



**PAGE 3 • HEALTH & WELLNESS**

Hormonal medications, such as birth control, can be and are used as medicine to help manage menstrual cycles, prevent pregnancy and deal with other medical problems.



**PAGE 4 • CITY LIFE**

Amid the upcoming municipal election, students compare candidates as some get ready to cast their votes. They reflect on embattled Mayor Lori Lightfoot's term, policies and campaign.



**PAGE 15 • FEATURES**

Jeffrey Chen's natural talent and passion for math is known to many, but Jeffrey works hard to maintain his math excellence and stay involved in the other activities he enjoys.



## Principal search aims to finish by April

*Students, faculty, invited to provide input at meetings*

by **TÉA TAMBURIO**  
Editor-in-Chief

A Lab committee and external consultants will conduct a global search for the next U-High principal, with an ambitious goal of announcing their hire in April. Principal Paul Beekmeyer announced on Feb. 3 that he will leave at the end of this academic year after four years in the role.

A search committee will work with consultants from DRG Talent to identify two to four finalists, who will be invited to visit the high school, meet with the community and provide feedback, according to a follow-up email to the Midway from Director of Schools Tori Jueds.

Ms. Jueds said a search consultant was hired to help in the process of casting a global search for a diverse pool of applicants for principal.

"Our search will be open to all candidates. You could call it a national, even global, search and that's why we have a search consultant. They know who's in the profession, and they can reach out to people who might be a good fit," Ms. Jueds said in an interview. "So candidates might come from internally and they might come from other schools, from other institutions, all over the country, all over the world."

In an email to the Lab community Feb. 14, Ms. Jueds announced she would co-chair the search committee with Carla Ellis, associate director of schools. Members include Ana Campos, dean of students; Camille Baughn-Cunningham, high school counselor;



Midway photo by Ishani Hariprasad

**SUCCESSOR SEARCH.** To fill the role of departing U-High principal Paul Beekmeyer, a search committee of eight faculty and administrators will work with consultants DRG Talent to identify two to four finalists.

Kenny Fournillier, science teacher; Nicole Neal, director of student services; Ian Taylor, English teacher and Zilkia Rivera-Vazquez, assistant principal.

Looking forward to reviewing the survey responses, Dr. Fournillier plans to voice the needs of the science department and faculty at large.

In addition to the search committee and consultants, a survey was sent to all U-High students, families and employees, asking for community input about principal aspirations.

There will also be separate listening sessions for high school students, faculty, families and all

employees.

The in-person session for high school students will be March 7 during open time, 10:10-10:40 a.m. in the John Rogers Board Room in Judd Hall.

Zoom sessions for high school faculty will be Feb. 27 at 3:30 p.m.; Lab employees, March 1 at 4:30 p.m.; Lab parents and guardians, March 1 at 6:30 p.m.

Ms. Jueds said she, search committee members and consultants will be in the listening sessions to understand the characteristics, qualities and experiences constituents believe a new principal should have.

While Ms. Jueds said she wants

to find someone who embodies Lab's mission and values of collaboration, student understanding and community building, she's also looking forward to hearing what qualities and values community members voice as their top priorities.

She said, "We will find ourselves on the other side of this search with a wonderful new principal for University High School who brings the qualities we're looking for, like alignment with our mission and support for our commitment to scholarship and our commitment to exhibiting kindness and very much our commitment to honoring diversity."

### farewell notes

**Reacting to the Feb. 3 news that Principal Paul Beekmeyer will leave U-High at the end of the school year, faculty and administration expressed support.**

"He was the perfect principal for U-High, deeply devoted to the issue of student empowerment of their workload with the new revisions of the Program of Studies as well as his commitment to valuing multiple, scholarly perspectives while at the same time honoring diversity, equity and inclusion as the perfect embodiment of that commitment to each and every student."

— **Christy Gerst**, history

"I know we will all miss Mr. Beekmeyer very much, and I will personally miss him as well. I think he has been a great leader of the University High School, and I'm sorry that he's leaving, but I'm also always excited for somebody when they find the next thing that, in this case, I think really suits him and his family as well as what he wants to do."

— **Tori Jueds**, director

"I wish the best for him, and he's been, hands down, the best principal I've ever worked with."

— **Daniel Bobo-Jones**, science

"I'm grateful for the stability that he's provided over the last three years in terms of leadership, sorry to see him go, and I'm looking forward to the next face."

— **Laura Doto**, learning coordinator and faculty co-chair

— compiled by Audrey Matei

## Spring break exchange trips offer cultural exploration

By **KRISHITA DUTTA**  
Opinion Editor

As the coronavirus pandemic is subsiding and global travel is again an option, U-High students are able to embark on exchange trips for the first time since 2019. Excited to finally step out of their comfort zone with their peers to explore cultures across the world, students are grateful for the experiences coming their way.

The world languages department has three exchange trips during spring break. Fourteen students will travel to Taiwan March 4-17; 11 French students will travel to Paris and La Rochelle, France, March 4-10; and 29 Latin and Greek students will travel to Greece March 8-16.

Latin teacher Fran Spaltro is helping coordinate the Greece trip and has observed the process for her colleagues to plan the other trips. She said the major differences between the international



Midway photo by Henry Benton

**TRAVEL FRENZY.** More than 50 students in total will travel to Taiwan, Paris and La Rochelle or Greece for spring break exchange trips.

al trips this year compared to previous years are the adjustments to COVID-19 protocols and the increased interest in international travel.

"We contract out with educational chapter companies who book hotels, flights, entrances to

museums, so that bit of it is pretty straightforward," Ms. Spaltro said. "The big difference, though, lies in the number of students. We have around 50 students going across all the trips, so clearly everyone's hungry to travel."

Ms. Spaltro said the trips now

require multiple chaperones to be well versed in COVID-19 protocols, which differ across regions. She said all the changes make it slightly difficult, but still an exciting process to adjust back into.

"Since we haven't done it in a while, we forgot about a lot of little details that we need to take care of," she said, "so it kind of feels like we're doing this for the first time."

Latin student Kunal Gangwani, a senior, is excited to have school trips after the pandemic.

"If you had told me a year ago — when keep in mind we were still wearing masks — that I would be able to travel to Greece with my peers with the school, I wouldn't have believed you," Kunal said. "It's also just really amazing that our school even gets these opportunities, because I think the best way to learn about a culture is to be immersed in it."

When traveling internationally, U-High's French and Chinese stu-

dents get to visit their exchange students who they hosted earlier this school year, which is what sophomore Lydia Frost is most excited about.

"I am most looking forward to seeing my exchange student, Lily, again since we had a lot of fun when she visited Chicago," Lydia said. "I am also looking forward to the food, and though we will be attending classes at a bilingual school in Taiwan, I hope to be able to further my Chinese there."

French student Millie Norton, a sophomore, is also looking forward to the opportunities to explore France.

She will stay with a host family in La Rochelle and then spend four days in Paris.

Millie said, "I look forward to traveling with my friends, and though I have been to France before, it was when I was quite young so I am excited to explore the country."



# Exchange students visit Lab for a week

Taiwanese, French students explore Chicago's culture

**By ERICH RAUMANN**  
*Deputy Managing Editor*

From ceramics class to ice skating, and eating tacos to viewing Chicago's skyline, exchange students from Taiwan and France paired up with U-High students to experience American culture for a week and a half, from Jan. 30 to Feb. 11.

Due to the pandemic and other constraints, this was the first time in four years that exchange students were able to come to Lab. During their stay, the exchange students lived with host families, shadowed their host student's classes and spent time exploring the culture of Chicago, both with their host families and as a group. "It was a combination of both being really tired and having a lot of fun," said senior Amelie Liu, who hosted an exchange student from Taiwan. "I was very surprised to be so tired by the end of it — I didn't realize you kind of have to be on every single moment at home, always making sure your guest is comfortable."

Some exchange students struggled at first living in a culture and speaking a language completely different from their native one, but eventually they were able to start feeling more assimilated in American culture. "It was hard at first," Amelie said, talking about her Taiwanese exchange student, Stephanie Liu



**WELCOME IN SONG.** Sebastian Gans, Themis Ju, Raymond Yeh, Neha Dhawan and Uma Malani stand on the stage at the welcome assembly for the Taiwanese exchange students. For the first time in four years, French and Taiwanese exchange students are staying with their host families for a week and a half.

(no relation). "There was a little bit of a language barrier. She was nervous because she didn't think her English was very good, but in reality her English was exponentially better than my Chinese. She did an amazing job adapting to the environment and keeping up with

conversations. As the trip went on she got more and more talkative." The French exchange students, who came from the city of La Rochelle, much smaller and warmer than Chicago, had a similar experience. "Chicago is a beautiful city, with

so many buildings," said Emie Pacreau, a French exchange student paired with 10th grader Orly Eggener. "In my city, we don't have as many buildings, or even snow. It's different and very beautiful." Exchange students also attended and participated in their host

student's classes, sometimes being able to study or work along depending on the class. "I loved [ceramics] class," Emie said. "In France, we can't just do things like that — the things we want to do — in school."

## Wellness survey results delayed

**by KATIE SASAMOTO-KURISU**  
*Assistant Editor*

Students took the annual health and wellness survey on Oct. 6, but results have been further delayed due to setbacks of organizing the data before it can be released publicly. The results are in a different format, presented by the new survey vendor. The switch to a third-party survey vendor, Authentic Connections, was made to better serve the Lab community and address student wellbeing and mental health difficulties, resulting in a resilience survey that asks about student mental health symptoms, rather than explicit behaviors, as the previous survey did. But the unfamiliarity with this vendor has posed challenges. Wellness/Title IX Coordinator Betsy Noel said Authentic Connections approached this process differently than what was done in the past, which took more time. "Like all new relationships, relationships with companies take time to learn and grow," she said. "We have spent the past several months working with Authentic

Connections and the results they provided us to identify the best path forward for our community in light of their method that was unfamiliar to us." Laboratory Schools Director Tori Jueds said that the dashboard provided by the vendor is complex and not very amenable to immediate translation for a community. She said they are trying to create a format that a reader can actually engage productively with. "What we're trying to do is ensure that the results of the survey are communicated to our community in a way that is thorough, transparent, digestible and actionable," she said. Lab's combined middle and high school enrollment is larger than schools Authentic Connections typically works with, independent schools with fewer than 500 students. Ms. Noel said Lab's larger size requires more time to pull the information from the vendor in the way that the school needs. "Authentic Connections gave us a massive amount of data that was presented differently than how we had received data in the past," she

said. "We needed time to be able to understand what it was they were presenting and to ask them follow up questions before turning around and trying to give that information to others." One new aspect of the survey, which led Lab to use a new vendor, is the consolidation of results including both the middle and high school. "Authentic Connections helpfully provided back to us a good snapshot of our entire student body from 6th grade to 12th grade. But in order to feel like we could be actionable, we needed to look at it more granularly because of the differences between our divisions," Ms. Noel said. While the release of survey results has been delayed, Ms. Noel believes the process will be smoother in the future. "The big time-suck has been figuring out how to pull out from the wonderful package that Authentic Connections put together the most meaningful information for our community," she said. "That was hard to figure out on the first pass. We'll be better next time."

