brokerage.

The question arises what is your relationship with the registrant? Are you a client or a customer or just have a commission agreement with the Registrant?

Does it make a difference? What should you know about the different relationships and why? And shouldn't the Registrant be explaining all this to you?

Yes, the difference is in the level of service, duties and obligations that the Registrant and you owe to each other. And yes, the Registrant should be explaining all this to you in detail – BUT as an informed client or customer you should also be aware of your rights and obligations prior to deciding your relationship.

There are three types of Obligations that a Registrant owes to parties in a real estate transaction: Regulatory, Fiduciary and General. Let's examine each of these to see what is owed to a client and what is owed to a customer.

Regulatory Obligations: are what a Registrant owes to both a client and a customer alike. These are ordained under the *Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002, (REBBA 2002 or Act)* and the various ordinances and regulations arising from there and as administered by RECO.

These include among others, Description of Representative Capacity, Relationship between the parties and the Registrant, Delivery of Agreements, Offers, etc., Accounting of and handling of Trust Money, Commission or Remuneration, and not Inducing, Breaching or making certain promises.

These obligations as stated before are required by law and are owed to both – the client and the customer – no distinctions between the two.

Fiduciary (Legal) Obligations: are what a Registrant owes to a Client! Why only a client? Because they have a legal contract that both have entered as Principal (Client) and Agent (Brokerage) whereby the Brokerage (through its representative, the Registrant) is required to serve in the best interest of the Client.

These include among others, Confidentiality, Loyalty, Avoiding and/or Disclosing Conflicts of interests, Not making Secret Profits, Performing the Mandate, Obeying the Instructions, Negotiating the favourable terms for the Client, Disclosing all pertinent information, and Personal Service – that is doing all services required under the Act personally or with another Registrant. Cannot have a non-registrant do anything which only a registrant should do. In addition, to these, the Registrant must exercise Care and Skill and Ensure Honesty.

General Obligations: These are obligations that are owed to both the Client and the Customer. And these include Exercising Care and Skill and Ensuring Honesty at all times.

So, what relationship do you want with a Registrant? Client or Customer? A great Document is available from any Realtor® called "Working with a Realtor".

Your Obligations: As either a Client or Customer you also have certain obligations – including being bound for the specified period and would be obliged to remunerate the Registrant as per the agreement. Depending on the contract you would also be obliged to deal exclusively with the Registrant and could possibly also be obligated after the agreement expires by what is referred to as "holdover" period.

Do keep in mind that a Client or a Customer can be either a buyer or a seller. You can limit the scope of the representation by both geography and time. In other words, you can specify, for example as a buyer, condos in a specific building and the contract can only be for a specific period – say 2 weeks. This could give you the latitude without being bound. Also, the "holdover" period can be negotiated to eliminate it completely or shorten the time period.

RECO is a very valuable source of information for all things concerning Real Estate and very responsive to any inquiries, you can contact them at RECO.ON.CA.★

Disclaimer: The above is not legal advice – you should seek the advice of lawyer before signing any contract.

The author Mehboob Sheriff is a Registered Real Estate Broker with Homelife/Vision Realty Inc., Brokerage. He has owned two Century 21 offices and has been General Manager and part owner of a Re/Max Franchise office. He has over 45 years of experience in Real Estate and Mortgages and can be reached at 647-703-6786 or sheriff@trebnet.com.

Children and hope

MARY DOWNEY



These days there is much fear-even though our province is 90 percent vaccinated. There are still many who are afraid of going out, or getting together in small groups in a careful way.

There is also a harshness in attitude towards those who are unvaccinated and a fear that they are to blame for anything that might occur that is harmful. There is a lack of love and charity for others.

Children are sensitive to this but can still carry on and have fun with their friends.

A young boy of eleven recently had a medical situation that made him so fearful that his body went rigid with fright. We urged him to relax and assured him that all would be well. Eventually he did relax and all worked out fine. Children quite often forget unpleasant times and move on

easily with life. This is a real gift. There is a saying I love which is a big help in making decisions: "Perfect love casts out fear."

But it's important to be friendly with family and friends without constant distrust and fear.

The Christmas season and other religious holidays are with us. It is important to have fun and enjoy each other.

We have a real sense of hope and joy. Many of us who share a faith in a specific religion have a real sense of protection and love. It's important to share this faith with our children and teach it.

