LABLIFE

from the director

Dear Friends,

It is with the deepest of conflicting emotions that we arrive at the end of this school year. Never before have I so internalized the opening lines of Dickens’ ‘A Tale of Two Cities’: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...” It was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness.

We want to embrace the promise that comes with graduation, but it cannot help but be tempered by the tragedy that took place at the end of March when we learned that one of our twelfth grade students had been killed and two other Lab seniors critically injured in a terrible accident.

While on a carefully planned spring break bike trip, the three young women were hit by an elderly driver on a rural road in downtown Illinois. Faith Dreymer succumbed to her injuries, and Kaia Tammen and Julia Baird are still fighting their way back from serious injury.

There is no way to describe the feelings that have swept through our community—the sense of loss is profound, but so is the outpouring of care and compassion. From University President Zimmer who ensured crucial support, to our class counselors who personally called every member of the senior class, to our teachers who supported their students even while dealing with their own grief, and so importantly, to our students. It is an understatement to say how proud I am of our students. Their thoughtfulness and maturity have been an inspiration.

That remains, for me, the light in this tragedy. As parents, hospitals, places of worship, and schools (both public and private) offered resources, time, and understanding, we are all challenged to pace our efforts and do “better than their best.”

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Writing wonderland

As temperatures plummeted in Chicago, senior Rebecca Lucas spent the second week of January in mild Miami. As a finalist in the youngARTS competition, sponsored by the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts, she was part of youngARTS week, where the finalists gathered for master classes, exhibitions, enrichment programs, performances, and more arts competitions.

Rebecca has been writing fiction for as long as she can remember. Her first grade teacher still has a copy of the four-page novel she wrote at the “ripe old age of eight.” She submitted three short stories to the youngARTS competition and was one of 143 finalists out of 4,000 applicants. Rebecca’s week in Miami was all-expenses-paid—and all-around inspiring. “The more I found out about the trip, the more excited I became,” she says. “Being there blew all of my expectations out of the water. Every night, students from a different discipline read their work or performed. Just seeing the kind of talent that other people my age have—it was a privilege.”

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Miniature masterpieces raise thousands

Interpreting a work of art as an original, miniature watercolor painting fills many a class period for Philip Matsikas’ fifth graders. In the process, students not only study works of art but experience the process of professional artistic creation. It is a project without a deadline. So students are pressed to think about what it means to be “done” when it comes to creativity. They are challenged to pace their efforts and do “better than their best.”

Through painstaking attention to detail, the children learn to see art in new ways and to observe with increasing accuracy, whether it is a form or mixing color with greater subtlety.

Each year, under Mr. Matsikas’ leadership, the works of each student are converted into professionally printed note cards, and the series is sold to benefit the Schools. The series on sale now has raised nearly $12,000, and over a decade-long lifetime the project has brought in more than $100,000. It is a self-sustaining effort, one that will afford the Middle School Fine Arts program the opportunity to proceed with several new, extraordinary, and expensive group projects—the design and casting of a gargantuan sculpture in bronze and the creation and construction of a stained glass window. Mr. Matsikas emphasizes that the students go through a full artistic/philanthropic cycle that manifests all the ways that art and art education can make positive contributions to a community.

To order a set of note cards, go to www.ucls.uchicago.edu/notecards. All proceeds benefit the Middle School Fine Arts program.

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The pulse of second grade

“Why is blood blue sometimes and red at other times?” “How does the heart pump?” “What shape is it?” “Why is it called a heart?”

Kathy Piane’s second grade class arrived with a small arsenal of questions after having traversed the U of C campus on a cold winter day to visit Dr. Adam Cifu. Their visit to the University Medical Center held in store a special lesson about the human heart. Dr. Cifu, a physician, the University Medical Center held to visit Dr. Adam Cifu. Their visit to U of C campus on a cold winter day

The students tackled these questions during a short “pretest.” After viewing a video about the heart, the children split into three groups for some hands-on activities. One group examined a model of the heart, identifying its chambers and major vessels. Another located their own pulse points. And the third group, sporting lab coats and stethoscopes, listened to each other’s heartbeats.

This was the second year a colorful picture to illustrate a page of the story. Last year, Dr. Cifu gave the class an up-close look at the human skeleton.

It’s true that the United Nations declared 2008 the International Year of the Potato. But students in Jan Bollig’s first-grade class have been celebrating potatoes this school year—with a little extra help from Lab grandparent Howard Gary Parker.

Now a retired orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Parker grew up during the 1950s in Aroostook County, Maine. Back then, his boyhood home was considered the potato capital of the world, he says. Before the age of mechanized harvesters, he and other kids were let out of school for several weeks each fall to help harvest potatoes on local farms. “It was hard work,” he remembers, “but we also had fun and learned a lot about people and responsibility.”

Dr. Parker’s harvest-time memories stayed with him for life. Last fall, when his granddaughter, Cadence, told him she was studying potatoes at school, he was delighted to share his story with her class. “They asked me to describe in first grade terms what it was like, and that’s what I tried to do,” says Dr. Parker, who sent his Memoir of Maine Potatoes to Ms. Bollig’s class last fall. Next, each student drew a colorful picture to illustrate a page of the story.

The class on Lab’s annual Grandparents and Grandfriends Day, Dr. Parker got a first glimpse of the students’ artwork and heard a teacher read his story aloud. “I thought that was as far as they were going to take it,” he says, but Ms. Bollig and assistant Kathy Yates felt inspired. “There aren’t many books about potatoes and there aren’t many memoirs for children,” explains Ms. Bollig. The teachers scanned the illustrations, combined them with the story, and had 50 copies of a hardcover book printed for students and grandparents.

“I think he was almost as excited as we were about the project,” says Ms. Bollig of her students’. Collaboration with Dr. Parker. “He told them what he learned from picking potatoes: the joy of work and the value of lasting friendship. There is wisdom in what grandparents share with their grandchildren.”

The first graders’ potato studies have continued throughout the school year. Dr. Parker sent the class a large, round basket—made by the Maine potatoes: the joy of work and the value of lasting friendship.

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The Slow Food movement

Recommended reading: Slow food is good food

Slow Food Nation: Why Our Food Should be Good, Clean, and Fair.