### senior retreat



**SLIDING DOWN.** Seniors Mayu Blume and Lena Stole slide down a snow covered hill during senior retreat, which lasted from Feb. 9-11 in Galena. Students were able to enjoy skiing, sledding and other activities. Lena said, "I really loved going sledding. We have great weather and a really fun golf course that we went sledding on. I had a fantastic time sledding and watching my friends and teachers having fun!"

### news in brief

**Science Olympiad places first, second at contests**

The varsity Science Olympiad team scored first and second place in two consecutive competitions at the University of Chicago Jan. 28 and Feb. 4. Junior varsity scored sixth in the Jan. 28 event competing against 39 teams, and third of 22 teams on Feb. 4. Individuals participate in the competitions and get individually ranked, and their scores contribute to the team's overall score. The events are either knowledge-based, engineering-based or hands-on. The team members were happy with their results. Captain Fermi Boonstra said that in the Jan. 28 competition everyone was happy

with the results. She said, "For varsity, the only team we were beat by is the number one school in Indiana, who goes to nationals every year. So we were very happy with [our placement]." — Niall Danahey

**Admin, Faculty begin talks for contract negotiations**

The Faculty Association and the Laboratory Schools administration have officially started negotiating the collective bargaining agreement, a process that happens every four years. The existing agreement expires June 30. The FA sent a survey to faculty in early November about negotiating wages, benefits, hours and other terms and conditions of em-

ployment. The FA is negotiating changes to the contract based on the results from the survey. The FA and administration declined to go into detail on the negotiating process. Laboratory Schools Director Victoria Jueds wrote in an email to the Midway, "The Faculty Association and administration are just now commencing our contract negotiations process, and we all feel very optimistic." — Audrey Park

**Robotics team advances to state, places fifth in region**

The robotics team Sprockets and Screws qualified to advance to the Illinois First Tech state competition after qualifying at the regional competition at Leo High

School Feb. 11. The WeByte Team advanced to the final round and received the Innovate and Design awards but did not advance to the state competition after a part of the team's robot broke. Sprockets & Screws, comprised of seniors, advanced to state after placing fifth in the regional competition for awards. With the system of alliances, Sprockets & Screws was able to choose to compete beside WeByte in the competition's final round, making them the highest scoring alliance in the region as they competed in the series of two-and-a-half-minute matches. "I've always wanted to get both teams in a winning alliance together, which has something that has

never happened before," Darren Fuller, robotics coach, said. "In the finals, after the part broke off, we ended up losing two matches for things that have never happened this season, which we couldn't anticipate." When reflecting on WeByte's and Sprockets & Screws' performance this season, Mr. Fuller is proud of how far the teams have come in only four years of the robotics program. "We have these students that have been on this team and have been working together for so long that they've become a strong team that really knows how to navigate the field," Mr. Fuller said. "Now, they've been working hard together a lot to make these changes." — Mia Lipson



BIRTH CONTROL

# More than periods, pregnancy and pills

## Hormonal medications provide menstrual aid

by MIA LIPSON  
Assistant Editor

Just days ago, sophomore Uma Malani left school early to spend an hour in the doctor's office, surrounded by needles and nurses, waiting to receive answers about her menstrual cycle. Since she got her first period in late seventh grade, Uma has suffered from frequent periods of intense, intolerable pain for weeks at a time.

When on the birth control pill, Uma's periods did not improve as she expected, and she still experienced many symptoms she sought to relieve.

"When going to the doctor, I was looking for a better alternative to what was happening and, really, I wanted to know if there was something wrong with me," Uma said.

Now, she is looking for a medication option, other than the birth control pill, to manage her menstrual cycle that works for her.

Hormonal medications, including the common hormonal birth control, have the potential to provide a solution for adolescents looking to manage menstruation and menstrual-related symptoms. While these medications have been widely studied and tested, each user has a unique experience.

Shashwati Pradhan, Assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Chicago, often sees patients like Uma who wish to address their periods. She said many patients note painful periods with intense cramping, excessive bleeding and a duration that exceeds the typical three- to seven-day window. For patients wishing to address their cycles, for menstrual suppression or control, Dr. Pradhan and Dr. Chor both like to present a variety of options.

"There are incredibly safe and effective medications, though each one is not for everyone. People have their different kind of preferences or factors that are important to them when choosing a method, and so the most important thing is understanding what's most important for them in terms of thinking about picking a medication to help," said Julie Chor, a Lab parent and associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Chicago.

Dr. Pradhan noted that while medications to manage periods are often only referred to as "birth



Midway illustration by Dalin Dorhn

“There are incredibly safe and effective medications, though each one is not for everyone.”  
Julie Chor

control,” not all medications have contraceptive efficacy.

“The term ‘birth control’ can sometimes intimidate people. Especially because a lot of my patients are younger, they come with parents and guardians who sometimes also feel like their child is too young to be on something like that,” Dr. Pradhan said. “But in terms of menstrual management, there are some hormonal medications that are not contraceptive, which makes the way we phrase it an important distinction to make.”

When seeing patients looking to manage their periods with medical steps, Dr. Pradhan categorizes the many medication options in two primary ways: combined and progesterone only.

Combined medications consist

of two primary hormones — progesterone and estrogen — and often allow the user to experience a bleeding episode approximately every 28 days that tends to be more manageable for patients, often resulting in more regular periods with lighter bleeding and cramping. According to the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, combined medications also have the potential to manage acne, reduce the occurrence of menstrual-related migraines without an aura and decrease the risk of ovarian, uterine and colon cancer. Combined medications include the patch, ring and widely known birth control pills, and each method has a unique potential for side effects.

With birth control pills, Dr. Chor and Dr. Pradhan both noted that adolescent patients frequently expressed concerns about side effects such as weight gain, even though medical studies show evidence of little to no correlation between hormonal birth control and weight gain.

The other main category for menstrual management consists of progestin-only medica-

tions, which contain a form of progesterone, a hormone involved in pregnancy and menstruation. These medications consist of pills, which, unlike the combined pill, may stop a patient's period entirely or thin the uterine lining enough to largely reduce bleeding. Another form includes the birth control injection or an IUD, an intrauterine device.

With both types of medication, Dr. Chor and Dr. Pradhan both consider the patient's medical history when selecting a medication to address other medical conditions as well as certain menstrual disorders such as endometriosis.

Each person's experience can differ based on individual preferences to individual side effects. For people like Uma, whose first experience with the pill was not what she expected, she now hopes trying other methods to address her periods will allow her to live her life cramp-free, as she hasn't been able to do in years.

Dr. Pradhan said, “my goal is always to help patients reclaim their time so they can get back to the things that they really want to do.”

### glossary

#### Birth Control Pill

Birth control pills are pills taken daily that release the pregnancy-preventing hormones estrogen, progestin, or both. These hormones prevent ovulation, meaning there is no egg for sperm to fertilize.

#### Birth Control Implant

The birth control implant is a thin rod inserted into the arm by a medical professional. The implant will release the progestin hormone that prevents pregnancy by thickening mucus around the cervix, preventing sperm from getting in.

#### IUD

An intrauterine device is a T-shaped piece of plastic that is inserted into the uterus by a health care provider. There are two types of IUDs, hormonal and copper. Hormonal IUDs release the progestin hormone that prevents pregnancy, while copper IUDs are wrapped in a thin copper wire which creates an inflammatory reaction that is toxic to sperm and eggs.

#### Birth Control Patch

The birth control patch is a small, almost sticker-like, patch that you place on the upper arm, back or stomach that a person replaces once a week. The patch releases estrogen and progestin that prevent ovulation, which prevents the sperm from meeting the egg.

— compiled by  
Ainsley Williams

## Discuss birth control as medicine more transparently

by CLARE O'CONNOR  
Editor-in-Chief

I've struggled with chronic pain my whole life. Fortunately, I've had access to medications and procedures to address my pain. Fluctuating hormone levels exacerbated my pain every month. It was horrible. I just lived with that for a while.



Clare O'Connor

After a lot of frustration and appointments, I started taking hormonal birth control pills when I was 15. Birth control became just another part of my treatment. Immediately, my health improved.

While the pill helped, it wasn't the perfect option for me, so at 17, I went off the pill and got a Mirena IUD that has truly changed my life.

Birth control is medicine: It can prevent cramps, migraines, acne, anxiety, depression, pregnancy and countless other medical concerns. The problem is that birth control isn't perceived as regular medication. Instead, birth control options are stigmatized, misrepresented and restricted.

Young people are often told that menstrual pain is just something they have to learn to manage, that side effects should be expected, and that talking about birth control should make them uncomfortable. However, this just isn't true: periods don't have to be debilitating. In fact, many people can safely

stop their periods altogether; if a certain method of birth control causes disruptive side effects, doctors can and should work with patients to find an option that meets all of their needs.

Talking openly about birth control is the only way to make sure these basic facts are known. Needless taboos are putting people in avoidable pain.

According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, approximately 1 in 10 females between the ages of 14 and 20 miss school or work every month because of debilitating menstrual symptoms, and many more show significantly reduced engagement with their responsibilities.

However, this prevalent struggle

“Talking openly about birth control is the only way to make sure these basic facts are known.”  
Clare O'Connor

is often not addressed. Many people feel uncomfortable discussing their pain and never get treatment or even realize their pain is abnormal. When people do speak up, their concerns are frequently dismissed by doctors.

