

Life of tow truck driver isn't easy

Many lonely hours spent on side of roads waiting for business

By Sofia Rojas

It was the afternoon of Oct. 6 Thanksgiving weekend. The air was crisp, the sky clear and streets were scattered with orange, red and yellow leaves of Streetsville, in Mississauga – a sure sign that fall had arrived.

There was a cool breeze coming in through the open garage door of TKL Towing Company as Wayne Fields backed up his 2011 Chevy 1ton tow truck with a dented-up car hitched to the rear.

The people who had owned the car were standing outside, patiently waiting to speak with Fields. The small East Indian man, owner of the dented-up car, rubbed his forehead as Fields explained the best way to approach the situation.

After a quick handshake, Fields entered the garage and took a seat in his truck as his customer left. He seemed to be looking for something; eventually pulling out a pack of Canadian Classic cigarettes.

I stood by the side-view mirror of the monster truck. "Was it his fault?" I asked.

"No, he was T-boned at an intersection when someone ran a red light." He pulled out a smoke and lit it with his silver Punta Cana zippo lighter.

I'll admit, I was a little intimidated by the 50-year-old, typical-tow-truck-looking man. With his salt and pepper moustache, balding head and beer belly, I wasn't sure how to approach the first question. I knew a little bit about him from our previous encounter.

He had lived in Alberta for six years selling cars, until he decided to move back to Ontario. His longtime friend Todd Keeley, and owner of the tow truck company, had offered Fields a job after he returned and he has been working there ever since.

I wasn't sure how to begin asking questions, so I just jumped right into it.

"So tell me a little bit about your job here. Describe what you like about it." I asked, watching him take a drag and blowing the smoke upwards and out of the truck. The sunlight was shining in through the large entrance of the garage, reflecting off his blue eyes as smoke clouded his face slightly.

"I love my job..." he replied, taking another drag. "No...that's a lie. I like my job sometimes.

"It does get lonely, though. I basically just sit in my truck all day on the side of the highways waiting for something to happen. Usually play Angry Birds on my phone, or listen to music to pass the time." I could tell he was trying to think about things to say to make him seem more interesting.

"It's exciting in a twisted way, almost. Seeing different kinds of car crashes and how easily a car can be just totally smashed and ripped apart, kind of sad."

It wasn't really what I was looking for but that was all I was going to get out of him so I took a different approach. Maybe he would be able to tell me more about the things he disliked about it.

At this question, a small smile spread across his face, but his eyes were looking down at his dusted-up shoes.

"Having to put gas in my truck and not reeling anything in after. Putting out money for this job but not getting anything in return. Makes me think if this job is benefiting me or making things harder. And the people..." he said. His voice was rough and low. He tapped the ashes off the tip of his smoke.

I couldn't help but think that Fields basically had to almost hope for something bad to happen to someone on the road.

"An accident can be very hectic. The people involved are usually in shock, or traumatized. It's sad to even say I've seen people die on the highway because they were walking around in a daze not noticing the cars doing 120 km/h. Then there is that whole 'Tow truck divers are scavengers,'" he explained, rolling his eyes.

I had asked if he believed that or saw himself as a scavenger.

"No I don't. What would people do without tow truck drivers? We are essential in so many ways. Without us, who would take the broken down cars off the road?"

"Where would you put your brand new car that's now upside down bent in half in a ditch? They only think that because we are only there when something bad has occurred."

He had said more bad than good about his job. I needed to ask a question that shed some heavenly light on the topic, and so I thought up of one last question on the spot, hoping something good would come out of it.

"What have you learned from working here? Not physical, but mental. Something that will stick with you?"

He dropped his cigarette butt to the concrete floor and stepped out of his car.

"Good question..." he replied, putting out his smoke with his shoe. He shut the door and locked the car.



Photo by Sofia Rojas

Wayne Fields, 50, has been working as a tow truck driver for five years. He says he's towed some badly smashed up cars but it says to him, it's "exciting in an almost twisted way." He admits he has seen tragedy too.

"I guess you could say I've seen so many things, mostly bad, that nothing

would faze me.

"But at the same time, I've seen mira-

cles, and the miracles are what stick with me more than the nightmares."

Unique coffee changes life of Trenton woman

Proponents say special mushroom used in coffee has many health benefits

By Myriam Lublink

Sukaina Okorofsky had no idea that when she went to a GanoExcel meeting in early 2012, her mood and way of life would drastically change.

Okorofsky, 28, is a stay-at-home mom who was born in Cambridge, Ont. and grew up in Thornhill. She moved to Tren-

ton with her husband, Matt, who is in the Canadian Forces.

Okorofsky was never one to do more than was needed because of her lack of energy. She figured that this lack of energy was 'just the way she was' until she spoke with a close friend that had been suffering with depression. Her friend told her all about the symptoms and Okorofsky knew that there was a bigger issue than just feeling tired.

"All that I could think was 'Shoot, that's what I have.'"