May the end of this year and the beginning of the next bring love and trust and happiness to us and our children.★

The author, a Mississauga resident, has three adult children. She is an experienced tutor and youth group leader. Questions may be addressed to her c/o Hi-Rise.



It's always important to teach our children to be careful- at this time of Covid or any time. Obey the rules of the road-stop. Look and listen before you cross the street; and walk your bicycle across the street. Do not talk to strangers.

CRAFT OF THE MONTH

Mix 2 cups of baking soda, 1 cup of corn starch, and 1 and a quarter cups of water in a saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly. When the mixture is the consistency of mashed potatoes turn it onto a plate and cover with a damp cloth. When cool enough to handle, knead and add a few drops of vegetable colouring. To keep the clay moist you can place it in a plastic bag or air-tight container in the refrigerator.

To use, roll it out on waxed paper to the desired thickness.

Baking soda ornaments



Cut the clay with cookie cutters. Make a hole with a straw for hanging. Allow shapes to dry overnight. Shapes could also be heated in a 350 degree oven for 15 minutes. Continue to heat 5 minutes at a time until completely hard. Cool. They may be painted, then covered with varnish or clear nail polish.★

The author, a Mississauga resident, has three adult children. She is an experienced tutor and youth group leader. Questions may be addressed to her c/o Hi-Rise

MARY DOWNEY

LIVING FREE

What's your story?

ANDRENE
GREGORY



Christmas is the time of year when those of us who celebrate it, think about the grand old story. The story of the immaculate conception and birth of Jesus Christ and how it has shaped everything we have come to believe, accept or reject. The question is, how has that story shaped your reality today?



Take a second to survey your own story. How did you come into being? What stories were you told about your existence? How did you come to live in Canada? What's your mission? What gifts do you wish to leave to this world? Think a little longer, a little harder, a little deeper. Is it any clearer? Today we don't have to return to our ancestral town. There is a manger ready for you, right where you are, to give birth to your purpose.

Growing up, they told me that Jesus came from heaven to earth to save the world. We all have a

deep-seated desire, a longing inside us, to change the world: the untruths, the unnecessary, the immoral, the destructive, and the "reoccurring problems of this world," according to Martin Rutte, author of *Project Heaven and Earth*. We are all dreaming of a better place to call home. Most of us desire to be trendsetters and trailblazers—or to join the movement. Some want to change our culture, while some want to cancel our culture. Either way, we all want to live in a world that is life-affirming, engaging, inspiring, and hopeful.

Depending on how passionate you are about the changes you want to see, your perception of reality will be different from the next person's. Like Jesus, that change you hope to see will drive you to do brave, beautiful and bold things.

But none of us will have the power to change the world until we change our story about ourselves. Jesus did not let his birth in a manger define his

reality. We get so caught up in our own narratives that we often lose sight of the might in the manger. We have to start focusing on the blessing in disguise instead of the burden that besets us.

I encourage you to shift your perspectives and begin creating a new reality where you are in charge of your personal destiny. We were all given the same power to subdue the earth and be of service to each other. We can start to live into that reality. With our stories engrained in our souls, we must choose to let them propel us to new realities. Remember, everything in life begins with a dream followed by a decision to do something about it. So decide today to live the story you want to be told about your life. Merry Christmas!★

Andrene Gregory is a life coach who helps adults live a healthy balanced life. She may be reached at: aggiestrongulc@gmail.com

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SPECIAL DAYS



Christmas 101

The story begins with astronomical alignment of Saturn, Mars, Jupiter, and Venus over 2,000 years ago. And then with the Winter Solstice where we mark the longest night and light festival fires.

Over the past 2,000 years Christians around the globe mark the festival celebrating the Birth of Jesus Christ, a collection of vignettes from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John that reflects the burning hope of the prophet Isaiah. "Every valley shall be exalted, every hill brought low!"

Christmas has both meaning for the religious and secular spiritual persons alike. At the core it is a time to pause and remember long ago, a child was born. Jesus, to be the messenger of hope and grace for the broken of the world. Today we are called to be world menders.

In this time of Pandemic, it would seem that Dr. Seus's Grinch has stolen Christmas. And yet we are reminded that Christmas is a song of living compassion for all.

Unto us a child is born, right now!★

- Rev John Joseph Mastrandrea

LIFE'S JOURNEY

KATARINA VON KOENIG



To compromise or not to compromise

Last month we talked about my positive Beta Reading experience and how my fear of sharing my work with others was healed. After making all the fixes that my friend suggested I submitted the first part of my novella to the publisher. The mix of fear and excitement I felt sending it off to be reviewed was still there, but it was in the hands of the publishing Gods, and I had no choice but to wait.