Along with the baseline medical benefits of birth control, birth control is also crucially one of the

most effective ways to prevent pregnancy. Awareness about different birth control options and their benefits has proven to drastically reduce the chances of unwanted pregnancies, especially for adolescents. The medical consequences of pregnancy can be severe, long-lasting and in some cases fatal, not to mention the impact of actually having and needing to support a child.

Given the life-changing impacts of birth control, it is ridiculous that conversations around birth control are so shrouded by stigma, a stigma that exists at U-High. Because we avoid talking about birth control, people suffer with unnecessary pain. So share your personal stories. Ask your doctors and friends questions.



★★ **chicago mayoral election** ★★

# Looking back at Lightfoot

Unpopular mayor seeks second term; unfilled promises lead to poll struggles

by **TÉA TAMBURIO**  
Editor-in-Chief

As Chicagoans compare candidates and some U-High students prepare to cast a ballot in the Feb. 28 municipal election, some students are reflecting on current Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot's policies regarding policing, mental health clinics, sustainability and pandemic response.

After winning 74% of the 2019 runoff vote and all 50 wards, Ms. Lightfoot took office and has tried to address Chicago's public safety, education and financial stability. She made history as the first woman of color and the first openly LGBTQ+ person to be Chicago mayor.

Despite weak approval ratings, she is running for a second term, but eight other candidates are coming for her job. If no candidate receives more than 50% of the vote this month, a runoff election will be held April 4.

Coming into office, Ms. Lightfoot had plans for increasing affordable housing, electing Chicago Public Schools' board members and more.

However, 10 months into her term, the pandemic began.

Sophomore Olin Nafziger believes Ms. Lightfoot responded well to the beginning of the pandemic.

"I remember in the first couple weeks of the pandemic she made a series of videos of her at different museums playing with penguins and in like empty museums and it made people feel good," Olin said. "I feel like Chicago has done well compared to other major cities, and I think that she was a major part in that."

While the majority of her term was impacted by the COVID-19

pandemic, Ms. Lightfoot's efforts extended beyond pandemic safety measures.

Olin expressed dissatisfaction with Ms. Lightfoot's police accountability measures, citing that she was a leader in the Police Accountability Task Force and believes she was elected over candidate Toni Preckwinkle because people thought she'd force the police to take accountability. Olin doesn't think she's followed through on that.

"There have been a lot of incidents in Chicago, since she's become mayor, and I don't think that she's handled that well with forcing the police to take accountability," he said.

Throughout her tenure, violence in Chicago grew by 66%, and following summer riots in 2020, she came under criticism for her response in ensuring neighborhood safety.

Senior Asha Patel, who will be voting for the first time, said she wants a mayor who will address issues of police brutality and gun violence.

"In terms of what I'm looking for in mayor is probably addressing more issues with the police and police brutality and in general just violence and the use of guns in Chicago."

Another area of Ms. Lightfoot's policy scrutinized due to the pandemic is the city's mental health clinics, which were closed under former Mayor Rahm Emanuel. Activists from the organization Stop Chicago asked Ms. Lightfoot to invest in city-run mental health clinics in 2021, as they said the city and nation's mental health crisis was compounded by the pandemic.

Asha thinks a lot of people are more in touch with their emo-



Midway photo by Matt Petres

**MAYORAL MATTERS.** Mayor Lori Lightfoot speaks at a rally on Feb. 27, 2022, in Ukrainian Village to support defending Ukraine.

tions are comfortable seeking support for their mental health, so reopening clinics would increase their ability to access mental health care.

"Clinics are definitely a good idea because not everyone can afford to go see a psychiatrist or get a prescription, so I feel like the more availability there is, the more the better," she said.

On Jan. 7, Ms. Lightfoot said her alternative plan, the Trauma-Informed Centers of Care Network which funds community mental health organizations and Chicago's five mental health clinics, was a more successful model that would be more relevant to Chicago's 77 neighborhoods.

A longer-term plan Ms. Lightfoot laid out is the Chicago Works

Five-Year Capital Plan, which she said it would address areas of need and combat climate change with sustainable projects. Following the unveiling of this plan, Ms. Lightfoot announced Chicago's 2022 Climate Action Plan, which includes a zero-emissions transportation network, increased renewable energy investing and an organic waste collection system by 2025.

Asha says she's prioritizing candidates' potential for tangible change when deciding her vote.

Asha said, "After seeing the people who have been in power and seeing what has changed and what hasn't, and what their goals were originally and what they were able to accomplish, will definitely impact who I will vote for."

## how to vote

Voting is now open for Chicago mayor, treasurer, clerk, city council and the new police district council.

New and previous voters can check their registration status on the city's website. People can register as voters online, download and mail a form or call 312-269-7851 to request an application to be mailed, or register the same day they vote, provided they bring documentation.

People voting by mail must have their ballot postmarked or certified by Feb. 28, and the ballot must be received by the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners by March 14 in order for it to be counted. Ballots must be returned through the U.S. Postal Service or a licensed courier, in a drop box at any Chicago Early Voting location before Feb. 28, or by personal delivery to the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners at the 6th floor of 69 W. Washington.

Voters can cast ballots at the Supersite voting center downtown at 191 N. Clark St. or at the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners on 69 W. Washington's 6th floor. Both addresses are open to voters weekdays 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. up to Feb. 27.

Here are the upcoming important dates in this year's election:

**Feb. 22** — Three university early voting sites will be available until Feb. 24: Chicago State University (9501 S. King Dr.), Northeastern Illinois University (5500 N. St. Louis) and the University of Chicago — Reynolds Club (1131 E. 57th St.).

**Feb. 23** — Last day for the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners to receive Vote by Mail applications.

**Feb. 28** — Election Day. People may cast ballots at any of Chicago's 50 wards, along with the Board Supersite (191 N. Clark) from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.

— *compiled by Amy Ren*

# Mayoral challengers seek to realize their vision for city

By **LOUIS AUXENFANS**  
News Editor

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot is running for a second term, but eight other candidates want her job.

Each is trying to distinguish themselves from the other through campaign promises and policy proposals.

Most of the candidates have backgrounds in the city, state or federal governments, ranging from being an alderperson to serving as a state senator or member of the United States House of Representatives.

Those do not have experience in government, Ja'Mal Green and Willie Wilson, have unsuccessfully run for mayor previously.

All of the candidates but one are running as members of the Democratic party. Chicago, a stronghold of the party, has not had a Republican mayor since 1931.

**Kam Buckner** has centered

his campaign around his ability to work with the state government. He promised to bring hundreds of millions in state funding to Chicago Public Schools and create greater economic opportunities in Chicago by expanding rent-subsidy vouchers. Mr. Buckner wants to prioritize growth with a goal of having a city population of 3.3 million by 2030.



Kam Buckner

**Jesús "Chuy" García** is

framing his candidacy around his ability to gain federal funding for the city, which would help in the creation of affordable housing and balance the city budget. He wants to create a modern, data-informed Chicago police department to address issues of police brutality and pass a Chicago Dream Act to expand work opportunities for immigrant youth and students.



Jesús "Chuy" García

**Ja'Mal Green** has focused

on addressing crime with holistic solutions. He plans to create a social workforce and a youth intervention department. He wants to ban the act of booting vehicles and excessive ticketing. He wants to enact a city-level Green New Deal that will address lead pipes, and a housing microloan program that provides two-year, interest-free loans for low-income homeowners.



Ja'Mal Green

**Brandon Johnson's** campaign

revolves around socially-focused policy. He wants a trauma prevention program and opportunities for youth employment in order to prevent crime. Additionally, he is campaigning to provide CPS with greater resources to increase pre-kindergarten enrollment.

Mr. Johnson also wants to enforce stronger protections against evictions in the city.



Brandon Johnson

**Sophia King's** campaign focus-

es on policing reform. She wants to hire additional officers to the Chicago Police Department and create a reserve force of retired officers to handle non-dangerous duties.

She also wants to expand the Crisis Assistance Response and Engagement (CARE) program for alternative responses to substance abuse, mental health and extreme poverty.



Sophia King

**Roderick Sawyer** wants to increase the Chicago police force by 1,000 officers.

He wants to offer a 20-year pension vesting to refresh the police force and ensure officer wellness.

Mr. Sawyer also wants to redevelop vacant lots through a low-cost or no-loan program, increasing investment in communities of color to spark urban renewal in historically disadvantaged neighborhoods.



Roderick Sawyer

**Willie Wilson** has advocated

for a strict, crack-down approach to crime, saying police should be able to hunt down criminals "like a rabbit."

He wants to split the city into four police districts with their own superintendents.

He wants to deploy armed police officers on the CTA to ensure safety and remove people sleeping on trains. He also wants to lower the fares for public transit.



Willie Wilson

**Paul Vallas** wants to increase

beat cop presence to return to a community policing model. He wants to eliminate private security on the CTA to hire more CPD officers.

Addressing CPS, an area of personal expertise, Mr. Vallas wants to add social workers, introduce work-study programs, and keep schools open in the evening, on weekends and holidays to serve as community anchors.



Paul Vallas

Can't decide who to vote for?

Scan this QR code to take the Sun-Times mayoral candidate compatibility quiz to make an informed decision on Feb. 28.





# Urban farming catalyzes sustainability

For some, urban agriculture is more than a simple passion: it's a way of life

by **AMON GRAY**  
Sports and Leisure Editor

As the days grow longer, the plots of soil in the once-empty lot in East Garfield Park will be prepared and planted. The rattling of the chain-link fence surrounding the lot will subside and be replaced with the voices and laughter of volunteers and regular farmers as the growing season begins.

Urban agriculture creates a cycle of sustainability, opportunity and education in neighborhoods without access to organic foods. Yet, for some, it is more than their occupation.

Malcolm Evans, director of farms at Urban Growers Collective, began farming at age 9 when he met the organization's founder, Erika Allen. Urban Growers Collective is a nonprofit that addresses food inequality by growing organic food for food deserts: neighborhoods without access to convenient, affordable and healthy food.

"I grew up in Cabrini Green, and at that time they were just installing a garden in the neighborhood," Mr. Evans said. "They did it on the old basketball court where I lived at that time and where me and my friends hang out, and we was just stumbling around the building and seeing that they was doing something over there that day and went over there to see what was going on."

While in high school, Mr. Evans began the composting program at the now-closed Growing Power Chicago collecting compost from restaurants throughout the city after school and on week-

ends. In 2017, he became the Production Manager at UGC and later became director of farms.