For more about the Slow Food grassroots movement, Ms. James recommends the website www.slowfoodusa.org.

I live in Maine where farmers grow lots of potatoes.

Nursery School teacher Paige James recommends Slow Food Nation

The Reggio approach to teaching young children, a strong influence at Lab, emphasizes the natural development of children and close relationships with their environment. It originated in the villages of Reggio Emilia, Italy. One nursery teacher from that region had a son with a potato allergy. Michael Pollen’s The Omnivore’s Dilemma and Mark Bittman’s Food Matters—

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Caught in busy days, it’s hard to slow down and enjoy a more harmonious rhythm of life. Petrini’s manifesto inspires us to try these simple Slow Food recommendations: Trace our food sources. Learn about our regional food traditions. Shop at a local farmer’s market. Invite friends to share a meal. Visit a farm. Start a kitchen garden; let our children plant seeds and harvest greens. Such actions not only make us happier and healthier; making good decisions about food can change our communities and the world.

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Please note that this text is a natural reading of the document content, and it has been structured to improve readability and coherence. The original text may contain some formatting or structural elements that have been omitted or modified for clarity.
Senior rounds out running career with All State honor

Senior Sherry Fu’s U-High track and cross country racing is winding up on a high note. She took All State honors, placing 25th in the state IHSAA cross country meet. She led the team to first-ever sectional, both sectionals and regionals.

And while she really likes to win, the pre-meet pasta parties and her teammates matter more. “I know in 50 years my most memorable moments from high school will be in sports, particularly cross country and track,” says Sherry, who rounds out her athletic experience on the basketball team. “They’ve defined my friends, my lifestyle, and my attitude.”

Sherry’s peers seem to share the sentiment, embracing her as track and cross country team captain for three years. When she graduates, Sherry plans to continue track and cross country at MIT, a Division III school. Sherry plans to continue track and cross country at MIT, a Division III school.

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Reflecting on her accomplishments, Ms. Biggs is proud of the Lower School’s “commitment to social justice and appreciation of the role that even little children can play in contributing to the common good.”

As principal, she also led efforts to put the Lower School curriculum in writing, a process that increased faculty collaboration and student learning.

Decades contributing to Lab’s common good

Lower School Principal Beverly Biggs retires after 35 years

“The years flow by in rapid succession without your having realized just how much time has passed,” says Beverly Biggs. “They flow past you.” This spring, Ms. Biggs will retire after 35 years at the Laboratory Schools, where she served as a parent volunteer, assistant and third-grade teacher, interim director and, since 1994, principal of the Lower School.

What kept her at Lab so long?

“The students, families, and faculty,” says Ms. Biggs, and their shared “passion for making sure that all of our kids have the best possible educational experience.” Throughout her career, she sought to encourage what she calls one of Lab’s defining qualities: “the enormous respect that teachers always have given students.”

Ms. Biggs models that respect herself, asking Lower School students for their input on everything from the hiring of her successor to her post-retirement plans. “I had lunch with several groups of second graders and asked them, ‘What do you think I should do when I retire?’”

In fact, says Ms. Biggs, “I may do some of all of that.” Her immediate plans include traveling with her husband (who is also recently retired), tending her garden, and exploring volunteer opportunities in Chicago. An avid reader, she confesses that “I have this fantasy of working in a bookstore.”

Colleagues describe Ms. Biggs as passionate, caring, wise, and engaged. “She understands how to lead in a collaborative way,” says Carla Young, Nursery School/Kindergarten principal. “That’s very important at a place like Lab.”

First-grade teacher Kathy Plane, who worked with Ms. Biggs for three decades, “She understands the ‘teacher’ perspective and always has an eye out for what’s best for children. We’re all going to miss her a lot.”

Boys Basketball

The Maroons won their first regional championship in the 106-year history of basketball at U-High, winning the 3A Regional Championship, 77-64, over Hope High. The team took the Independent School League Championship for the second year in a row, with an overall record of 19–5. ISL honors included: senior Jordan Gibson, league MVP; junior Michael Turner, first team; senior Stephen Bando, second team; senior Daniel Levine, honorable mention.

Girls Basketball

Senior Gabby Lubin was selected to the 1SL second team all-conference. Brianna Watson and Sherry Fu were named honorable mention.

Fencing

At the Great Lakes Conference Championships, the boys foil fencing team won the regular season and conference championship, and the girls foil team took third place in the 10-team conference. Fall mediators included seniors Julia Goldsmith-Pinkham, Peter Hansen, Bill Stueben, and Paul Welschleber and junior Tina Umanisky. Conference coaches awarded Bill Stueben the Peter Morrison Sportmanship Award.

Girls gymnastics

After a 17-year hiatus, the Maroons once again entered the world of IHSAA girls gymnastics. Sophomore Elizabeth McNally competed in the Illinois Township regional competition and scored a 31.095 for the four events—balance beam, uneven parallel bars, vault, and floor exercise.

Swimming

Junior Michael Barody broke the school swim record for the 200-yard individual medley at the IHSA sectional meet. His time of 2:07.27 broke the 14-year-old record set by Jonathan Tobak, ’94, of 2:07.31 from 1994. He also came within .03 seconds of breaking the school’s longest standing swim record. Michael’s 100-yard breaststroke time of 1:04.03 was just shy of that set by Peter Schloerb, ’69, in 1968.

World Sport Chicago Scholars

Juniors Tina Umanisky (fencing) and Ben Bucheim-Jurisson (track and cross-country) were selected as World Sport Chicago Scholars. They are part of the inaugural class of 56 student-athletes from Chicago who will act as ambassadors to “promote the Olympic ideals of fitness, education, and well-being by working with partner organizations to launch or expand sport programs for kids.”

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Laura Gill

“I’m an alumna, the daughter of a Labbie, and the mother of a Labbie,” says Laura, the source of a whole dimension of support that most jobs don’t provide.”