Patience is not a virtue I possess; so, when a few weeks passed with no response it took Herculean strength not to e-mail the publisher every minute asking "have ya read it yet?" I somehow managed to contain myself and finally the response came.

The publisher, who was in the US, said something to the effect of... "It was great, I enjoyed it a lot, I can't wait to read part two". For someone whose native language isn't English it was very good.

Okay, I paused there, I had checked the grammar and spelling and punctuation and had it checked over by a friend and was pretty sure that I had fixed all the errors! After a few days I read through her comments again. Some comments were just word choice and I was fine with the changes or a re-write of something that needed more information. I still didn't see what she meant by the "English not your native language" comment.

After some more stewing and halfway through the edits I emailed and asked what she meant. What I got back made me laugh. It was as simple as this; the punctuation and word spelling were more British English than American English.

I was fine with converting it into "American English" as she put it. I let out a sigh of relief and continued editing until I got to the end and that's where another comment touched a nerve. She asked for some vital story changes, well within her right as an editor/publisher, but those changes would have made my story not what I wanted it to be.



This took me back to many years ago when I wrote a poem that I submitted to a magazine. The editor then had raved about how amazing the poem was, but he wanted a Haiku. Basically, a short poem with a few lines. My poem was a page long, rhymed and I was quite proud of it.

The magazine editor was adamant saying no Haiku, no publishing. I gave him a Haiku for the publishing credit (no pay just a byline) and I felt rotten. To this day I still spit at that entry in my publication book. I loved my original poem and I had compromised.

I am a lot older now and people pleasing is something I couldn't care less about; it's about being my authentic self. This time I would not give in so easy. I told this new publisher/editor that I knew why she was asking for the changes, and I thanked her for her time but that my story was my story. I had no problem with changing things grammatically, adding more explanation to

things, moving scenes around but I would not change the meaning of the story. I was happy with my story as is. We both agreed that perhaps her magazine wasn't the right one for my story, but we did agree on her publishing two of my poems just the way they were!!!

You know what? It felt good. This time I hadn't compromised and changed my work so much that I didn't recognize it. I made the right choice for my story and me. Maybe someday I will publish the novella as is, but for now the three-part Novella will stay a work for my soul.

This brings me to the moral of the story. Every writer must stay true to their story. Can you live with changing what your story is about just to please someone else? In some cases, sure, why not if it's minor, but if it would cut the heart out of the story then you must be able to say no; You must stand up and do what's best for your characters, and the story itself and not your byline. For me it was easy, I enjoyed writing the story, it gave me something to look forward to every day and it was a true labour of love, so, no compromise.

So ends a year of my writing journey, perhaps next year will be a better year for my creativity and getting my works out there, but if it's not, I enjoy the writing journey.

Until next time, which will literally be next year, keep strong and keep writing.★

Katarina graduated from UofT with a major in political science and classics and a minor in philosophy. She continues her post graduate studies in journalism and adult learning and education and holds certification in media relations. She is passionate about writing and can be reached at: von_koenig2003@yahoo.ca

Year's festivities begin on December 31 (New Year's Eve), the last day of the Gregorian calendar, and continue into the early hours of January 1 (New year's Day).

The earliest recorded festivities in honour of a new year's arrival date back some 4,000 years to ancient Babylon. For the Babylonians, the first new moon following the vernal equinox- the day in late March with an equal amount of sunlight and darkness- heralded the start of a new year. They marked the occasion with a massive religious festival called *Akitu* (derived from the Sumerian work for barley, which was cut in the spring) that involved different

ritual on each of its 11 days. In addition to the new year, Atiku celebrated the mythical victory of the Babylonian sky god *Marduk* over the evil sea goddess *Tiamat* and served an important political purpose. It was during this time that a new king was crowned or the current ruler's divine mandate was symbolically renewed.

Did you know? In order to realign the Roman calendar with the sun, Julius Caesar had to add 90 extra days to the year 36 B.C. when he introduced his new Julian calendar.

The early Roman calendar consisted of 10 months and 304 days, with each new year beginning at the vernal equinox;

SPECIAL DAYS

MARTINE FONTAINE

Why is the day after Christmas called boxing day?

