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## Star kicks off 96th Santa Claus Fund drive



BY LESLIE FERENC  
STAFF REPORTER

Holiday flyers are dropping on doorsteps like leaves from the trees — the first sign that Christmas is nearly upon us.

Plenty of kids are already poring over the glossy pages, circling this and that as they prepare for the big day.

But for thousands of other

children in our city, there will be little to celebrate this holiday season. More and more families are facing hard times. For some parents, just putting food on the table is a daily struggle.

And Christmas is the most difficult time of year. With little or no money for even basic necessities, the only toys some

children will see Christmas Day are those pictured in well-thumbed flyers.

No doubt, we're living in difficult times.

The world continues to mourn the events of Sept. 11, and the aftershock has created political and economic instability around the globe and right here. Workers in all sectors are

bracing for what's to come.

And yet in the darkness, there is light.

In a global outpouring of generosity, hundreds of millions have been raised for the massive relief effort south of the border.

Sept. 11 has also heightened awareness about the need to take care of our neighbours,

says Rose Cudney, executive director of The Star's Santa Claus Fund, which launches its 96th campaign today.

Some agencies fear resources have been overtaxed and there may be little left over to meet the needs of the poor in our own community.

➤ Please see Santa, A18

## Here comes Harry Potter



Harry Potter (Daniel Radcliffe) and his best friend Ron Weasley (Rupert Grint), left, arrive late for class as their foe Draco Malfoy (Tom Felton) watches in a scene from 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone'.

## Exclusive: Writer J. K. Rowling answers her readers' questions

Once upon a time, a pretty young British woman was travelling on an interminable train journey, when all of a sudden an idea jumped into her head. This idea gave birth to a story and then dramatically exploded into the concept for a whole series of stories that have changed the course of popular literature — and now seem ready to do the same for film.

This is one remarkable fairy tale that came spectacularly true for the author J.K. Rowling, who, only as recently as 1996, was an impoverished single mother, living with her daughter in a mouse-infested Edinburgh apartment with barely enough money to cover the bills. Five years later, her stories have



**'The amazing and magical thing is that the character of Harry just popped into my head. Looking back, it was all quite spooky.'**

AUTHOR J.K. ROWLING

sold an unprecedented 110 million copies and made her a multi-millionaire many times over.

The secret of her success, of course, is a lovable, bespectacled boy wizard named Harry Potter who undergoes dramatic otherworldly adventures, and is possessed of unruly black hair and a trade-

mark lightning scar down his forehead — a legacy of his run-in as a newborn with the evil, dark Lord Voldemort.

As the Potter publicity machine goes into high gear for the Canadian movie launch on Nov. 16 (it opens in Britain today), Rowling sat down with a British news agency on condition that a percentage

from the fees for the interview would go to Comic Relief, her favourite charity of the moment.

**QUESTION:** Is J.K. Rowling your real name or is it your 'writer's' name?

**J.K. ROWLING:** My real name is Joanne Rowling. My publishers wanted another initial, so I gave myself my favourite grandmother's name as a middle name, which was Kathleen.

**QUESTION:** Were you encouraged to write as a child?

**ROWLING:** I didn't need to be encouraged. I was always writing. I think my parents thought of it as a hobby. I never told them it was all I wanted to do with my life. They

➤ Please see 'I expected, A30

## Bush promises no let-up in battle

War won't stop during Muslim holy month

BY LINDA DIEBEL  
STAFF REPORTER

WASHINGTON — U.S. President George W. Bush says the "net is tightening" around terror suspect Osama bin Laden and vows the war in Afghanistan won't stop for the upcoming Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

"The enemy won't rest during Ramadan, and neither will we," Bush said yesterday at the White House. "We're going to pursue this war until we meet our objectives."

Difficulties in achieving those objectives hit home in Washington last night when an American military helicopter carrying Special Forces crashed, reportedly in bad weather, at an undisclosed location in Afghanistan while trying to rescue a sick soldier.

However, the Pentagon said the crew, which scrambled aboard a second helicopter on a secret mission, made it out safely. Four crew members were injured, one seriously, but none had life-threatening

injuries. It was not known if the sick soldier was rescued.

The downed helicopter was later destroyed by F-14 Tomcats flying from the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt, a Pentagon statement said, to prevent the helicopter from being captured.

Earlier yesterday, Pentagon spokesperson Rear Admiral John Stufflebeem said efforts

### War on Terrorism

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to ferry in more elite commandos by Blackhawk helicopters — putting three or four times an estimated two dozen commandos already on the ground — have failed due to freezing rain.

Meanwhile, U.S. warplanes were sent in to aid an Afghan opposition leader who came under attack by the Taliban on Thursday, a senior U.S. government official said

➤ Please see Bush, A8

## Suicide warriors: Dying for a cause

'Deactivating' extremists not easy, analysts say

BY LYNDA HURST  
FEATURE WRITER

So what happens next?

Even if the war in Afghanistan ends in a victory of sorts, even if Osama bin Laden is captured or killed, even if Islamic grievances are addressed and political talks begun, will the threat of terrorist attacks on the West disappear?

No, say terrorism analysts, likely not for years.

The Japanese surrender in World War II put a stop to kamikaze suicide bomber pilots. But that was a conventional war, with accepted rules of engagement. This conflict is anything but.

"De-activating" Islamic ex-

tremists who are willing to sacrifice themselves while killing others won't be easy, even for the combined intelligence forces of the Western powers now being mobilized against them.

"How we defuse these guys is an unresolved question, one of many that have opened up since Sept. 11," says Ian Lesser, senior specialist on terrorism at the Rand Corporation, a high-level U.S. think tank. Whatever the political resolution to the current crisis, "we'll still be dealing with individuals who've grown up in a terrorist milieu."

The key question for Matthew Devost, director of the Terrorist Research Centre in Washington, is, "How many more of them are out there?"

By "out there," he means inside here, North America. Many of the 19 suicide attack-

➤ Please see How, A4

## Powerhouse greenback key to swoon of the loon

BY THOMAS WALKOM  
NATIONAL AFFAIRS WRITER

The decline of the Canadian dollar this week has left the country not so much spooked as perplexed.

By all of the usual standards, the economy is doing relatively well. Canadian inflation is lower than it is in the United States. Economic growth, while slowing appreciably, is still stronger than south of the border.

Interest rates in Canada are so low that they are almost negative. The tax-cut orthodoxy has captured not only Ottawa but most provincial governments.

### Analysis

■ Job losses spark stimulus plan, C1

And so far, Canada has been spared the kind of terrorist attacks that are roiling the U.S. No one has died of anthrax in this country.

"By any argument, the Canadian dollar should be higher than the U.S. dollar," says economist Mike McCracken, the chief executive officer of Informetrica Ltd., an Ottawa-based forecasting firm.

➤ Please see Strong, A22

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