West Coast with her family. Following her retirement, Ms. Gill and her husband, Richard Gill, ’66. “This has been a huge chunk of all our lives.” For the last 31 years, Ms. Gill’s primary role at Lab has been teaching math to Middle and High School students. During a few of those years, three generations of her family were afoot in the halls: Ms. Gill, her daughter Hollie Gill Jacobs, ’96, and her mother, the late Betty Hollander, who attended Lab as a freshman and sophomore and later oversaw standardized testing at the Schools.

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Richard Gill, ’60

Grace Morgan

Emeritus retirements in 2010

Kathy Gallagher

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The decision to retire was a bittersweet one prompted by her daughter’s imminent move to the West Coast with her family. Following her retirement, Ms. Gill and her husband, Richard Gill, ’66, plan to visit often and eventually may relocate. In the meantime, she may return for some substitute teaching and will miss the second home that she, and the math department in particular, have represented. “We care about each other,” she says. “We’ve been at life events for each other, we know each others’ kids. It’s been the source of a whole dimension of support that most jobs don’t provide.”

Grace Morgan

When Middle School secretary Grace Morgan retired in December 2009, it was the end of an era. Her 28 year tenure as secretary lasted through seven middle school principals and saw her contribute to the Lab community in ways that went far beyond her job description. One of the most memorable for Ms. Morgan: delivering the 1995 Middle School graduation address, elected to do so by that year’s eighth-graders—and, when she initially thought she’d decline, badgered by them into accepting.

Ms. Morgan started her career at Lab as an assistant in Rowley Library, where she worked for three years before moving to the Middle School principal’s office in August 1984. “I really miss the kids,” she says, “all my little buddies.” They miss her, too: Middle School yearbooks dedicated to her stand as testament to her importance to a couple of generations of students. Following her retirement, Ms. Morgan is reflecting on a rewarding career—“letting it all absorb”—spending some quality time with her dogs Sam and Champ, and looking forward to a life even more involved with her church.

Dominic Piane

When Dominic (Don) Piane joined the Lab faculty in 1972, the music program was a mere seedling of what it has since blossomed into. Credit Mr. Piane: he expanded the curriculum in new directions by establishing courses in music theory, composition, and the history and literature of music. Lab’s successful AP studies course first came into being in the mid 1990s when students approached him wanting instruction in jazz performance and he began meeting with them during lunch. By now “it’s taken on a life of its own,” he says.” I started booking places on campus and now we’re a working band.”

A trombonist who has continued to perform throughout his teaching career, Mr. Piane plans to “get back on my horn” after he retires and also take a few cooking classes. “I won’t miss meetings and I won’t miss paperwork,” he says, “but I absolutely will miss the kids and the teaching.”

Some AP offerings to be replaced by AT (Advanced Topics) courses

Lab will stop offering Advanced Placement (AP) classes next year in history, science, and art. But that doesn’t mean students at U-High won’t have an opportunity to learn the material—or be shut out of the AP tests in those disciplines.

The reasoning for the change is twofold, explains U-High Principal Matthew Horvat. First, the College Board, which administers the AP program, has enlarged the list of required topics in history, science, and art to the point where “the content was becoming larger than could be managed in the school year.” The second reason was that the College Board was allowing less and less flexibility in teachers’ class syllabi, which teachers must submit to the Board in order to designate courses as Advanced Placement.

Lab isn’t alone in moving away from the long-standing AP program. “Schools of Lab’s caliber on the East and West Coasts have started to move away from the Advanced Placement program, so this isn’t a phenomenon that we’re leading,” says Mr. Horvat. To replace the AP courses that are ending, Lab will start offering Advanced Topics (AT) courses. The nomenclature was chosen after consulting with the college counseling office. College counselors suggested that admissions officers to ensure they understand that AT courses are the equivalent of AP courses in terms of intellectual challenge and the depth of material covered.

Mr. Horvat stresses that Lab isn’t foregoing AP completely. Math, world languages, music, and computer science classes will still bear the AP classification for the time being. And AT classes will be taught at a level sufficient to prepare students to take the corresponding AP test if they wish to do so. And since U-High has “students who take AP tests in areas in which we don’t even offer courses,” he adds, the school will continue to serve as an AP testing center for all subjects.

The construction and launching of a flying model rocket. Each student designs his or her own rocket and assembles it with a little help from a High School buddy on the more complicated bits. Then the second-graders and their buddies launch the rockets from the middle of the Midway Plusaice, where they reach “as high as the legal limit” for model rocketry in Chicago, Ms. McFarlane says. After their motors burn out, the rockets come floating back to Earth on parachutes. The prevailing westerly winds mean they land downrange on the Midway, where their High School buddies retrieve them. “We invite the school community, especially the nursery school and kindergarten classes, to join us on Launch Day,” says Ms. McFarlane. “The students love it. And the high school kids get just as excited.”

Ms. McFarlane confesses she knew very little about space before she started the project—to say nothing of rocket science—but she’s now developed a much deeper appreciation of the subject. She’s attended a space education workshop at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, been named to the Teacher Advisory Board at Adler Planetarium, and attended the National Science Teachers Association with a group of teachers from Lab over spring break.

“it’s sparked an interest in astronomy and space that I never thought that I would have,” she says.

Lift off! If you see rockets streaking skyward on the Midway Plusaice one day this spring, don’t be alarmed—it’s all in the name of science. Very fun science, of course, courtesy of Donna McFarlane and her second-grade class.

Four years ago Ms. McFarlane’s assistant, Sam Larson, ’03, suggested teaching the second-graders about space as a way to tie together different topics in math and science. Over the years, students have talked to astronauts in orbit, watched NASA rocket launches on TV, and taken field trips to the University Buildings where instruments for the South Pole Telescope were being built. But the highlight of the class is always the construction and launching of a flying model rocket. Each student designs his or her own rocket and assembles it with a little help from a High School buddy on the more complicated bits. Then the second-graders and their buddies launch the rockets from the middle of the Midway Plusaice, where they reach “as high as the legal limit” for model rocketry in Chicago, Ms. McFarlane says. After their motors burn out, the rockets come floating back to Earth on parachutes. The prevailing westerly winds mean they land downrange on the Midway, where their High School buddies retrieve them. “We invite the school community, especially the nursery school and kindergarten classes, to join us on Launch Day,” says Ms. McFarlane. “The students love it. And the high school kids get just as excited.”