December 26 is not only a day for Santa Claus to catch his breath but a public holiday known as *Boxing Day* in the United Kingdom and other British Commonwealth countries such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand. In spite of its peculiar name, Boxing Day has nothing to do with Fisticuffs, the trashing of empty boxes left over Christmas or the return of unwanted presents to department stores. The term is of British origin, and the Oxford English Dictionary traces its earliest print attribution to 1833, four years before Charles Dickens referred to it in *The Pickwick Papers*. The exact roots of the holiday name are unknown, but there are two leading theories, both of which are connected to charity.



One idea is the December 26 was the day centuries ago when lords of the manor and aristocrats typically distributed "Christmas boxes" often filled with small gifts, money and leftovers from Christmas dinner to their household servants and employees, who were required to work on December 25, in recognition of good service throughout the year. These boxes were, in essence, holiday bonuses. Another popular theory is that the Boxing Day moniker arose from the alms

boxes that were placed in churches during the Advent season for the collection of monetary donations from parishioners. Clergy members distributed the contents of the boxes to the poor on December 26, which is also the feast of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr and a figure known for acts of charity. (Ireland celebrates December 26 as St. Stephen's Day.)

Although the practice of alms giving on December 26 has faded with charity being given in the weeks leading up to Christmas, the Boxing Day name has endured. These days, December 26 is a popular holiday in the United Kingdom and Commonwealth countries for watching sports.

A number of important sporting events are held on Boxing Day and watching them on television is a popular activity. *The International Ice Hockey Federation* world junior hockey championships often start December 26. The Canadian National team often does well in this event. The *Spengler Cup* ice hockey tournament, which is played in Davos, Switzerland, is also shown on major television channels. The Canada national men's team has performed well in this event in recent years.

Many people in Canada have a day off work and many of them visit stores that start their annual sales on Boxing Day. Some shoppers even start waiting outside in the small hours of the morning and many stores open earlier than usual. Now, the sales often last for a whole week between Christmas Day and New Year's Eve and are known as the "Boxing Week Sales" instead of the "Boxing Day Sales". Do not let the crowd or the cold beat you!

HAPPY SHOPPING THIS BOXING DAY.

according to traditions, it was created by Romulus, the founder of Rome, in the eight century B.C. A later king, Numa Pompilius, is credited with adding the months of Janurius and Februarius. Over the centuries, the calendar fell out of sync with the sun, and in 46 B.C. the emperor Julius Caesar decided to solve the problem by consulting with the most prominent astronomers and mathematicians of his time. He introduced the Julian calendar, which closely resembles the modern Gregorian calendar that most countries around the world use today.

As part of his reform, Caesar instituted January 1 as the first day of the year, partly to honour the month's namesake: Janus, the Roman god of beginnings, whose two faces allowed him to look back into the past and forward into the future. Romans celebrated by offering sacrifices to Janus, exchanging gifts with one another, decorating their homes with laurel branches and attending raucous parties. In medieval Europe, Christian leaders temporarily replace January 1 as the first of the year with days carrying more religious signifi-

cance, such as December 25 (the anniversary of Jesus' birth) and March 25 (the Feast of the Annunciation); Pope Gregory XIII reestablished January 1 as New Year's Day in 1582.

The practice of making resolutions for the new year is thought to have first caught on among the ancient Babylonians, who made promises in order to earn the favour of the gods and start the year off on the right foot.

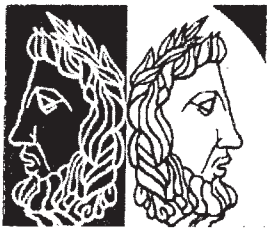
And today...

Toronto's public transit is free New Year's Eve, so leave the car at home. Also free is an open-air-concert at Nathan Phillips Square, in front of Toronto City Hall, which caps off the season's Cavalcade of Lights.

Get that resolution to get in shape underway with Midnight Run Toronto, which hosts a 5K run at 12 a.m. and post party. Google for Days: New Year's complete rundown of New Year's Eve events in Toronto.

Here's to a bright New Year and a fond farewell to the old; here's to the things that are yet to come, and to the memories that we hold. "May you have a prosperous New Year."★

SPECIAL DAYS



January was named for Janis, a two headed Roman god, who looks back and looks forward.

