

The Daring Issue

We all dream of dropping everything to pursue our passions. These Torontonians actually did. Find out why they think you should too.

Hippie van man on his 16-country road trip

Like many other millennials, Aaron Neilson-Belman went backpacking in southeast Asia. When he came home, he was already eager for his next adventure. He had recently bought a VW van and had an artist paint a hippie-inspired mural across it, so he decided a road trip was in order. At that point he had been freelancing as a website developer and photographer and decided to take his gig on the road. He drove out of Toronto in August 2013, reached Buenos Aires by December 2014. "Driving in Peru was such a wild adventure with the dirt roads on the side of a cliff with a huge drop," he says. "You meet great people everywhere you go, that was one of the best parts too, breaking down cultural barriers and stuff." Currently, the van is undergoing renos, getting ready for the next big trip. With a rebuilt engine and custom interiors, it's a little more livable. Living in your van is the #vanlife trend after all. He's also getting a new mural painted. "One idea I'm toying with is to drive up to the Northwest Territories." Neilson-Belman recommends dropping everything to travel: "There is no better way to learn about yourself or the world we live in. You trade in your misconceptions generated by movies, the media and other third-party sources, for priceless first-hand experiences." — *Nikki Gill*

The skydiving grandpa

Elly Gotz, a Holocaust survivor, dreamed of becoming a pilot before the war. After living in Norway and South Africa, Gotz and his wife, Esme, came to our fair country in 1964. "I love Canada. I'm a great Canadian patriot. I learned here how to fly an airplane. I fulfilled my dream of being a pilot," he says. Last July, the day after Canada celebrated its 150th birthday, Gotz took his dreams of flying to the next level. He decided to go skydiving for the first time at the age of 89. "I wore a big sign that said Canada 150," he says. "The moment you jump out of the airplane into the cold air at 13,000 feet, your heart stops for a minute, but it resumes." This March, Gotz will turn 90, and he and his wife will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary. The daring Torontonian will also be releasing a memoir in the near future. When it comes to jumping out of planes, this grandpa says it's perfect for people "who have that special love of space, of flying, of being in an aircraft." — *Mackenzie Patterson*

The colour-blind finance pro turned artist

Despite the fact that he's colour-blind, North York artist Anthony Ricciardi has had a lifelong love of painting. Yet instead of chasing his dream, he chose a stable career in finance. A gig at a real estate investment fund downtown paid the bills, but he always found time for painting. "I considered myself a full-time artist because the hours I was putting in painting were almost the exact same I was putting in at my job," he says. Then last February, the artist received an offer to paint a mural in New York City.