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Students find a voice in the halls

The greening of Lab

Inspired by Lab’s membership in the Green Schools Alliance, Kathy Piane’s second-grade class made posters on environmental themes. Ms. Piane read the class Lynne Cherry’s picture book The Great Kapok Tree, about animals who try to convince a woodcutter not to cut down a tree. Then the students talked about ways they could change their behavior to help the planet.

“Saturating” children with the spirit of service

They peeled potatoes at Kenwood Healthcare Center, a nursing home. In early November, Lab eighth-graders fanned out around the city to participate in a day of service—volunteering at organizations in the morning and coming back to school to debrief in the afternoon.

Humanities teacher Jan Yourist accompanied a group to Kenwood Healthcare Center, a nursing home just a few blocks from Lab. “The students were a bit unnerved in the beginning” as they interacted with adults who have dementia and disabilities and who can no longer care for themselves, says Ms. Yourist. “But by the time we left two and a half hours later, the students felt that there were more similarities between them and the people they met than they ever imagined.” Talking and drawing with the residents, the eighth-graders “actually began to form relationships and are still eager to continue their work there,” she says. At Lab, volunteering is a longstanding tradition. John Dewey believed the schools should “saturate” children with “the spirit of service” and provide chances to learn about the world by venturing into it. Frances Moore-Bond coordinates the Middle School community service learning program, which finds students volunteer opportunities. For example, sixth- and seventh-grade advisories cultivate a relationship with a community organization that they work with on an ongoing basis throughout the year. Teachers serve as chaperones and guide the students in reflecting on their experiences afterward. Eventually, Ms. Moore-Bond would like to see volunteer service tied more closely to classroom curricula. Until then, whether Middle Schoolers pick up trash in a city park or make holiday cards for hospital patients, the goal is the same, says Ms. Moore-Bond: “We’re trying to instill in them while they’re young that giving back to others can bring a sense of pride to everyone in the school.”

“The art allows students to feel comfortable revealing a little piece of themselves.”

When U-High Studio Art teacher Annie Catterson displays her students’ work around the school, Principal Matthew Horvat is always impressed. “The work is tremendous,” Mr. Horvat says, “and often from kids who don’t identify themselves as artists.” Indeed, many of the students—mostly ninth- and tenth-graders—in Ms. Catterson’s two sections of Studio Art haven’t taken an art class in several years, and some are there primarily to fulfill their U-High requirements. Mr. Horvat first took notice last spring, when he saw the dioramas that were the results of a project that Ms. Catterson calls “Self-Portrait in a Box.” She begins the project by asking the students to complete a series of statements: “I am a person who...”, “People see me as a person who...”, “I feel good when...”, and so on. The statements are private, but through the exercise, students extrapolate a narrative about who they are and create a diorama that features the people, places, and activities that are most important to them. “Ms. Catterson has tapped into something here—a welcome opportunity for students to express themselves,” says Mr. Horvat. “The art allows students to feel comfortable revealing a little piece of themselves. There’s a freedom in her class that they may not have in other places.”

The self-portrait diorama is emblematic of Ms. Catterson’s teaching process and philosophy. She gives her students a starting point, but the results are all their own. In a recent class they worked on self-portrait collages using only white, black, and gray paper. Mac Sinclair, a tenth-grader, created a self-portrait filled with tree branches and birds. “I’m a tree now. I’m all grounded,” he laughed.

“Sometimes,” Ms. Catterson says, “students’ interpretation of a project isn’t what I would think of myself—and it’s pretty cool.” It’s important to remember that the end product isn’t the goal, she says, “it’s the process they use to get there that helps them express their creativity.” She wants her students to think as abstractly and creatively as possible. No idea is off-limits.

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Middle School library advisory board goes beyond books

It’s by their own design that the 13 members of the Middle School library advisory board have their hands full. To further their mission to help make the library a better place for everyone who uses it, they’ve selected new reading pillows, consulted on the middle school summer reading list; established a suggestion box; helped set up new book display cases; designed bookmarks; contributed to the library blog, Speaking Volumes; and raised funds for the relief effort in Haiti—a break from their usual focus on library or educational organizations, but, says Ms. Oakes, “the need in Haiti seemed overwhelming.”

A trip of mammoth proportions

In May 2007, on a mudflat beside a northern Siberian river, an unprecedented discovery was made: a woolly mammoth carcass, almost perfectly preserved. Christened Lyuba, the baby woolly mammoth had been buried for 42,000 years, protected from deterioration by permafrost. Since March, Lyuba has been displayed at the Field Museum as part of the traveling exhibit “Mammoths and Mastodons: Titans of the Ice Age.”

This spring, the entire first grade planned to visit the museum for a glimpse of the most complete and well preserved mammoth ever found.
in the halls

Home matters

A living testament to John Dewey’s commitment to experiential learning, Home Economics has been part of the middle-school curriculum since Lab’s early days. With the exception of a new, professional-grade dishwasher, much has remained the same.

“I’ve been teaching the course for 24 years,” says instructor Bea Harris. “The teacher before me was here for 35 years. Alumni visit and tell me that the room looks almost the same.” That room houses three ovens, two refrigerators, a long row of sewing machines, and a wall of white cabinets that have been there since Ms. Harris’ arrival. “I think they are original to this room,” she says. “I smeared some paint on them one year because they were rusting.” Home Ec today is offered as a related arts elective for eighth-graders (alternative electives include computer, drama, photography, and art) and part of a course rotation for seventh-graders that also includes art and drama. Students learn how to hand-sew, use a sewing machine, sauté, stir-fry, preserve food, and more. A recent class meeting found eighth-graders—boys and girls alike—putting finishing touches on handcrafted aprons, cutting out flower appliqués, stitching, and ironing. On a cooking day, they might bake cookies, or practice chopping skills, or roll sushi.

Over the years, Ms. Harris has seen the course captivate many students. “I had a student who came into the class with a great interest in cooking,” she says. “He wanted to make croissants for his final project. I asked him if he was aware of the time demanded by such a project, and he said he was up for the challenge. He asked me if he could come in early to do it right, and I consented. By the time I got to school, he had completed about three pans of the best croissants I’ve ever tasted.”