New Year's

Civilizations around the world have been celebrating the start of each new year for at least four millennia. Today, most New

MOVIE REVIEWS



DAVID KING



NO TIME TO DIE HH PG
2h43m

Action Thriller
Profanity: Light

CAST: Daniel Craig, Léa Seydoux, Rami Malek, Lashana Lynch, Jeffrey Wright, Christopher Waltz, Ralph Fiennes, David Dencik, Lashana Lynch
Director: Cary Joji Fukunaga
Viewing Accessibility: In theatres AND via Video-On-Demand Rental platforms including Amazon Prime, Apple and Vudu.

Although it's now deemed "permissibly okay" to once again watch movies in a cinema - albeit with "distance-separation" from others - I'm still feeling comfortably okay sitting at home whilst I ponder what my viewing choice(s) for the evening might be.

That said, the first title that might immediately come to one's mind is Daniel Craig's long-anticipated 5th (and final) performance as James Bond in NO TIME TO DIE which I - along with many other 007-addicted viewing audiences - was looking forward to with eagerly excited anticipation.

Some 5 years after retiring from active service in MI-6 and living a life of seemingly apparent ease in Jamaica, Bond is unexpectedly visited by an old friend and CIA operative, Felix Leiter (Wright) with hopes of getting Bond's help in tracking down a secret MI-6 lab scientist, Valdo Obruchev (Dencik), who has ostensibly defected over to help Bond's old nemesis, the global criminal organisation "Spectre", utilize a potentially catastrophic bio-weapon that he's developed. Known as "Project Heracles", it uses nanobots to assassinate specific targets using their DNA. Although Bond initially declines, he later agrees to help with the mission.

Alas, while the movie has an interesting beginning, the subsequently evolving - and unnecessarily overlong - plotting becomes so progressively convoluted and annoyingly repetitive that I often found myself tuning mentally out of what was happening.

Thinking as I do that NO TIME TO DIE is most likely a film that many Hi-Rise readers are undoubtedly hopeful of viewing - here are some of my "personalized" post-viewing thoughts that might be meaningfully helpful to you in deciding whether or not it's indeed a movie you might want to pay some \$20 Video-On-Demand "rental" money to watch.

Alas, although it's filled with scenes of gorgeously beautiful cinematography, an abundance of impressively creative special effects, and many seemingly impossible action-packed stunts, the problem I have with the film is its overly convoluted script which is often tediously trite, frequently cliched and full of unrealistically manipulated plot holes that are big enough to drive a fleet of Aston Martins through.

Insofar as I have a limited tolerance for watching tediously unrealistic fist fights and prolonged car chases, and scenes where dozens of people are repeatedly killed with automatic machine gun fire (although Bond is somehow miraculously never hit), it wasn't long before they became excessively boring.

As for the acting, while there's a supposedly meaningful sub-plot about Bond's former (fairly serious) love-relationship with Madeleine (Seydoux) - as seen in the previous 2015 Bond film "SPECTRE" - for two people who are supposed in love with each other, it's decidedly strained with lots of unpleasant, unappealing chemistry.

On reflection, I think the main problem I had watching NO TIME TO DIE was the feeling that instead of being excitedly "stirred" by what I was watching, I was simply feeling "shaken."

Put another way, as Brian Tallerico of RogerEbert.com commented in his review: "Perhaps the biggest knock against the film is that there's nothing here that hasn't been done better in one of the other Craig movies."

All things considered, I wish you well in whatever viewing decision you ultimately choose to make.★

[Note: in case you may be interested in also viewing any of the four preceding Daniel Craig Bond films whereupon you may better comprehend more of this movie's plot and some of the characters, you can stream CASINO ROYALE + QUANTUM OF SOLACE + SPECTRE on Amazon Prime, Apple TV+, YouTube, and/or Google Play, while SKYFALL is available on Hulu.]

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Gifts for gardeners

Gardening in December often means trying to keep a Poinsettia healthy and with the many new varieties that's easier than ever. Each year there seems to be a different shade of red or pink or something in between but the real advances in Poinsettia breeding are creating plants that hold on to their green leaves and red bracts for an extended period. That period is so extended that most of us wind up throwing it out because we are tired of it.

There are, of course, those among us that can't bear to toss a living plant in the compost but I usually remind those folks that they pay three times as much for a dozen Roses and have no compunction tossing those when they fade after a week or two. There's something about it having roots that makes us forget that it is a seasonal plant. Is it possible to keep a Poinsettia and get it to rebloom next year? Theoretically yes, but it is not easy to do in most of our homes.

