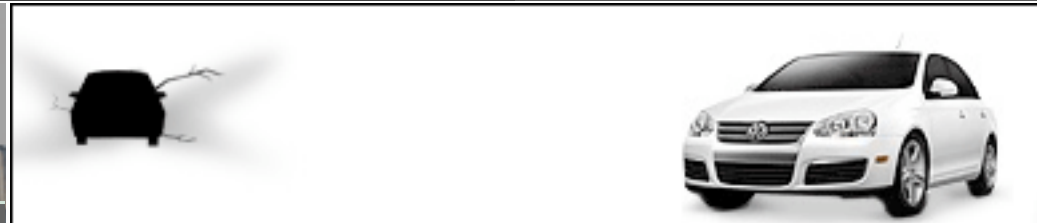


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Making a difference

Firm uses strategic design to enhance experiences

HEATHER BUCHAN
METRO TORONTO
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While there are numerous initiatives in Toronto aimed at improving our quality of life, one local firm is doing so in a unique way.

Called OpenCity Projects, the three-year-old consultancy firm uses strategic design to make public spaces and the communication between Toronto communities more meaningful experiences for everyone.

"How we define and interact with our neighbours alters the very way we experience our city," said Wendy Gold, who, with Job Rutgers, founded Open-City.

Last year, they partnered with the City of Toronto to create a "creative lab," enlisting industrial design students at the Ontario College of Art and Design to identify opportunities to enhance neighbourhood experiences around the city.



HEATHER BUCHAN/FOR METRO TORONTO

Wendy Gold, co-founder of OpenCity Projects, is flanked by her business partner Job Rutgers, right, and her brother, Jordy Gold, the firm's sustainability strategist.

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Initiatives Across the country

HALIFAX Cyclists of all ages and skill levels, and other self-propelled people on wheels, rode to the Halifax Commons yesterday to celebrate sustainable and active transportation. The open street party was part of HRM Bike Week, which kicked off last Friday and runs through Sunday.

OTTAWA Over the weekend, Bicycles for Humanity — a volunteer-run grassroots organization — collected more than 400 bicycles in a drive that will help improve access to health care, education, food, and employment for people in need.

EDMONTON "Knowing the farmers that grow my food can make a living is critically important. More of the money we're spending on food can stay in our community," said Jessie Radies of the Good Food Box Project, one of two recent initiatives to make eating local easier.

CALGARY The Lilac festival drew record crowds yesterday, expected to surpass 100,000 people. 4th St. BRZ director Jennifer Rempel said, "We had two private businesses give us free parking for our visitors ... and every year the support keeps growing," said Rempel.

VANCOUVER In Vancouver, Oscar-winner Goldie Hawn joined several local community leaders at a gala held by the Face the World Foundation this weekend that raised about \$800,000 for various charities in the city. It's a winning fundraising formula: Throw a big party to raise big money. For her part, Hawn said she will "support anything for children."

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atmosphere, the student proposed a mural installation and public garden that would celebrate the area's history.

"Other students went to Parkdale and found that there was a real social/economic divide between Parkdale and Queen West," said Gold. One proposed creating appliqué images of the future development of the neighbourhood to put in TTC shelters throughout the area so viewers could see the progression of the area over time.

From 80 submitted concepts, 22 were chosen for the Toronto Unbound exhibit last June as part of Luminato. Of those, the top six were chosen by the City of Toronto to be implemented across the city.

Due to the success of last year's initiative, this year OpenCity Projects has teamed with Luminato, Toronto's Festival of Arts and Creativity (June 5-14), to present a similar exhibit called Icebreakers — Creating Common Ground by Design.

Launching at the Luminato Box, it "explores design and creativity's crucial roles in breaking down common barriers in the urban environment," said Gold. "We're engaged to create really unique public spaces that reflects our diverse cultural community."

More about Sunny Side



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Garden brings touch of green to Red Rocket

In a fresh bid to spruce up the Red Rocket, the TTC has carpeted the roof of its Eglinton West station with an 835-square-metre garden.

Green trash lumped in with the rest?

Toronto garbage workers have been routinely mixing green bin organics with regular garbage that is trucked to a Michigan landfill, say city employees interviewed by Torstar News Service.

Life sentence for local man

Supporters of an Ontario man sentenced to life behind bars in Ethiopia want the Harper government to suspend aid to the African country over what they consider a politically motivated sham.

No fun in the park

Nearly 3,400 Ontario students who spend their summers working in provincial parks say the government is ripping them off by \$400 to \$600 each by refusing to give them holiday pay — a move they say is an abuse of labour laws.

Iranian visa students on the rise at Canadian universities

Iran has become a top source country of foreign students to Canada in the last five years. The number of Iranian visa students is up 50 per cent from two years ago.

editor's picks

The Gosselins are apart, but show goes on with new 'Jon&Kate Plus 8' segments

NEW YORK - Reality TV mom Kate Gosselin says she feels a sense of peace after making the decision to separate from her husband, Jon.

Foes of Niger president say slow-motion coup is under way

NIAMEY, Niger - His opponents call it the "slow-motion coup."

Michael Jackson's wishes preserved after lengthy hearing, but not without a little drama

LOS ANGELES - The wishes Michael Jackson expressed in his will began to come into reality Monday during a lengthy court hearing, with his mother placed firmly in charge of rearing his children and the two men he designated still at the reins of his financial empire.

'We always live in fear': Deaths of Christians shows fragile existence of Pakistani minorities

GOJRA, Pakistan - Almas Hameed grabbed his 7-year-old daughter and stumbled out of their smoke-filled home as she pleaded in vain to bring her pet parrots. His wife, father and two other children did not survive.

Friend: Americans missing in Iran were hiking in wrong place; family asks for safe return

SAN FRANCISCO - Freelance journalist Shane Bauer planned to cover the elections in northern Iraq's self-ruled Kurdish region. His girlfriend, Sarah Shourd, was going with him on a backpacking trip. Another friend stayed put, sick with a cold.

