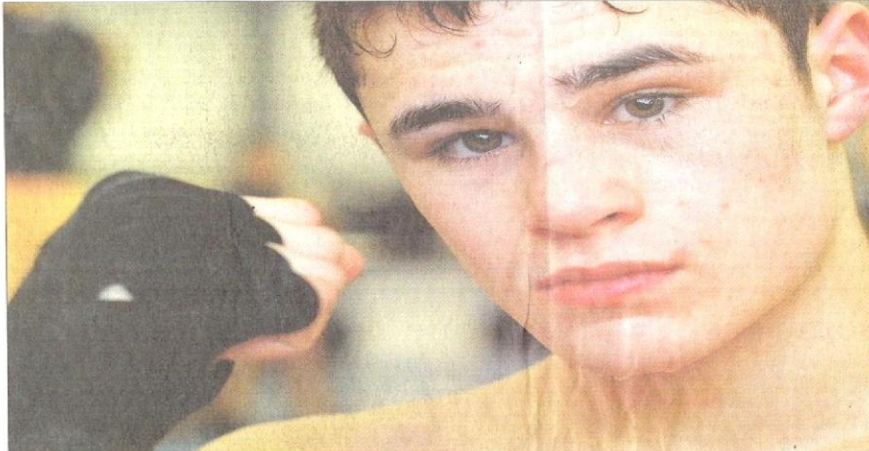


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His first bout



Muay Thai fighter Jon La, 16, seen here at Titan Combat & Fitness on Tuesday, is ready for his first bout of "full-body sport."

Critics call Muay Thai 'human cockfighting,' but to Jon La it's the 'king of martial arts'

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GUELPH — Jon La has the rippling muscles and superb fitness level of a finely honed athlete — immensely impressive for a boy of 16.

Jon also has the soft-spoken, respectful demeanour of a confident, determined martial arts student itching to put his abilities

to the test.

He's about to get his chance: he'll compete Saturday evening in West Seneca, New York State, in an amateur bout against an equally determined 16-year-old American boy in the ancient Thai kick boxing sport of Muay Thai.

Gaining devotees across North America, some critics have called Muay Thai "human cockfighting," though not Jon or his in-

structor and coach, Jay Bathija of Titan Combat & Fitness.

"I disagree. It's no different than wrestling or any other sport," Jon said.

That hasn't totally alleviated the fears of his parents, Tuan La and Cathy Harding-La, that he'll be roughed up.

"My mom's obviously worried; so is my dad." But they're supporting him, said the five-foot, seven-inch, 145-pound strapping youth. "They know I want to do it."

Dad Tuan La said Wednesday he's taking comfort in the fact it's a regulated sport and his son has a good, responsible instructor.

▶ SEE MUAY THAI ON PAGE A5

“ You can never be the best. There will always be someone better, but I enjoy doing it. It keeps you in shape.

JON LA, 16-YEAR-OLD MUAY THAI FIGHTER GETTING READY FOR A BOUT SATURDAY

Two restaurants hoping to open in south end

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GUELPH — Two new restaurants are in negotiations about moving into the Campus Estates Plaza location left vacant when Philty McNasty's shut down in January.

Kyma, a 150-seat privately owned restaurant specializing in Greek and Mediterranean food, and Cora's, a chain restaurant specializing in breakfast, are both hoping to be open at the Harvard Road location this summer.

"We've targeted a couple of prospects and we should know more in about 30 days or so," property manager John Kabucis said Wednesday when asked about new tenants. "We're in negotiation and they're going very well."

Philty McNasty's closed its 6,300-square-foot location bordering Harvard Road and Gordon Street on Jan. 10.

The frontman and co-owner of Kyma is Dino Roumel, former co-owner of the popular Greek Garden restaurant on York Road.

Roumel and as-yet unidentified partners are planning a 5,500-square-foot restaurant that would employ about 30 people. It would also include a 20-seat lounge area.

"We're really excited. I really think there's so much opportunity in the south end," Roumel, 44, said.

"We've been looking around for a while now and I knew Philty McNasty's was in a bit of trouble so I kept in touch with the landlord," he said. "It's going to be a lot of Greek food and a lot of seafood."

Roumel said the proximity of the spot to the university and several hotels make it a great location for his type of restaurant.

▶ SEE EATERIES ON PAGE A2

Ghostbusters say old Guelph jail haunted

Ronald Wolf for The Mercury
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GUELPH — A group of Hamilton-based ghost investigators have probed the Guelph Correctional Centre and claim to have detected paranormal activity at the site.

Stephanie Cumerlato, co-founder of Haunted Hamilton, said a team from the organization visited the property's jail on Nov. 25, 2007, and "it almost felt like the prisoners were still there, trapped inside the jail forever."