If you are looking for something different there are other choices. Garden centres will usually have a range of colours in Cyclamen with their nodding blooms and they have lovely, patterned leaves as a



Cyclamen thrive in a cool climate.

bonus. They do have a slight problem as a houseplant. They thrive in a cool climate and that is usually cooler than we like to keep our homes. In a warm room their leaves will start to turn yellow and die off. If you can find a cool spot for them, they will grow and bloom for a long time and I don't get tired of them.

Gifts for gardeners are easy to find and for balcony gardeners it can often be a good gardening book. There are a variety of choices that are just wonderful reading during our long, non gardening months and not, how to, books that are beyond the

scope of our limited time and space. Carol J Michel's *Digging and Delighted: Live your best gardening life*, is a series of essays that will enchant you even if you don't have the space to follow some of her dreams. Ellen Zachos' *The Forager's Pantry, Cooking with Wild Edibles*, will encourage you to go for long walks in the spring to find some of the hidden treasures that she carefully gathers and eats. She outlines an amazing array of edibles that are easy to find once you know what to look for.

A more practical note is Darryl Cheng's, *New Plant Parent, Develop your green thumb and care for your houseplant family*. Darryl's advice is clear and sensible and covers a wide range of topics. For Hi Rise readers, he is one of you, living and growing plants in a Toronto condo. I know each of these authors and heartily recommend their books to you. ★

Ken Brown is a horticulturist with extensive houseplant and container gardening experience. He will gladly answer questions addressed to him c/o Hi Rise. He currently devotes his time to his website www.gardening-enjoyed.com

Happy Holidays

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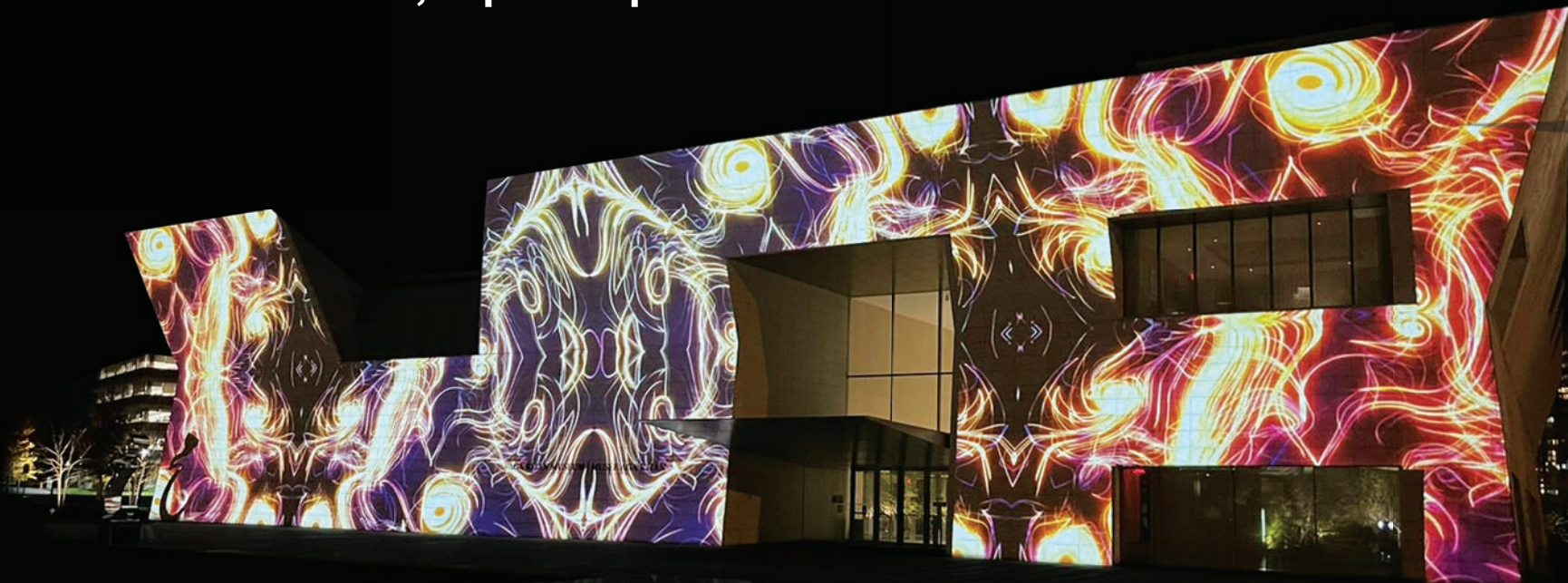
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