“I don’t expect students to become seamstresses. My goal is to give them life skills.”

Four join Lab Board of Directors

In February, University of Chicago President Robert J. Zimmer announced four new members of the Laboratory Schools’ Board of Directors: Hanna Goldschmidt, faculty emeritus, began teaching math at the Laboratory Schools in 1970, retiring in 2006. She was awarded the prestigious Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1987, was appointed principal of University High School in 1995, and is a parent of four children who attended Lab.

Peggy Lim is a Lab parent of two, a member of the Development Committee and Lab’s Campaign Steering Committee, and for the past two years served as co-chair of Connections. She is a former teacher as well.

Michael C. Markowitz, MA’73, PhD’75, is a member of the Social Sciences Visiting Committee, chairman of the John Marshall Law School in Atlanta, and executive vice-chairman of Yorkville University.

Patrick Ryan, Jr., parent of a child at Lab, is chief executive officer of Incisent Technologies. In contrast to his corporate career, Mr. Ryan worked as an undercover narcotics detective, taught fifth and sixth graders on Chicago’s West Side, and founded the Inner-City Teaching Corps.

On the world’s radar

This year, Lab will host a delegation of educators from the Big Bridge Experimental High School in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province, China. Big Bridge is the first officially approved private school to open in that area since 1949. Its administrators and teachers, like many who take time to visit Lab, are looking to the Schools as a model of success as they work to prepare their own students for college both in China and abroad.

Almost weekly, outsiders—principals, teachers, teachers-in-training, grad students—survey the “best practices” unfolding here. Most are Chicago-area educators or attendees at the national educator conferences that take place in Chicago regularly. “Lab really has an international reputation,” says Mr. Magill. “But what never ceases to amaze me is the fact that our teachers embrace these visitors without missing a beat. They manage to welcome fellow educators without detracting from the fact that our teachers embrace these visitors without missing a beat. They manage to welcome fellow educators without detracting from their own teaching.”

Other students come into the course as novices; Mrs. Harris remembers one student leaving the wax paper on the bottom of a pie, making it nearly impossible to cut. Regardless of their skill level, Ms. Harris strives to make a lasting impact on her charges. “I don’t teach the course as vocational,” she says. “I don’t expect students to become seamstresses. My goal is to give them life skills.”

and revamping schools, and they are looking to the American model as one of excellence.”

Over the past years, Lab has hosted visitors from as far away as China, Japan, and Singapore. An administrator even came all the way from the Junior School at St. Cuthbert’s College in Auckland, New Zealand, to better understand how girls transition to the middle and upper schools.

Looking to the American model as one of excellence, Looking to the American model as one of excellence, looking to the American model as one of excellence, looking to the American model as one of excellence, looking to the American model as one of excellence.
The Scholarship Fund created by Faith Dremmer Memorial will be combined with the Fund the Faith Dremmer, 2010 Class Scholarship decided to name the Senior Class Gift established Faith Dremmer Scholarship Funds this earliest decision will make. To Lab because they know what a difference Their attitudes reflect the hopes and dreams of Lab and the lessons they learned in these halls tell us that the connections they made at college and for their professional lives. And teachers. They tell us it prepared them for the same sentiments about Lab.

Across the decades, from recent graduates to retirees, alumni echo the same sentiments about Lab. They tell us that the Schools offered them an outstanding education grounded by dedicated teachers. They tell us it prepared them for college and for their professional lives. And they tell us that the connections they made at Lab and the lessons they learned in these halls continue to resonate for them and affect them throughout their lives.

Their attitudes reflect the hopes and dreams of our current parents: they bring their children to Lab because they know what a difference this earliest decision will make. And it is this feeling that compels so many to contribute generously to the Lab+ Campaign. They want to see this unique learning environment sustained not just for current students, but for generations to come.

Lab+ is the most ambitious campaign in the Laboratory Schools’ history, unprecedented in scope and size. Its success will bring new resources to every aspect of the Lab experience, enabling transformative investments in Lab’s historic campus, addressing essential programmatic needs, and reinforcing the Schools’ commitments to diversity and inspired teaching.

The Lab+ priorities are clear and focus on providing each student and teacher with the resources they need to make the most of every day:

**Enhancing the arts**

From music to painting, from drama to photography, the Lab+ Campaign will allow the Schools to build spaces dedicated to the arts that match the creativity and talent of our students and teachers.

**Upgrading our historic campus**

Lab will update its existing buildings to meet 21st-century learning standards. Simple but critical improvements like modernized heating and cooling systems will address basic infrastructure needs and complement the creation of new spaces, including community gathering areas—both grand and intimate—and additional science and computer labs.

Throughout the campus, technology will be brought into daily classroom life in the most appropriate and beneficial ways.

**Creating a new space for early childhood education**

Lab will build a groundbreaking new early childhood center to house the renowned N/K, first, and second grade program, accommodate increased enrollment at the lowest grades, provide our youngest learners with spaces tailored to maximize their independence, offer indoor gross motor skills areas, and connect indoor and outdoor learning more seamlessly.

**Providing increased student aid**

Lab+ will ensure that financial considerations do not get in the way of attracting the best and brightest students to our Schools. In just the past few years, through the support of donors, the number of full scholarships has increased from one to 18.

**Enhancing our libraries**

Investment in libraries is one way Labs+ will guarantee teachers and students the resources and spaces they need for one of the best educational experiences in the country. Blaine Library will be expanded from its current location (once regular classrooms) into a space designed to hold books and facilitate greater use (i.e., story-time for one class while another accesses the stacks). The Middle and High School libraries will grow their age-appropriate collections and workspaces but stay linked in recognition of how children at these ages need to cross back and forth between levels of reading sophistication.

**Honoring exceptional teachers**

The DePencier Society is named in honor of Ida DePencier, a beloved Lab teacher for more than 30 years. The Society recognizes alumni who have generously contributed $1,000 or more to the Schools. We encourage donors—in the spirit of the DePencier Society—to use their gift to honor a Lab teacher who has made a difference in their life. It is a thank you in action, as a DePencier-level gift significantly furthers Lab’s most fundamental priorities and helps ensure that all Lab students have the opportunity to develop a strong bond with a gifted teacher.