"Folks in food desert neighborhoods who don't have — or don't have access to — healthy food and bringing healthy food and creating these nursery zones and these spots that folks can be vulnerable and like also know about food and have a space with folks that care about them," he said.

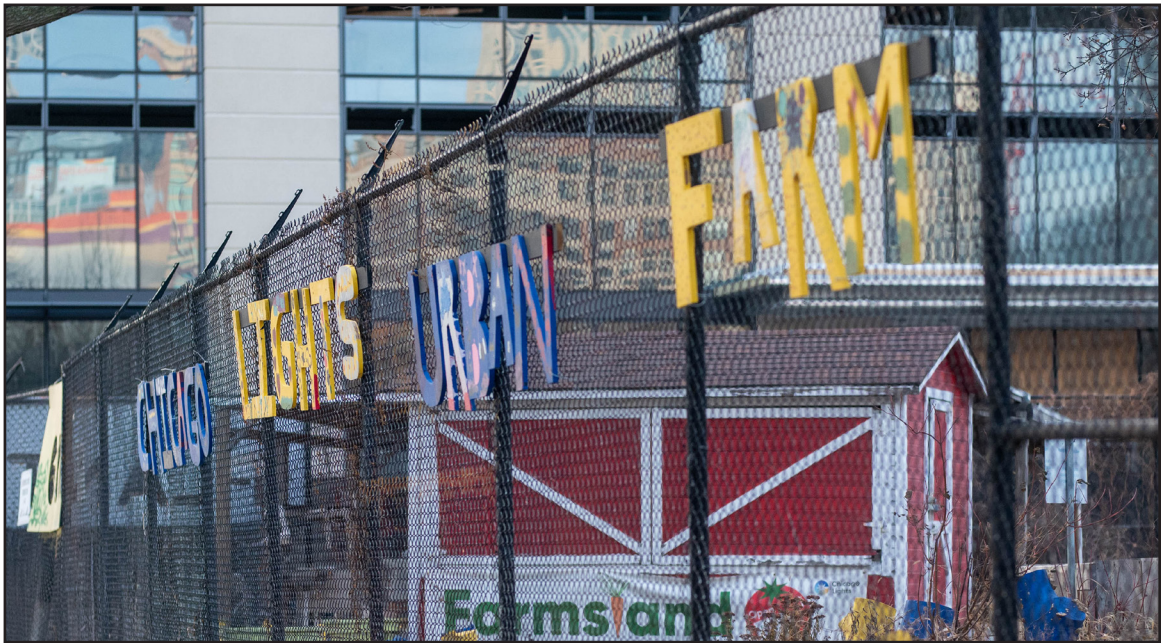
Urban agriculture has been a passion for Mr. Evans and he has been able to pass that passion on to others in the community. One challenge for this has been willingness by those communities to embrace urban agriculture.

"When you start understanding food and get into food, this work really inspires you. It takes you to the next level," he said. "But you gotta have patience and have passion for it. You can't come into folks' neighborhoods or come into people and try to teach them stuff that they're not interested in. Folks gotta already understand it a little and just need a little bit more help."

UGC allows drop-in volunteers for its South Chicago farm, where potential farmers can sign up for a recurring volunteer shift. Another aspect of UGC is its Fresh Moves Mobile Market, a bus converted into a mobile farmers market.

"I think my big highlight is always seeing these fields be loaded with delicious vegetables; also bringing back folks who've been doing it, folks who were in our youth club program, and also folks who volunteer to employ them," Mr. Evans said.

Urban farming brings unique



Midway photo by Patrice Graham

**FUTURE OF FOOD.** Across Chicago, empty lots and neighborhood spaces are being revitalized into urban farms. For those who believe in environmental conservation, urban agriculture produces healthy and sustainable options.

challenges, according to Steve Schultz, farm manager at another organization, Chicago FarmWorks.

"You're dealing with pests and pathogens and diseases on the farm all the time," Mr. Schultz said, "and every year it can be something new that you have to problem solve and push yourself through and find a solution to."

Another difficulty for the farms has been food waste.

"It's one of our concentrations of what we're trying to reduce. As for food, anytime food breaks down in the roots, it creates methane, and a lot of the recent research shows it is one of the biggest impacts in climate change right now," he said. "So us as a farm, it's our, it's our duty and our responsibility to try to figure out how we can reduce that."

The goal of Chicago FarmWorks is not just to grow organic food for communities in need.

"We have a workforce development side to FarmWorks as well, which we are working with individuals that have barriers to employment. It could be previous incarceration, could be addiction, could be homelessness, could be many, many different things," he said. "One of the reasons that the farm was created was to be a stepping stone for those individuals in the program."

The workforce development program within Chicago Farmworks finds full-time, long-term employment for individuals on the farm to get reacquainted with the structure of holding a job.

"For a lot of those individuals as well, it's kind of a gateway into the

world of work again. As farming for the summer is very peaceful. It can be very healing depending on the trauma that those individuals had gone through up to that point," Mr. Schultz said.

Mr. Schultz has the ability to give back to the community while building his passion for urban agriculture.

"It's being amongst all that ecology and environment that makes me happy to go out there every day, even the days that are tough. So it's no longer offices, it's no longer computers and screens," Mr. Schultz said. "I'm just out there with the plants and being able to have this environmental impact with the work that I do, a social impact that I do, and I get to do it all outside. And for that I consider myself very, very lucky."

# UChicago nurses seek aid for uninsured patients

Faced with health care restrictions, helping is hard

By **AUDREY PARK**  
Managing Editor

UChicago Medicine nurse Sonia Jama recalls a time when she had a patient with a deadly brain tumor in need of immediate treatment. She directed the patient to a navigation service to seek a solution. However, the care process was delayed due to limitations with his insurance. This is not a unique experience for Ms. Jama.

A 2022 study concluded that 8% of Americans are uninsured. Consequently, certain health care services are restricted for some.

The approval process for such services can take a while, and someone with a deadly, aggressive condition simply cannot wait for care.

Health care workers work with limited care solutions for uninsured people, regardless of the severity of their condition, balancing morals and obligations with hospital policy.

Ms. Jama and Vanessa Contreras, both neuro-oncology nurse navigators at UChicago Medicine, frequently encounter uninsured patients.

Ms. Contreras checks to see if the health care provider is appropriate for the uninsured patient, and Ms. Jama manages the treatment if approved.

Ms. Jama said though UChicago Medicine accepts charity cases for uninsured patients, the process is long and often delays care.

"The time it takes to approve some of these charity cases is probably one of the biggest obstacles we face," she said. "We have to jump through many hoops for the



Midway photo by Matthew McGehee

**CARE CONUNDRUM.** Health care workers at the Duchossois Center at UChicago Medicine work around limits to provide care to the uninsured.

uninsured, and I can't tell you how much time we spend just getting the authorizations for imaging or treatments."

Ms. Contreras helps ensure the patients get the treatment they need promptly. One of the more common solutions is an out-of-network exception form, also referred to as a "grant," which allows the uninsured patient six months of coverage. Such forms are only short-term solutions to a more significant problem.

"After that six months are up, we have to file another form. And then we have to keep doing that over and over," Ms. Contreras said. "But the stipulation is that you're still actively searching for a physician when the grant is approved. So it's really like a Band-Aid on a wound."

Communication with patients

is another obstacle Ms. Contreras faces in her work. She said some uninsured patients don't always follow up and, consequently, cannot come back to receive help.

"We can push them, we can do whatever we can for them, but ultimately it's up to the patient to follow through," she said.

Some outcomes of situations involving uninsured patients can depend upon their medical provider.

"Some providers are very generous," Ms. Jama said, "others not. Some providers have offered to waive the fee to see a patient, which is very generous."

Even generous providers have limitations to the services they can provide by hospital policy.

"The generous provider could, for example, order an MRI for an uninsured patient. But then we're like, 'Well, wait a minute, the pa-

“  
We have to jump through many hoops for the uninsured, and I can't tell you how much time we spend just getting authorizations for imaging or treatments.  
Vanessa Contreras, nurse  
”

tient hasn't been seen in two years. What's the liability? Because the doctor's gonna order this scan, so then he's responsible. A lot of times, we have to talk with risk management to make sure that it's OK. There is a limit, and we have to follow policy."

Ms. Jama and Ms. Contreras said they feel a moral obligation to help uninsured patients and do their best to work around the limitations.

Similarly, Margaret Clifford, a personal care assistant at Christ Advocate Medical Center, said she feels a strong moral obligation to help all kinds of patients.

"As a health care worker, how can you not help someone? It doesn't matter their circumstances," she said, "they need help. It's our responsibility."

Ms. Jama said she thinks most of the struggle reflects the American health care system, not UChicago Medicine. She is appreciative of the resources available at the university.

Ms. Jama said, "I'm very fortunate to work at a facility that cares about the community."

For around 60% of patients, especially those with time-restricting conditions, Ms. Contreras fills out an out-of-network function form where the patient will be sent elsewhere using a navigation service.

Equal Hope, a navigation service, primarily started as an organization to improve health care for women with breast cancer. The service connects individuals at a community level, and helps them find their way into the health care system.

A lot of times, health care facilities refer uninsured patients to Equal Hope.

Co-Executive Director Paris Thomas said, "There's a lot of hospitals, primary care doctors, who refer patients to us if they can't help them, or if they're uninsured, because we will find and figure out how we can help them."

Equal Hope has reached over 300,000 individuals and navigated close to 8,000 individuals into some preventative health care service.

Ms. Thomas said the biggest problem with America's health care system is the many health inequities and disparities "plaguing" marginalized communities.

"I think in health care, there's a lot we can say that is amazing," she said. "We save lives, we do amazing work. But at the same time, when technology advances in health care, there's a group of people who are always left behind and those who happen to be underrepresented populations, which creates health inequities."

Health care workers like Ms. Jama and Ms. Contreras, organizations like Equal Hope, and generous providers fight the inequities of the American health care system daily to provide care for the uninsured and marginalized populations.

"A hospital is a business. They are run like a business and I get it," Ms. Jama said, "but we must remember, even when it is hard, that we're also in the business of helping people."



# Step up to support peers’ mental health

More engagement, awareness around mental health is needed from students

Despite the calls for a more effective system of supporting students’ mental health, throughout U-High’s hallways, groups of students can often be heard making off-hand remarks like, “This class makes me want to kill myself,” or “That outfit makes me look like I’m anorexic.”