Okorofsky was pregnant with her second child at the time, so she was hesitant to start anti-depressants as she wanted to

have a healthy pregnancy and be able to breastfeed afterwards.

"That's when I heard about gano coffee from my doula [a labour coach that helps during the pregnancy and birth]. She told me all about the health benefits and how it really helped her health in the past so I decided I'd go to her GanoExcel meeting and hear what they had to say about gano coffee."

Cathy Wong is a licensed naturopathic doctor and an American College of Nutrition-certified nutrition specialist. Wong is the author of the book, *The Inside Out Diet*, and has spent the last 11 years researching and

teaching complementary and alternative medicine.

"Ganoderma lucidum is a mushroom used to promote health in traditional Chinese medicine. Advocates claim that ganoderma lucidum can help keep cholesterol in check, relieve fatigue, tame inflammation, build stamina and support the immune system."

Okorofsky said that she wasn't sure if it was a joke at first but she figured she could go to the gano coffee meeting and at least listen. She realized that gano coffee wasn't just something to buy and consume, but that she could become an affiliate and earn money selling any gano

products.

"Some people do it for a business and some people do it just because they want to get healthy. I saw a business opportunity and in turn, it's helped my well-being too."

Okorofsky went away from the meeting with some sampler packs ready to try out what she had just heard all about. She said that after just a week, she could already feel the difference that the gano was making in her body.

"I felt seriously amazing. With all that energy, I got up and cleaned my house top to bottom. I get up every morning and I feel happy."

Therapy dogs share the love

Meaningful work of enthusiastic pets and owners brings joy to patients

By Emily Cumming

This year marks 20 years since the first therapy dog was put to task in Ontario, and today, their meaningful work continues to bring joy to the lives of elderly and ill patients in health centres across Quinte.

St. John Ambulance currently has therapy dogs visiting in 21 health facilities across Hastings County in towns and cities such as Belleville, Trenton, Tweed, Stirling and Madoc. The dogs visit patients in all kinds of health centres such as hospitals, nursing homes, retirement homes and Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) programs.

The impact of these visits is immediate and evident.

"You go into a room with a dog, there are smiles on faces," says Joyce Fowler, the therapy dog program co-ordinator and evaluator at the St. John Ambulance in Belleville. Fowler adds that patients have told her that the visits make them feel calmer and "connect them to the outside world."

Fowler and her dog Bandit, a Shetland sheepdog (more commonly known as sheltie), have a weekly schedule of patients to visit throughout Trenton. During a visit to the VON day program recently, Bandit's effect on both staff and patients was unmistakable – faces lighted up, Bandit's name was called out and he

was lavished with scratches behind his ears and pats on his head.

Certain patients have clearly developed a significant bond with this four-legged creature, and Bandit compliantly and calmly reciprocated this bond by allowing them to bestow tight hugs and enthusiastic kisses, without growling or barking, never showing a sign of aggression, which is a key quality in becoming a therapy dog with St. John Ambulance.

According to Fowler, for a dog to successfully qualify for the therapy dog program, size and breed is not what counts, it is the dog's natural personality and disposition that determines their suitability for the job.

Fowler added they currently have all kinds of breeds and sizes participating in the program throughout Quinte, from a three-legged Miniature Poodle all the way to a Bernese Mountain Dog and everything in between.

Dogs usually join the therapy dog program at the age of one or two, and they are not trained, but instead are assessed through a series of tests to measure the dog's reaction to scenarios that mimic real life situations. The program is run by volunteers and at no cost to patients or health facilities for this service.

Asked why she got involved with the therapy dog program, Fowler recalled the years her mother spent in a nursing home and reflected on how this program could have been beneficial to her. After retiring from a career with the military, Fowler decided to get involved with the St. John Ambulance as a volunteer for the therapy dog program because "what better way than to involve my dogs?"



Photo by Emily Cumming

Grace Mylles pets Bandit, a therapy dog from the St. John's Ambulance, at the Trenton Memorial Hospital in Trenton.

Quinte area fencing club welcomes people of all ages

By Sandra Kielback

The sport of fencing has been around for hundreds of years originating in Spain, but a formal fencing club has only been in the Quinte area going on two years.

Rob McFadden, head coach and principal at Harmony Public School in Corbyville, started the Loyalist Fencing Club last year in his school gym, intriguing people of all ages around the Belleville area to come out and try the sport.

McFadden, along with Paul Williams, who also coaches at the Kingston Fencing Club, teach two classes a week, and they also host one open bouting session a week.

Now in its second year, the Loyalist Fencing Club has 45 members ranging in age from eight to over 50.

McFadden teaches his students all three styles of fencing – foil, sabre, and epee.

With his class for children, he focuses mostly on sabre, and teaching the class the basics of sword fighting. Sabre is vastly different from epee and foil, which have similar rules. To get a point in sabre, you can either use the edge or the tip of the blade, which is more like traditional sword fighting. In epee and foil, you can only get a point using the tip of the blade.

Fencing is a great way to stay in shape and to meet new people in the area and from around the province.