To make a gift in honor or in memory of a teacher, contact Kerry Tolson at 773-702-3789.

The Senior Class Gift Committee unanimously decided to name the 2010 Class Scholarship Fund the Faith Dremmer, Class of 2010 Scholarship Fund. All funds raised will be combined with the Faith Dremmer Memorial Scholarship Fund created by the Dremmer family.
Every year, Connections, Lab’s annual fundraising gala, brings hundreds of parents, alumni, faculty, and staff together to celebrate and support the Schools. Attendance this March exceeded 700, generating $450,000 that will support not only short-term needs—financial aid and operating funds—but also the Lab+ Campaign. Co-chairs Peggy Lim and Liz Parker, the planning committee, and more than 100 volunteers dedicated countless hours to making the celebration a success.

The auction—no small part of the event’s proceeds—offered things as varied as a week in St. Barts or an evening discussing the economy with University of Chicago and parent experts (not mutually exclusive). And to make everyone feel at home, the LabArt Exhibition showcased work being done by students from nursery through high school.
When he was five years old, Daniel Clowes, ’79, began drawing comics. They were primitive figures then, of course—“barely chicken scratches,” he says—all inspired by a thick stack of tattered comic books that his older brother had bequeathed to him.

By the time Mr. Clowes graduated from Lab, he was known at school for his comics. While other U-Highers told a yearbook writer they put their spending money toward movies and records, Mr. Clowes confided that he bought comic books and art supplies. And he presented sketches of teachers, doodled during classes, as his project for the Schools’ then annual Arts Week. (The result was not particularly well received, Mr. Clowes recalls, by the teachers it featured.)

Some believed that comics would prove to be a passing phase, something to outgrow, or a stop on the way to a profession in the more traditional arts. Mr. Clowes has surprised them—all, perhaps not least of all.

His comic works, in books and comic book series, for magazines such as The New Yorker, Esquire, and The New York Times, and even in movie adaptations like Oscar-nominated Ghost World (2001), have drawn broad critical acclaim. He has a new book, Wilson, scheduled to come out in May, has several film projects in development, and is working on a pilot for HBO.

In a way, Mr. Clowes is still doing what he’s always done, even at Lab. He has watched, he says, as the comic book genre itself—once a niche limited mainly to underground artists and fans of superheroes—has shifted, expanded, and grown up to meet the visions of himself and others like him, a group more often described now as graphic novelists.

“I would have never imagined that it would turn out like this,” says Mr. Clowes, who is 49 and lives in Oakland, California, with his wife, Erika, and five-year-old son, Charlie. “When you look back at what people once wanted and once read, I couldn’t even conceive of the stuff I’m doing now.”

A COMIC LIFE

The artist-author Daniel Clowes comes of age with his genre: ordinary life, framed. In much of his work, Mr. Clowes tackles ordinary life, in all of its bleakness, humor, alienation, desire, and tangled complication. He can be crass and profane (these comics are not meant for Charlie—not yet anyway). His images are clean and simple and eye-grabbing, but as Michael Chabon, another author, has said of Mr. Clowes, his words are such that he could also be just a writer with no pictures at all.

Wilson, his forthcoming graphic novel, centers on a man who, in the midst of a midlife crisis, tries to force together his family, such as it is—an ex-wife and a daughter who was given up for adoption years ago. “It’s actually a comedy,” Mr. Clowes says. “Every
decided to do the comics we wanted to do,” us people, inspired by underground comics, collaborative serial Love and Rockets. “A few of and Gilbert Hernandez, the California-based famed comic artist Robert Crumb and Jaime influence on his own work, along with the of Mr. Spiegelman, who he points to as an “He gave us a starting point to do a graphic novels in the 1980s. Holocaust, with breaking new ground for addressed the whose serialized narrative Maus Wilson notwithstanding, much of Mr. Clowes’ work focuses on young adulthood: characters’ time in late high school or just afterward. Some critics have even likened Mr. Clowes to J.D. Salinger and his characters to a new generation’s Holden Caulfield. In David Boring, Mr. Clowes follows the peculiar, sometimes violent journey of a nearly 19-year-old with fetishes. In Ghost World, which Mr. Clowes wrote as a graphic novel before he helped turn it into a critically-acclaimed movie, two high school girls, Enid and Rebecca, bond through their mockery of others but grow apart. Mr. Clowes acknowledges that his experience growing up and at Lab (which he entered in first grade) play some role in the stories he now tells in his comics. For example, Mr. Clowes did not buy into the fancy nomenclature—“graphic novel.” “When it first came along,” he recalls, “I thought, ‘Wait a minute. It’s a comic book. They’re tricking us. I don’t want to be part of this big scam.’” Besides, he says, not all graphic novels are novels at all; plenty are based on nonfiction. And the word “graphic” seemed, to his ears, confrontational and confusing. But the name stuck. And the range of readers—including those who might have disdained reading a comic book—grew. Mr. Clowes stopped fighting it. “I give up,” he says. Wilson

The New Yorker

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The New Yorker

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He sent it to three comic publishers and heard back from one. Fantagraphics gave him his own comic book: Lloyd Llewellyn, a parody about a private investigator. He picked the style and topic, he says, based on the logic that it would sell. It didn’t, and within a year he gave it up.

Months later he returned with Eightball, a far less traditional comic series with an edge of sarcasm and satire. He figured it might.net better.”

“I decided I’m just going to do exactly what I want, and if nobody buys it, I’ll just have this thing,” Mr. Clowes remembers deciding. “But by doing what I wanted to do, it caught on. It defined this sector of counterculture that existed at the time. People were much more aware than the culture would let on.”

“For him, the process of creating begins not with particular sketches or words, but with a character and an ‘optimal situation’ for that character. He explores the situations with doodles and sketches, and eventually the narrative simply flows. ‘All of the sudden, that’s what it’s going to be and I can’t do anything else,’ he says. In the case of Wilson, which runs 80 pages, Mr. Clowes spent about 19 months, start to finish. In earlier days, Mr. Clowes says his followers were mainly a younger group who were also into alternative music, weird movies, or both. Now, he says, he draws a ‘polyglot audience,’ some of whom are in their 40s or 50s, or older. “This has become mainstream and a real option,” though it began as a career path that once seemed as faded and unlikely, he reflects, as becoming a blacksmith.