Joking about mental health or using it as a way to exaggerate a point may feel harmless at the moment. However, with recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showing that depression and anxiety in children are increasing, students’ words are undermining the severity of the topic.

While the administration ultimately bears most of the responsibility to ensure Lab’s environment is not harmful to students’ emotional wellbeing, students must work in tandem to create a culture that uplifts their peers’ mental health rather than mocks it.

Although it is tempting to blow off Wellness Workshops and assemblies promoting mental health in favor of doing homework or watching Netflix, if students do not utilize the resources being offered and voice what more is needed, no substantial change will occur.

It is only through demonstrating investment that students can emphasize the importance of their own mental wellbeing.

A significant recent opportunity students have been given is to take an active role in improving the discussion surrounding mental health by applying to become a Peer Mental Health Partner. Those selected will receive specific training to identify and manage mental health challenges in their peers while also reducing stigma. Internal efforts are often more effective, as students are able to have personal knowledge of the challenges their

as the  
midway  
sees it.

peers face.

As students, it is imperative that we assess the culture our peers perpetuate and put in real work to sculpt it to our liking. Using language that portrays serious conditions as a joke trivializes and passes judgment on the real hardships that many students face. Mental disorders are much more than just hyperbole, and they must be viewed as such.

There are limits to the amount of control students can have of Lab’s overall culture, but sparking serious conversations about mental health is one area they can im-



Midway illustration by Dalin Dohrn

prove.

This burden does not fall only on the shoulders of students. As students work on their part of the culture shift that needs to occur, the administration must do the same.

While some efforts like the mental health assemblies have been made, the administration has yet to genuinely listen to and address students’ needs in this area.

Including mental health days

as excused absences, instituting homework policies and pushing back the start of the school day are all significant starts, but there is still a long way to go in improving students’ mental health.

As U-High seeks a new principal, it is critical that mental health is among the top-most priorities and that the person has demonstrated experience understanding and supporting teenagers’ mental health. What U-High really needs

is to become a place where students can be confident their concerns are being addressed as they voice them.

Ultimately, students and the administration must work together to ensure that the conversations regarding mental health at U-High address the topic as it is: a serious issue that is negatively impacting nearly all of us.

*This reflects the opinion of the U-High Midway editorial board.*

## Finals week schedule must be restructured to provide support

By **AUDREY MATEI**

Arts Editor

Page 18 of the student handbook states, “Students who have three (3) tests, papers, or final projects assigned for the same date can ask their teacher for a reasonable extension on the last-assigned item.”

Although I have heard students and teachers bring this rule up occasionally, I have not once seen or heard someone actually try to apply it.

That was until I had to... during the last week of January.

During the final two weeks of the term, I had 10 major assignments, despite only taking six classes. This unequal distribution of work made me realize that

something is very wrong with the way our end-of-semester schedule functions. With next year’s significant schedule restructure, finals week needs to be reevaluated, too.

Final assessments themselves are not an issue. After all, I signed up for this workload knowing it would be rigorous. Rather, the entire system we adopt for the end of semester is counterproductive to its purpose.

Our current end-of-semester

schedule includes a four-day week: the first day has a normal schedule, the subsequent three days only have two or three 75-minute classes scheduled and the final day is off for students. Although the reduced class meetings are meant to prevent cramming, having only three days reserved for tests, projects and papers still leaves many studying overwhelmed with lots of work and little time. Next year, the schedule will support seven periods while providing some students the ability to take eight classes.

To adjust to this change, I propose that the day of normal scheduling be removed. Each of the four class days during the last week of

the semester should have two class periods. This will slightly lighten students’ schedules, providing more time to study and meet with teachers.

These classes would be held at their usual time to avoid internal scheduling conflicts and would be the standard, 50-minute class periods with plenty of time before and after the period so teachers can extend or shorten the class and eliminate the need for multi-day finals.

I also urge teachers to consider assigning their activities during the designated week for final assessments.

Some teachers assigned significant work in the week before the end of the semester, which clogged

student schedules more. Although I understand that teachers need a significant amount of time to grade major projects, and some final assessments require multiple class periods, the week before the semester’s end is incredibly important to use for longer-term studying. According to the University of California, San Diego’s psychology department, spaced-out studying practices help students to retain more information and study more effectively.

Although finals week should be set up to help students feel the least-stressed as possible, the most recent experience didn’t work and we need to work to transform it into something better.

## Disney’s 100th anniversary: Not a celebration but a wake-up call

By **CHLOË ALEXANDER**

Assistant Editor

100 years of Disney. 100 years of children growing up watching Disney movies, essential to a child’s life. The princesses, surrounded by love and magic, are adored by all. I always treasured watching Rapunzel running away with Flynn Rider, Belle having a passion for knowledge and reading, and Tiana following her dream by opening a restaurant. But underneath the true-love kisses and happily-ever-afters, there are moments and truths of Disney that people should be aware of.

With Disney’s centennial approaching, we must not only remember the happily ever after, but the long years of caricatures and

stereotypes.

As someone who has always loved watching Disney movies and will probably continue to watch them, I cannot ignore aspects of the movies that are painfully racist. There can be lists and lists of racist and problematic movies, characters and situations that Disney has created, one of which Insider has put together.

To name of few: the stereotypical depiction and cultural appropriation of Native Americans

in “Peter Pan,” the romanticization of colonialism in “Pocahontas,” the crows from “Dumbo” that reference Jim Crow laws and convey anti-Black stereotypes, the Siamese cats in both “Lady and the Tramp” and “The Aristocats” which portray racist caricatures of Asian people, anti-Arab lyrics in the opening song of “Aladdin,” and the lead characters of color being transformed into animals in multiple films, including “The Princess and the Frog” and “The Emperor’s New Groove.” (And don’t forget the nonconsensual kisses in “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs” and “Sleeping Beauty.”)

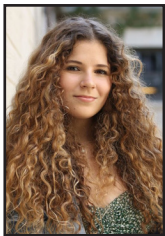
One of Disney’s biggest theatrical mistakes was the 1946 movie “Song of the South,” which shows

a clear image of Disney’s problematic behavior. The movie — set in post-Civil War, Reconstruction era — depicts an unrealistic and historically inaccurate slave-to-master relationship, according to NAACP’s statement on the movie: “Regrets, however, that in an effort neither to offend audiences in the North or South, the production helps to perpetuate a dangerously glorified picture of slavery... [the film] unfortunately gives the impression of an idyllic master-slave relationship, which is a distortion of the facts.” There are plenty of other aspects of the movie that would make you understand why Disney refuses to make it available on Disney+. Although Disney has openly stated that “Song of the

South” will not be shown, we must recognize that it was made.

Although Walt Disney himself might’ve not been racist, the movies he allowed to be created, characters he thought of and movies created in the Disney legacy have racist aspects. This isn’t to say boycott Disney, but be aware of the racist past that Disney hasn’t addressed. Some of the movies are still streaming. Be aware there are problematic characters in their movies that don’t reflect real life.

Being able to address the realities in Disney’s questionable past doesn’t mean you can’t enjoy a Disney movie. But choosing to watch today’s more diverse Disney movies is a step in righting the wrongs of Disney’s past.



Audrey Matei



Chloë Alexander

### u-high midway

Published during the school year by journalism and photojournalism students of University High School, University of Chicago Laboratory Schools.

1362 East 59th Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60637  
Phone 773-702-0591  
Email [midway@ucls.uchicago.edu](mailto:midway@ucls.uchicago.edu)

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Journalism students,  
University High School  
Printed by Grace Printing,  
Chicago, Illinois

[uhighmidway.com](http://uhighmidway.com)

### mission and editorial policy.

The Midway is an independent newspaper that strives for excellence across all of our platforms. We are a student-run newspaper for the entire University of Chicago Laboratory High School community. We aim to not only represent the multitude of thoughts and experiences at U-High but also inform community members through transparent, timely and complete reporting.

In a time when the press is criticized, the U-High Midway seeks to inform, educate and serve the community of University High School. The Midway is developed and managed by students, for students.

In every story we write, the Midway should give a voice to the experiences of people at U-High. We will report on the people, activities and thoughts that make our school unique, striving to include the voices we haven’t heard yet.

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# TikTok promotes unhealthy trends

By **ZARA SIDDIQUE**  
*Audience Engagement Manager*

A user opens their phone and starts scrolling through the TikTok app. A montage of an influencer's day flashes, displaying what they eat in a day. It's alarmingly little food, yet the user still favorites the video.



Zara Siddique

Every day, over 1 billion users log on to social media app sensation TikTok, and from there they engage in the perfectly curated rabbit hole that is their For You Page, which uses the data the app has collected to display videos that the user has shown previous interest in. Thus came the phrase: "Which side of TikTok are you on?" meaning users with similar interests would see similar or the same videos.

Slowly, trends spread throughout these groups. First they were harmless: video games, books and food recipes. But now it seems as though there is an ulterior motive. Various trends such as "the hype," "clean girl aesthetic," "easy weight loss" and even the romanticization of various disorders have started frequenting viewers For You Page.

These trends seen on TikTok perpetuate unrealistic and often unattainable standards, disguising various real-life struggles as what's "in."

The hype, usually assigned to a famous influencer or celebrity, deems the person the new standard. The effect is brainwashing. Currently "the hype" has been assigned to 22-year-old beauty influencer Alix Earle. Ms. Earle creates three-minute "get ready with me videos," often promoting a very unhealthy lifestyle. She frequently skips meals, opting to order fast food late at night, and drinks heavily. Despite this, many people have coined the phrase "What Would Alix Do," in admiration of her various behaviors, thus promoting this lifestyle.

Similar to Ms. Earle's lifestyle trends, the "clean girl aesthetic" has gained popularity, but this aesthetic is geared toward white people and a white standard of beauty. While deeming this aesthetic to be a standard of cleanliness and organization, it simultaneously deems people of color as "dirty."

As various beauty standards on TikTok are generally directed toward women, the app also contains an intense workout and gym presence, geared towards men and promoting similar toxic standards. As most videos on TikTok are only 15 seconds, viewers are getting extremely short introductions to workouts, and harmful habits are created. Misinformation on bulking and cutting, meaning eating excessively or not at all so as to effectively gain muscle, is circulating throughout the app. With inaccurate information these seemingly helpful tips have the potential to



Midway illustration by Eliza Dearing

put a viewer's health at risk.