Haunted Hamilton has been conducting paranormal investigations in the region since 1999.

It also holds ghost walks and events such as seminars and



The Guelph Correctional Centre was built in 1911 and closed in 2003.

workshops on how to properly use Ouija boards for spirit communication.

Cumerlato said the Guelph jail

probe began with a two-hour tour, then "darkness started to creep in."

▶ SEE GHOSTS ON PAGE A4

Prof seeks children to take part in safety studies

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GUELPH — Injuries are the leading cause of preventable death for children over the age of two, and that's reason enough to examine the risks that surround children and the way children make decisions about their own safety.

"The big thing, the eye-opening thing, is that most of these injuries are preventable," said Barbara Morrongiello, director of the Child Development Research Unit at the University of Guelph. "But there's surprisingly little research about

how children make decisions around risk. If we want to develop programs and best practices, we have to understand their thinking."

Morongiello and her team are looking for some local families to take part in a number of studies around children and safety. She needs families with children aged two to 12.

"Take dog bites, for instance.

"Dog bites are not that frequent, but they are often catastrophic when they happen to small children," Morrongiello said.

▶ SEE SAFETY ON PAGE A2



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A LOOK AT TOMORROW'S WEATHER
FULL FORECAST PAGE A2

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The former Guelph Correctional Centre on York Road was the site of an investigation by a group of paranormal investigators named Haunted Hamilton. They say they found evidence of ghosts.

Guelph psychic on hand for paranormal sightings

► GHOSTS FROM PAGE A1

"The long hallways started to feel like they were closing in on us. The air became heavy and mysterious," she said. "It was an overwhelming feeling that became even more intense as it got darker and darker."

The organization was on site with Guelph psychic Wanda Hewer and Cumerlato said several paranormal observations were noted.

"One incident that stands out in my mind was when we were walking through the infirmary area. I was the first one up the steps and was met by a long hallway with a bunch of doors on either side. I quickly saw a black shadow dart from one room to the other, across the hall.

"That scared me enough to not want to venture any further so the rest of the team had proceeded a bit further until we all got the sense that we shouldn't be in there. We looked around a few rooms and then left the area immediately.

"But before we did, there was one patient room that both Hewer and I stepped into. She started pacing in a circle and said that she was picking up on a spirit in there that was very nervous and anxious. Maybe he was waiting for a procedure to be done? We're not sure. But Hewer did sense that he was torn up about something. (The spirit) couldn't sit still because of the pain."

Hewer called the suspected jail spirits "very strong ghosts."

"I experienced one spirit in a triage area in a patient's room and I felt I started to become his spirit. I felt like he had no shirt on and burning skin. It was stinging pain all over my back shoulders and some of my chest. I am not sure if it was burned from heat or a burning sensation from injury such as lashings," said Hewer.

She said she felt reluctant to leave that room — as though she would be in trouble if she did.

Another reported ghost encounter was in a common room, while Hewer worked on a Ouija board. She said a male spirit walked up behind her wondering what she was doing.

"I could see he was muscular and had a broad build without a shirt. He had fair hair and he was young, in his early 20s, but I could not see his face and he wouldn't answer my questions," Hewer said.

Hewer also later reported feeling a spirit walk through her, said Cumerlato.

Cumerlato said another member of the team saw an apparition standing in cell number five at the facility and that many people on the visit felt a strong and threatening presence in cell 11.

Terri Pontichuk, another Haunted Hamilton investigator, also reported an experience in cell 13 on the visit, she said. Cumerlato said he was carrying diving rods and they would



This file photo depicts the Guelph Correctional Centre after a riot about cigarette prices in 1989. A team says the jail may be haunted.

swing and cross in that room, more strongly than in any other cell.

"All in all, the location is definitely haunted, not by one, but by many spirits that are still trapped there," Cumerlato said.

Built in 1911, the Guelph Correctional Centre was a revolution in the provincial corrections system. It focused on rehabilitation, not punishment. Before its last operating structure closed, in 2008, it offered inmates work experience in such things as agriculture, machine shops and in a wool mill. It frequently housed more than 600 inmates.

Today, it amounts to about 30 empty residential and administrative buildings — and behind them, a complex of abandoned industrial buildings.

The province owns the property and is studying possible future uses for the property. It has proved a popular venue for filmmakers. In 2006, it served as the backdrop for *Blindness*, a \$25-million film that starred Julianne Moore and Mark Ruffalo.

Ronald Wolf is a northern Ontario-based journalist and author of a weekly online column called Things That Go Bump in a Canadian Night.

“She started pacing in a circle and said that she was picking up on a spirit in there that was very nervous and anxious.”

STEPHANIE CUMERLATO, CO-FOUNDER OF HAUNTED HAMILTON

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