MONICA DAVEY, ’82, IS THE CHICAGO BUREAU CHEF FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES, A SECOND GENERATION LAB GRADUATE, AND NOW, WITH HER SON IN THE NURSERY SCHOOL, A LAB PARENT.
GoTHIC poMp AND CIRCUMSTANCE

By the time the Class of 1970 was graduating, flower power had been in full bloom already several years (the theme of the 1968 U-Highlights was “The Beat Goes On”) and had several more years to go (the 1974-75 Midway looks like a Tim Burton movie).

So it’s no surprise the Class of ’70 set its mind and possibly heart on a Woodstockian Commencement ceremony tossing out hallowed tradition and bringing in love, peace, and student-written music including a rock cantata and psychedelic colors.

In fact, it wasn’t even Commencement. It was, quote, a “Graduation Festival.”

Opinion was divided on how well it went but, significantly, it proved a one-time festival of peace and love. By the next year, Rockefeller Chapel seemed its old self again and the beat of tradition and dignity continued on.

Mr. Brasler has been attending graduations at Rockefeller Chapel since he arrived at U-High in 1964.

Class of ’70 revises graduation ceremony

The class of 1970, deciding that a traditional commencement would be meaningless, planned instead a “Graduation Festival.” Announcements bringing the ceremony centered out the student-directed theme, with drawings by Erica Meyer and Ivry Cae.

Replacing a guest speaker, six people leaving the school gave their thoughts on U-High, commitment to a cause and individuality. They included Seniors Richard Goodman, Irene Tillman, Paul Silver, Jon Hazard; English Teacher Arthur Sherry; and Director of Off-Campus Naomi Black. Four of the speeches ended standing ovations.

Instead of “Pomp and Circumstance” and other traditional music, Senior Skip Sherman wrote pieces mixing classical and rock styles. A procession, “Beginning of a Certain End,” accompanied the class as it entered from the front and rear of Rockefeller Chapel. Twenty-eight seniors sang “Thursday Farewell,” a self-composed rock cantata, accompanied by eleven student musicians.

The following is reprinted with permission from the U-High Midway:
MUSIC, PLEASE

The halls and rooms of the Laboratory Schools are almost constantly filled with music.

From Lower School through U-High, Labbies make music class sing.

BY CARMEN MARTI
The halls and rooms of the Laboratory Schools are almost constantly filled with music. On the first floor of Blaine, kindergarteners sing, learning to use their first instrument—their voices.

Upstairs, second-graders play percussion instruments: tone bars, chimes, drums. Over in Belfield, there’s middle- and high-school choir, band, orchestra, jazz, and chamber music classes, as well as the Electronic Music Studio and all the clubs and special interest groups rehearsing for one thing or another.

It’s a symphony of music education, based on teaching methods that John Dewey laid out in 1896 when the Schools were founded. He professed learning by doing; in the Music Department, that means playing, singing, listening, and thinking.

Every student at Lab is required to explore music. While they don’t have to play an instrument or sing if they don’t want to, most do take the opportunity when offered a choice in the fifth grade. Others choose General Music, the basic music education track, where they are steeped in music history, theory, and appreciation. Kat Sinclair—who has taught at Lab for nine years and was music department chair last year—describes General Music as a “sort of consumer ed: what’s out there, what’s quality, what’s not.”

For those who choose to play an instrument, musical groups are open to everyone who wants to participate, no matter what their skill level. Teachers assign music that incorporates all students, while they work toward performance, “we’re not so performance-driven,” says Brad Brickner, a 12-year veteran who teaches Middle and High School Band and Lower School General Music. “We have time to teach concepts and ideas. And we do it within school hours.”

Their practice is encouraged as its own reward. Dominic Piane, who has taught since 1972 and retired this year, remembers an excursion with students to Orchestra Hall to watch an open rehearsal of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. They saw the musicians behind the scenes, wearing jeans, working. “It left a very visual impression,” Mr. Piane says. It crystallized for them that “rehearsal is so much more important than performance.”

They saw that reward in music is really derived from the day-to-day effort. The goal is for students to engage in the process of making music and to gain an insider’s understanding. “We’re not interested in training professional musicians,” says Mr. Piane. Rather, the mission is to provide “a solid, quality music education,” he says. “Someone who played in school may go off to do other things. But we’ve created a patron.”

BUILDING A LIFELONG LOVE OF MUSIC

The Music Department master schedule for 2009-10 is mapped out on a color-coded data chart tracking the movement of students and teachers from nursery school through senior year. Music is integral to the Lab mission of excellence in academics, the arts, and athletics. Comparable in size to the athletics staff, the music department’s ten faculty members teach as many as 45 separate offerings between them on any given day.

Built around a continuum approach to music education, the program begins in the Lower School, where teachers strive to convey the fun of music in order to inspire a lifelong love in students. Children sit on the floor and play in teaching at the young levels.” For kindergarten teacher En Chen, that means focusing on “having fun, enjoying music, internalizing music.” Her classes love in students. Children sit on the floor

By fourth grade, students are sampling the full-range of Lab musical offerings. Over the year, they have five different teachers, each of whom covers a particular aspect of music. This prepares them for fifth-grade and Middle School, where they will splinter off into different musical avenues: vocal, instrumental, or general music.

PRACTICING THEIR ART

The time: 8:15 in the morning. The place: Belfield 244. Ms. Sinclair cranks up the volume on some choral music and starts leading her seventh-grade choir class in stretching exercises—arms reaching, bodies shifting, instruments getting tuned.

By 8:30, Ms. Sinclair’s students are focused and working. As they read or sing the music scores, their hands follow the notes in the air like sign language that is akin to conducting. It’s a practice they started in second grade.

These students have chosen choir as their musical discipline. Classes meet four times a week for 45 minutes, as do all Middle School music classes.