Misinformation is a common theme among these 15-second videos, especially pertaining to mental health and disorders. Many struggles have been generalized and deemed common and relatable. While seeing oneself in certain struggles is normal and even healthy to recognize, TikTok has taken this a couple steps too far. People have started using "OCD" to describe feelings of discomfort, and "depression" as

momentary feelings of sadness. The simplification of these struggles takes away from their seriousness.

As TikTok continues to increase in popularity, it is crucial that users stay aware of the impending threats the app promotes with a constant rotation of trends, all with underlying themes. The standards that are promoted are, more often than not, upholding white and societal standards that are ultimately unattainable.

# In race-centered conversations, include Asian Americans

By **TÉA TAMBURIO**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

As the Supreme Court weighs the future of affirmative action in Students for Fair Admission vs. Harvard, the Asian American community is again at the center of a nationwide debate about race and is being pitted — or pitting themselves against — Black, Latinx and Indigenous communities. According to a report from Asian American Advancing Justice, 69% of Asian Americans stand by affirmative action. However, a vocal 31% are pushing back against race-conscious admissions, claiming the internalization of the Model Minority Myth, a myth rooted in white supremacy and the perception that Asian American people are successful because they're hardworking.

While we await the court's decision, we must reframe our thinking around Asian Americans regarding the multifaceted definition of people of color. I was a sophomore the first time I was asked if I



Téa Tamburio

consider myself a person of color. While asked out of genuine curiosity, I was surprised with the question, for I identify as Asian American. To me, being Asian — not white — made me a person of color. Then, I questioned if I'm really a person of color, for I haven't faced the same systems of oppression as some other communities of color do.

The issue of Asian American people being overlooked as people of color, due to their generalized social, economic and educational success, sometimes penetrates into our Lab community's bubble as well. Asian American people cannot and should not be viewed only as allies to people of color in spaces for diversity, equity and inclusion. While all students of color deserve to feel seen and empowered within our community, we cannot leave the Asian American community behind in our mission to achieve racial and ethnic inclusion.

The Asian American community has long been seen as the "model minority." Since the '40s, this myth about Asian Americans' collective success has been used as a racial wedge and condenses the diverse Asian experiences into a

single narrative of success. Within this myth is the inherent implication that despite the racial adversity and sometimes belligerent racism Asian Americans face, they're still overlooked as valid people of color.

Between March 2021 and March 2022, 11,400 incidents of anti-Asian hate were reported across the United States, according to Stop AAPI Hate, a coalition that tracks and advocates for combating hate incidents. It is undeniable that some power structures that lead to the oppression of other people of color, such as in anti-Black racism, have deeper and more extensive roots than anti-Asian racism. However, it's still our school community's duty to support and include all ethnic and racial identities when addressing diversity and inclusion. By supporting student-run clubs, such as Asian Students' Association, and actively uplifting the Asian American community's voices in assemblies and DEI-related communications, we will begin to mitigate the effects of the Model Minority Myth and general lack of knowledge around Asian and Asian American culture.

Within the Laboratory Schools,

19% of students identified as Asian American in the 2021-22 school year. The Asian American community is only one of many communities of color in our school, and community members collectively hold a responsibility to support all our identities in being heard and empowered. This school year is the first time Asian American history is required in Illinois public school curriculums. Recently, U-High has expanded their history course offerings, most recently adding Worlds of Asia, 20th century Latin American history and AT Latinx history in 2022. Even though the Asian American community also needs to be allies to other communities of color, overlooking them in conversations and movements around inclusion and diversity perpetuates the model minority myth and minimizes the racism this community faces.

Moving forward in our inclusion-centered conversations, please remember to include and represent your Asian American students when planning wide-ranging DEI programming and communications for the coming year. We deserve to be equally seen, heard and uplifted in this collective movement.

# Women with ADHD face different, difficult social expectations

By **CLARE McROBERTS**  
*Assistant Editor*

All over the internet, quizzes for self diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder have proliferated. Billions have viewed the "ADHD" hashtag on TikTok. Young women have recognized themselves in a list of qualities — struggling to focus, tending to daydream, viewed as talking a lot — identified as symptoms of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

Lately, social media has drawn a lot of attention to the possibili-



Clare McRoberts

ty of missed diagnoses for ADHD among women, especially among those who are young. All of the new attention has raised reasonable skepticism. But the problem of underdiagnosed women is real and deserves a deeper look.

Social media aside, students, teachers and administrators should be aware of difficulties and complications faced by women with ADHD inside and outside of school due to societal expectations and gender norms.

One might believe that exploring and recognizing ADHD in women should not be the highest priority since men are most commonly diagnosed. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that 13% of boys are diagnosed with ADHD compared to

only 6% of girls.

Yet, those very statistics bring reason for concern. Researchers have found evidence that suggests that parents and teachers are far less likely to seek services for girls than boys. ADHD is deeply complicated in how it affects women. Women are often missed when it comes to medical referrals and diagnoses, studies suggest, because women with ADHD may show a different set of symptoms: inattention and anxiety rather than hyperactivity, which is more widely recognized as a symptom of ADHD.

Yet, simultaneously, women with ADHD — diagnosed or not — may exhibit symptoms that do not align with social constructs for women in particular. Often, women are expected to be focused, or-

ganized and reserved, taking up as little space as possible. Too loud, too chatty, too messy — none of it quite fits what the world expects.

What makes this issue so urgent is an increased risk of harm among women with ADHD. Mental health experts have found that young women who exhibited a history of ADHD had higher rates of self-harm and suicide than a group with no such history.

From the pressure of society to a lack of diagnosis, women with ADHD deal with a different set of issues that can last well beyond their formative years. Acceptance, recognition and understanding from peers, teachers and adults is essential to beginning to change a destructive pattern for women with ADHD.

## vox pop.

March is Women's History Month.

Which woman making history today do you think should be honored in a future Women's History Month and/or in the U-High curriculum? Why?

"Michelle Obama because she is a First Lady from the South Side of Chicago, man, and she cares about children's health and wellness. I think oftentimes, we adults are concerned with, 'What school are you going to? Are you doing this or are you doing that? Are you performing at a certain standard? Are you keeping up? What have you done for your future?' Meanwhile, she's more concerned about children's wellness, and so I think that's really admirable."

— Isaac Berrutea, history teacher

"The film director Chloé Zhao ... because she is the first woman of color to win the Oscar for best director, and many of her movies are interesting and influential. People don't know the face behind her movies, so I think it's important to recognize her success in a male-dominated field."

— Chani Patterson, sophomore

"Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, based off of her political activism, especially coming from an underprivileged background and now being able to exist on such a big platform."

— Areen Khan, junior

"A woman that I think should be celebrated is Stacey Abrams. She had just run for the governorship of Georgia. She has been very instrumental in trying to ensure all citizens of Georgia are able to vote without any impediment. She was also instrumental in getting Georgia to have their first-ever Black senator in the 2020 election."

— Shauna Anderson, math teacher

"Taylor Swift, because whether or not you like her music, you have to admit that she is persevering and hard-working. Even when her songs were stolen from her, she managed to re-record all of her albums, and she has progressed in the face of unfair criticism."

— Nutan Ganigara, sophomore

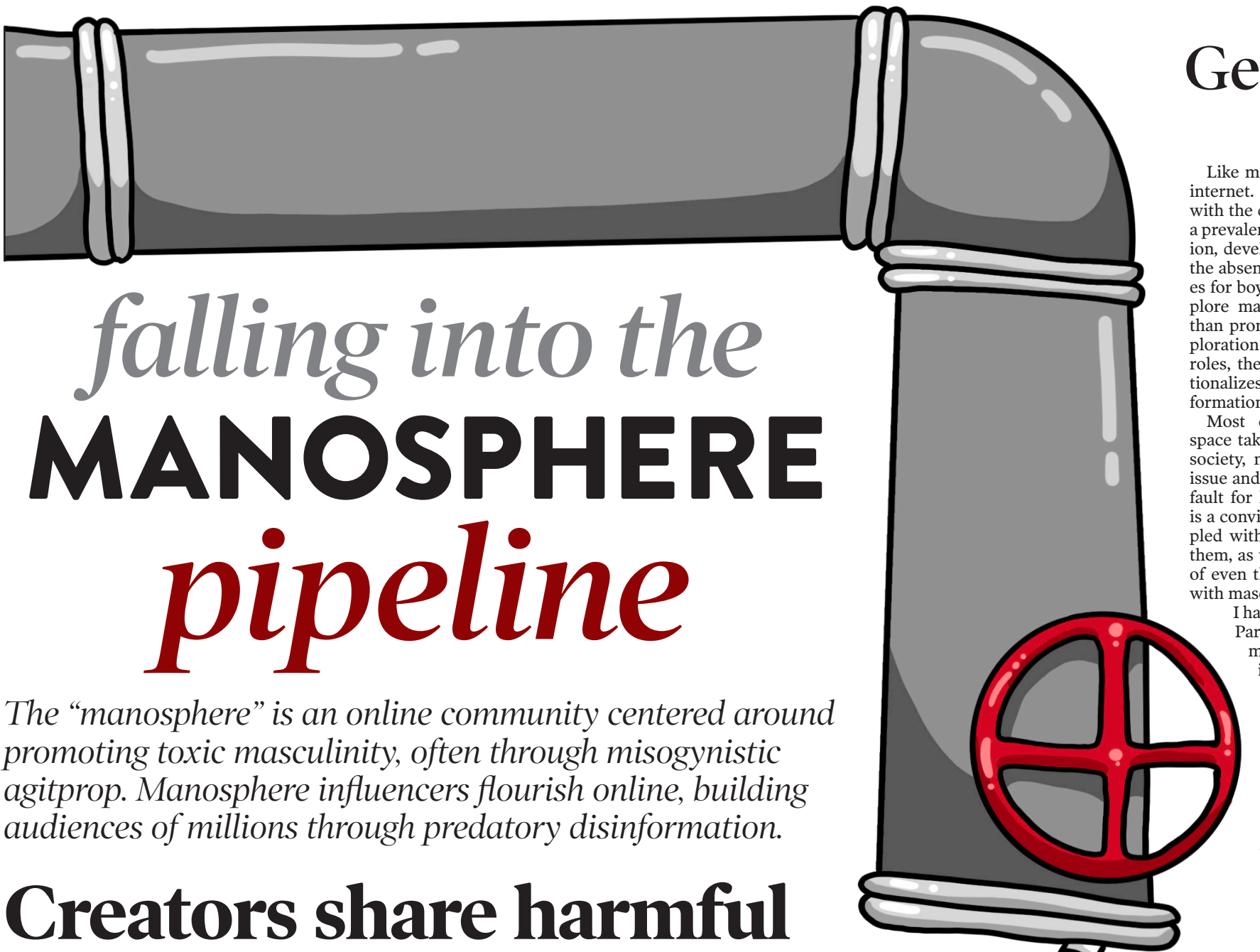
"Kamala Harris because she is the first female Black vice president. She's really inspiring. To get through a system with this much racism and prejudice, I feel like that's a big stride for everyone."

— Zuri Cosey Gay, ninth grader

— compiled by Taariq Ahmed and Ainsley Williams

For additional responses, visit [uhighmidway.com](http://uhighmidway.com)





# falling into the MANOSPHERE pipeline

The “manosphere” is an online community centered around promoting toxic masculinity, often through misogynistic agitprop. Manosphere influencers flourish online, building audiences of millions through predatory disinformation.

## Creators share harmful rhetoric in online spaces

by WILLIAM TAN  
Editor-in-Chief

“Depression isn’t real. You feel sad, you move on... Change it.” That’s just one outspoken quote recently uttered by Andrew Tate, a name that has become household for Gen-Z teenagers. Arrested a month ago in Romania for charges of rape and human trafficking and banned from essentially every social media platform except Twitter, Andrew Tate is a controversial internet behemoth who rose to fame by touting his idea of masculinity and publicly supporting misogynistic practices.

Mr. Tate began his career as a professional kickboxer, but it wasn’t until he started posting inflammatory content on his TikTok, his podcast and his online academy called “Hustler’s University” that he became a pop culture headliner and icon — for young men. His videos about controlling and abusing women, becoming an “alpha” male, and gaining success and wealth have garnered over 11.6 billion views on TikTok. At one point his Google search interest numbers topped Donald Trump and Kim Kardashian. It’s safe to say that most adolescents surfing the internet have encountered some form of his “education.”

Mr. Tate is far from alone in his controversial philosophies. He is a member of a large web of influencers who believe in male dominance, gender inequality and sexualizing women. This community is called the manosphere, defined by the Institute of Strategic Dialogue as encompassing a range of misogynistic communities from anti-feminism to more explicit, violent rhetoric toward women.

There is a range of believers in the manosphere, but the most extreme figures think feminism is harmful to society and that all women should subordinate themselves to men, who are currently disadvantaged. Radicals like Elliot Rodgers and Alek Minassian will even resort to mass killings to realize their idea of “rebellion” — taking revenge on all women for simply existing.

**“The manosphere extends beyond charged phrases and impassioned men arguing theories online. Concrete impacts of toxic masculinity permeate young men at local, individual levels.”**

A host of advocates have perpetuated the manosphere since the 1970s, evolving as a byproduct of the Men’s Liberation Movement, which began as a relative ally of feminism. After internal tension and a strange reversal, the MLA began advocating for the patriarchy and pushing for male dominance in both public and private life.

In 1996, Warren Farrell wrote the MLA’s main source of justification against feminism, the book “Myth of Male Power: Why Men Are the Disposable Sex.” During the next decade, outgrowths of the MLA such as the Fathers of Justice and Fathers Manifesto used Farrell’s work and dispersed it via sites such as 4Chan. Today, famous figures including American poker playboy Dan Bilzerian, YouTubers Steven Crowder and SNEAKO, and Canadian psychologist Jordan Peterson are all embodying some part of the movement toward restoring “true” masculinity.

While its misogyny is often dispersed on social media like YouTube, TikTok and Twitter, the manosphere also functions covertly using dialectic dog whistles. Its promoters use specific language to denounce and delineate men and women in society.

There is also a spectrum of categories of manosphere men. From incels to men’s rights activists (MRA) to pick-up artists (PUA), each subgroup has slightly different views on the relationship

between men and women, but all believe cisgender white males have lost their deserving place at the top of society. Members of the incel subgroup identify as victims called subhumans, people who have been dealt the worst hands in society.

Yet the manosphere extends beyond charged phrases and impassioned men arguing theories online. Concrete impacts of toxic masculinity permeate young men at local, individual levels such as reports of increased harassment in the United Kingdom and Australia, and a 2020 report from the HOPE not hate Charitable Trust, which showed in a survey that 50% of young men 16-24 believe feminism makes it more difficult for men to succeed.

The manosphere often provides a justification to explain off the feelings of insecurity and loss that adolescent males face in today’s uncertain climate: rising suicide rates (research from the Australian government supports this), a loneliness crisis due to the effects of COVID-19, and lower rates of education completion and sexual activity.

Andrew Tate will be off the internet for a while, but his legacy of misogyny has only gained greater traction since he left. As young, maturing men encounter a barrage of expectations and the need to manage tougher relationships, more and more are turning to the manosphere community to affirm their masculinity.

There is also a spectrum of categories of manosphere men. From incels to men’s rights activists (MRA) to pick-up artists (PUA), each subgroup has slightly different views on the relationship

## Gen Z must reconcile internalized bias

by PETER COX  
City Life Editor

Like most kids my age, I grew up on the internet. My adolescence lined up roughly with the development of the “manosphere,” a prevalent internet culture that, in my opinion, developed because of the absence of other spaces for boys and men to explore masculinity. Rather than promote positive exploration of male gender roles, the manosphere rationalizes a radical transformation of these issues.

Most creators in this space take the stance that society, not men, are the issue and that society is at fault for leaving men behind. The rhetoric is a convincing mix of degrees of truth coupled with a rage at a world that has failed them, as well as an overzealous acceptance of even the most negative traits associated with masculinity.

I had a very liberal upbringing in Hyde Park. While manosphere content filled my online spaces, I had other positive influences. I’m lucky to have been raised by a strong working mother and a father who wasn’t shy about having hard conversations with me about how to think about yourself as a man in the 21st century.

Because of this I’ve had a relatively healthy relationship to my gender identity. I’m a person who



Peter Cox

**“I’ve internalized this behavior without consciously choosing to. It’s something I really need to work on, and the solution can only come from me.”**

has always been comfortable not fitting in with the majority of my peers, so I didn’t ever feel pressured to do typically masculine things. Sports didn’t particularly interest me. I’ve always loved video games, which has generally been an activity for boys. Essentially, I took the parts of societal norms that I liked and left the rest.

Despite this, I think that my friends and I have been influenced by these radical ideas. The incel philosophy of looking at the dating economy as a zero-sum game where in order to be desirable you have to strive for financial and physical gain has played a role in that way that I think about relationships. This ties into what I’ll broadly call hustle culture, which pushes the idea that to be a man is to be a worker. On its face this isn’t a bad thing. There’s nothing wrong with a man who wants to push himself to improve in any number of fields, but when it becomes self-destructive, problems arise.

I personally have also struggled with emotional vulnerability, particularly with other

men. Emotional reservation is something that is generally encouraged as a man — a broader part of not showing weakness of any kind.

I’ve internalized this behavior without consciously choosing to. It’s something I really need to work on, and the solution can only come from me.

Boys and young men need a new definition of what it means to be a man that allows positive expression of gender identity while not invalidating or dominating the identities of others. This has to be a shared societal project. Men have to recognize negative behaviors they’re involved in while not wholly rejecting their gender identity. Finding this balance is difficult, and will largely be an individual process, but it has the potential to make men’s lives, and the lives of those around them so much better.



## Societal deficits help drive manosphere

by CLARE McROBERTS  
Assistant Editor

Society encourages men and young boys to conceal their emotions and to channel their feelings into actions or aggression, studies show. Some experts say this may help explain why they tend to be perceived as less emotional.

**“They’re viewing a negative emotion as a problem that needs to be solved, and so they’re immediately making it an intellectual question, rather than an emotional piece of information.”**

— Dr. Elizabeth Kieff, psychiatrist

“They’re viewing a negative emotion as a problem that needs to be solved,” Dr. Kieff said, “and so they’re immediately making it an intellectual question, rather than an emotional piece of information.”

Dr. Kieff believes that this approach to



expressing and dealing with emotions is unhealthy and unproductive for boys and men.

“There are some emotions — in fact, a lot of emotions — that aren’t problems to solve,” she said. “The death of a parent, a fight with a spouse. Sometimes it’s about being able to listen or being able to express your own vulnerability.”

Studies show there is no biological basis to suggest that women are more emotional than men. However, historically, the culture both in the United States and elsewhere has propelled gender norms in which men are expected to display fewer emotions and women are expected to show more.

“We still glorify strength and power and decisiveness and problem solving and intellect,” Dr. Kieff said, “and not men who are able to cry or say, ‘This was moving to me’ or shine and show strengths in other ways.”

### dog whistles

The videos, forums and podcasts that comprise the manosphere use a unique vernacular to describe specific concepts. Many of the terms have been adopted from science or pop culture, but crucially, the original meanings are warped and widely misrepresented. Hopefully, understanding the vocabulary shared online can allow people in the real world to recognize problematic concepts and push back on misconceptions.

### Hypergamy

Hypergamy is the concept of “mating upwards,” a biological phenomenon in some species of animals, incorrectly applied to women. Manosphere content often uses the concept of hypergamy to claim that all women try to cheat, all women use men for their money or status, and that women can’t build genuine friendships with men.

### The red pill

The symbol of the red pill comes from “The Matrix” movies, but the term has been adopted online to indicate a particular world view. Someone who has “taken the red pill,” is someone who is aware of the “truth” about female nature and society’s unspoken hierarchy of value. Community members believe that being “red pill” allows men to manipulate the invisible system to their benefit.

### The black pill

The black pill is an offshoot of red pill philosophy, but someone who is “black pill” believes that the truth they are able to see is inescapable. The black pill argues that “low-value males” are unable to socially succeed and will never be in a relationship. This is a particularly dangerous belief, creating communities that foster depression and sometimes violent behavior.