By some debate about whether to enter the band, 13-year-old Leah Rosenweig picked choir. “I really like choir, basically because I’m a soprano now,” she says. “I always wanted to be a soprano.” Leah says music is “a pretty big part of my life.” She started music at Lab in kindergarten, and now plays flute as well as piano. “But singing tops them,” she says. She even likes to practice. If the plucking during eighth grade orchestra class is any indication, these students like to practice too. Their teacher, Roz Torts, who also teaches High School orchestra, directs them in sections and as an ensemble. In between, the students pick randomly on their violins and play melodies transcribed from the sound of their instruments.

In Middle School “they’re very excited about instruments,” says Ms. Sinclair. “They have a high self-concept; they’re comfortable trying new things.” Accordingly, the program is flexible enough to accommodate their range of interests and desire to experiment. For someone, getting to play music or sing in the choir is a lifetime—it’s the place they do their best work. For others, it’s not their best subject, but they continue to be involved even after they’ve fulfilled their last music credit requirement at U-High.

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH PERFORMANCE

The musical opportunities expand beyond the classroom and into the community. There’s the Lobby Sing, a regular open house where students, parents, teachers, and administrators gather to sing together. There are fall and spring concerts, musical theater performances, and engagements around the community, from the University of Chicago Medical Center to assisted living facilities throughout the city.

And the shows are quality. At one outing, recalls Mr. Brickner, a colleague of his at another school couldn’t believe there were no auditions for the U-High band; they sounded too good to be so democratic.

But that’s the Laboratory Schools’ way. Not only are the large performance groups open to all, so are the opportunities to form clubs. And if something seems to take, the faculty responds in the curriculum. For example, Mr. Piane says, “Instrumental and choral have been excelent. We need the faculty’s endorsement.”

The Music Department blog includes photos, faculty pages, and information about activities and classes. blogs.u-chicago.edu/music.
Mr. Kass is blending two careers at the nation’s capital, cooking and writing food-related policy for First Lady Michelle Obama.

needed for White House events. Since he was her personal chef during Barack Obama’s presidential campaign, the family invited him to continue cooking for them.

“My philosophy with food is to keep it American and simple,” Mr. Kass explained during an interview. “I don’t want to mess them up.”

Despite his national culinary prowess, during his high school years Mr. Kass dreamed of playing major league baseball.

“I’m not hesitant to say we had the best baseball teams in Midway history my senior year,” the former captain said. “I graduated with an athletic scholarship to Kansas City Community College in Kansas City, where I played for Triton College in River Grove. But I eventually decided I wanted to get a serious education, so went to the University of Chicago for a history degree instead.”

His senior year of college, Sam traveled to Vienna, Austria to finish his history study, where he took a job under world-renowned chef Christian Domschitz at the Michelin-starred restaurant Inevitable Table, a home-style restaurant from his Pilsen home the year Mr. Kass dreamed of playing baseball.

“That’s along with his other duties as Special Assistant to Raedyn Ali, the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Civil Rights. Ms. Ali, who delivers the speeches and represents the White House on education issues, focuses her efforts on diversity and inclusion in government, we have to take ownership over the idea and huge responsibility of ‘we’re governing the country right now.’”

"Those of us who are lucky enough to be here don’t do it to say ‘I’m working in the White House or the Administration,’ we do it because we feel like we can make a difference if we are serious and work extremely hard.”

All U-Highers witness firsthand the immensity and weight of the responsibility that comes before them. "I wasn’t ready to leave teaching yet for the campaign and I wanted to see them through 8th grade. When that 8th grade group ended up doing better than many of my U-High classmates and I would have done, three of them even went from the 30th to the 96th percentile in reading. I felt like it would be alright to head out to the campaign full time.”

As Michael was a Midway Ed��on-in-Chief his seniors year, it’s not surprising he’s entered a career in 승 scowering. Under his leadership the newspaper claimed both a Columbian Scholastic Press Association Gold Crown and National Scholastic Press Association Pacemaker—a feat the Midway has yet to duplicate since then. After graduating from Duke University in 2005 with a public policy major and an African American studies minor, he became a teacher at the National Teacher’s Academy at 22nd and State Street in Chicago’s South Side.

While we are serious, we’re also idealists. We think we can make change to this unique environment, but in that first year teaching 8th grade, students went from 13% passing the state test in reading to 71% passing.”

“My first year teaching, I had no reason to believe I was actually going to make change to this unique environment, but in that first year teaching 8th grade, students went from 13% passing the state test in reading to 71% passing.”

“As Sam was preparing to launch his baseball career, Michael Lamb, Class of ’01, was getting his first taste of U-High.

“Today, between the moment he carries his 5-foot, 9-inch frame into the U.S. Department of Education on a typical weekday morning and when he leaves his office 13 hours later, Michael will probably have written a speech that helps protect someone’s civil rights.

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But even after dinner’s served, he doesn’t stop working. Once he gets home, he spends another several hours creating policy.

“Mr. Kass may be known for his hours he 1 work each week,” Mr. Kass said with a laugh. “A lot.”

“U-High definitely helped me be ready for that. The school has high standards and expects you to follow through on them. There’s also a sense of community, there’s a lot of people you stay in touch with.

“I’m not hesitant to say we had the best baseball teams in Midway history my senior year,” the former captain said. “I graduated with an athletic scholarship to Kansas City Community College in Kansas City, where I played more for Triton College in River Grove. But I eventually decided it was time to get a serious education, so went to the University of Chicago for a history degree instead.”

His senior year of college, Sam traveled to Vienna, Austria to finish his history study, where he took a job under world-renowned chef Christian Domschitz at the Michelin-starred restaurant Inevitable Table, a home-style restaurant from his Pilsen home the year Mr. Kass dreamed of playing baseball.

“Tanvas was always very passionate about anything he did,” Mr. McFarlane recalled. “When he was here, I remember he wanted to be a pro baseball player, and he worked hard at it. He loved to argue and challenge the grey areas of any topic.

“I’m not surprised at all that he’s such a high level in his field. He seemed so excited and eager to do it. And his cooking was local and healthy food. After even he moved to Chicago for the past few years, Sam kept a strong connection to Chicago and the Lab Schools. His dad, Robert, teaches 5th-graders.

“Sam was always very independent in high school,” his dad recalled. “He loved playing baseball, but he also played soccer"