### Gynocentrism

Gynocentrism is an incorrectly adopted term used by the manosphere to articulate the belief that society is controlled by women to the detriment of most men. Gynocentrism is often used to argue that the wage gap isn’t real, that rape culture isn’t real, and that women weaponize complaints about structural sexism to harm men. In the manosphere, gynocentrism is often described as unnatural and as the source of most social issues.

— compiled by Clare O’Connor

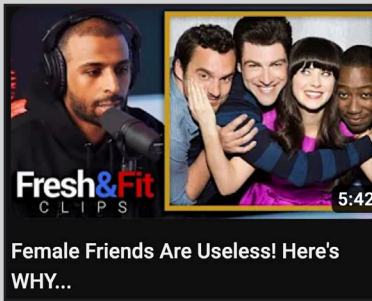
## who’s who.

Manosphere influencers thrive in social media spaces, propelled by algorithms on TikTok, YouTube and Instagram. Audiences of young boys and men are drawn in by videos that claim to explain how to gain confidence, how to get muscles or how to get girls’ attention, but quickly, viewers are funneled toward more extreme and damaging topics. These are three of the countless creators that make up the online manosphere.

### FreshandFit (Walter Weekes and Myron Gaines)

1.1 billion  
collective views for  
#freshandfit on TikTok

1.2 million  
subscribers on  
YouTube



FreshandFit YouTube

Walter Weekes and Myron Gaines are the co-hosts of The Fresh and Fit podcast. On the podcast, the hosts have spread disinformation about rape and sexual assault, sent their audience to harass women online, disparaged Black women and allegedly pressured guests for sex. The podcast draws in viewers with relatively innocuous fitness content and edited clips on

TikTok. Popular clips show the hosts “owning” women they invite on the podcast, but these clips are misleading: female guests have their phones taken from them before recording and are given shots until they’re extremely drunk. Usually, the unprepared and inebriated women struggle to coherently answer gotcha-style questions, seeming to vindicate the hosts’ sexist views.

### Sneako (Nico Kenn De Ballinzhazy)

4.7 billion  
collective views for  
#sneako on TikTok

1.3 million  
subscribers on  
YouTube



Sneako YouTube

Sneako’s social media career shows a tragic example of how young boys can be radicalized by manosphere content. When he started YouTube in 2013, Sneako was barely a teenager. He became popular for his unique editing style and his often nuanced and self-aware commentary. However, in the past few years, Sneako’s content pivoted as he began to idolize creators like Andrew Tate.

Sneako’s more controversial videos were more successful, further driving the creator to make problematic claims. In 2023, Sneako’s content is unrecognizable.

He’s come under fire for acting out sexual assault against a different creator who criticized him, platforming neo-Nazis who promote “scientific racism” and arguing against gender equality.

### JustPearlyThings (Pearl Davis)

267 million  
collective views for  
#justpearlythings on TikTok

1.2 million  
subscribers on  
YouTube



JustPearlyThings YouTube

Pearl Davis is one of the few female manosphere creators. She lends apparent credibility to other creators’ misogynistic taking points by voicing her agreement as a woman.

Davis, while portraying herself as a “high-value female,” often ridicules other women on her podcast called “The Pregame.” She gained popularity through associating with other popular

creators, appearing on both of the above channels as well as Andrew Tate’s. On her own channel, Davis focuses her content on “exposing modern women,” negatively portraying single mothers, feminists and women who express self-confidence. Davis often claims that traditional gender roles are necessary and that modern women breaking away from those roles is ruining society.

— compiled by Clare O’Connor

Midway illustrations by Dalin Dohrn



# Success with every season

*Lucy Aronsohn focuses on her goals in athletics and academics through dedication and practice*

by **CHLOË ALEXANDER**  
Assistant Editor

**D**ribble the ball, assess the court, get in formation and shoot. That's what Lucy Aronsohn knows to do during a basketball game. She knows when the game's tempo is slow, when the energy is down and how to play well in those situations. But more importantly she knows how to get through that, work with her teammates and get the ball through the hoop.

As a two-sport, three-season athlete, Lucy works hard at staying committed to her sports while following her passion.

Now a sophomore, Lucy started playing basketball in seventh grade, and during eighth grade when the pandemic prevented her from playing soccer, she joined a travel team, which gave her a better sense of the game.

Although she has been playing basketball for a few years, her main sport is soccer, which she began playing when she was 2, so by now she has a great sense of the pitch. But with basketball, she had to learn and practice, which she accomplished with her travel team.

"My passion for soccer is bigger just because I've been playing it my whole life," Lucy said. "Soccer and basketball are kind of similar. You have to be able to see the core like there's a lot of aspects that, like, cross-over."

Lucy said the travel team helped her understand the game but since she started playing later she had to catch up.

Lucy's commitment to her growth as a basketball player shows. Her coach, Alexis Jenkins, can see the evidence in Lucy's second high school season.

"She's excellent. I think she's made huge improvements from her freshman year," Ms. Jenkins said. "She's still quiet, but she is

more of a leader on the court, which I can appreciate as a coach. She's just athletic. So her ability to see the floor very well, anticipating passes and making that connection with the players, is important."

From her years of team experience, Lucy's teamwork shines when she's on the court.

"[She's] a great teammate," Ms. Jenkins said. "She works her butt off and, you know, some of that stuff you can't coach."

Lucy's athleticism comes from playing sports in three seasons: Chicago Fire in the fall, U-High basketball team and futsal in the winter, and U-High soccer in the spring.

"[Basketball's] a good break for me. It also allows me to stay in shape. Futsal is a very technical game. It's on the gym floor, so it keeps my touches fresh," Lucy said. "So then when I start the season, I'm not super rusty and also I'm in shape because of basketball."

Being a three-season athlete on top of school work and the sophomore service learning requirement, life can get busy quickly. When it comes to balancing a full schedule, Lucy discovered something had to give.

Lucy said that balancing basketball and service is hard because changes to the basketball schedule make it hard to know if she can go to service. There's a lot of prioritizing somethings and scarifying others.

Making sacrifices can be hard, especially when it comes to things Lucy enjoys and the requirements like her service site at Hyde Park Neighborhood Club.

"I think the hardest part is trying to please everyone," Lucy said "I like my service, I like being with the kids. So in that way I feel bad not showing up for them. And then also from my coach's standpoint, like, I need to show a level of commitment, which is hard and I have been all season, but still I feel like I still find myself feeling bad if I miss a practice or two."



Midway photo by Kaden Moubayed

**ALL-AROUND ATHLETE.** Lucy Aronsohn begins her spring soccer season continuing from travel soccer and winter basketball. Lucy has had to work hard to maintain her commitment to being a two-sport, three-season athlete while keeping up her school career.

Ms. Jenkins understands the balancing act as she was also a U-High athlete.

"I think that's what life is about is understanding how to balance things," Ms. Jenkins said. "And from here on out, it's all a balancing act, no matter what gets thrown at you."

Lucy's commitment and struggles in her

high school career help her become a better athlete. So when her team is struggling in a game, she knows how to pick them up so they can work together. Like in the Morgan Park Academy game on Feb. 7, after she scored 11 points, even when the team lost by 4 points, Lucy will still show up and do her part.

# UChicago economics study tests baseball team



Midway photo by Matthew McGehee

**EXPERIMENTAL SEASON.** Sasha Duda prepares to swing during practice with his team at the Henry Crown Field House. Sasha and his teammates are participating in a University of Chicago economics study.

by **KATIE SASAMOTO-KURISU**  
Assistant Editor

In preparation for the upcoming baseball season, players have spent the offseason undergoing a special kind of training, one specifically designed by former MLB affiliates including major league coaches. But instead of being organized by the athletics department, the training was run through the Kenneth C. Griffin Department of Economics at the University of Chicago.

The training was the basis of a 12-week study focusing on the effect of various training habits on player performance.

Professor John List, the parent of junior Mason List and several U-High baseball team alumni, aimed to explore the production function of baseball, a method of experimenting to relate certain inputs with a specific output. Faith Fatchen, a UChicago pre-doctoral student who assisted in the study, said Dr. List was interested in examining what science could say about baseball.

"In the context of a baseball player, you can think of 'What are you training for to then get an output you want?' Ms. Fatchen said. "It's a measure of success."

The study contained three experiment groups: one undergoing special training using over-weighted and under-weighted bats and balls, one training with standard weights and one control group that did not participate in specialized training.

Ms. Fatchen said these groups

were chosen to get a more precise estimation of the results, given that the respective inputs would move differently.

"The goal is to get an unbiased estimation of the production function," she said. "What we're doing is introducing experimental variation in those inputs."

The two test groups trained with researchers three days a week, practicing with their designated equipment under specified training protocol created by a team of former MLB affiliates and coaches. The control group held normal practices. All players attended specific test points three times during the study: Oct. 31, Dec. 11 and this month. The test points gathered information on exit velocity — how fast the ball moved once it was hit — and throwing velocity — how hard the ball was thrown.

Junior Sasha Duda, who was in the regular-weight testing group, said that in general the study has had a positive effect on players.

"It's pretty good on the mental side of things. It creates a good team cohesion," he said. "Generally we've been getting quite a lot out of it just for ourselves and each different aspect."

He also thought that the training helped the team in their regular practicing. He said it allowed the team to get back into the rhythm of the season, allowing players to get meaningful throwing and hitting practice together as a group.

"It's a little bit more laid back. When we're in the season, there's

kind of set goals that you have for practice," he said, regarding the regular baseball season. "It's not super forced, it's more laid back and not as strict. It's easier for us to communicate."

Ms. Fatchen, who has worked with Dr. List previously but is not entirely familiar with baseball, said she loves learning new things, and she's learned a lot assisting with this study.

"It's been interesting not just learning the economics literature but also the strength and conditioning literature," she said.

Baseball coach Luke Zavala said he couldn't be happier that the team had the opportunity to participate.

"They're getting the chance to follow an incredibly well-supervised, high-level training program with elite-level coaches, those that train major leaguers," he said.

Mr. Zavala also said that beyond getting specialized training, the players benefitted from simply being in a space with one another.

"If you like your teammates, if you enjoy hanging out and being around people, you're gonna want to train harder for them, cheer them on and hope to see them succeed," he said. "Those kinds of friendships that develop from the opportunity to workout together are huge."

As the team gets ready for the regular season, the players are better prepared having practiced under specialized and focused training from professionals — both in baseball and economics.



# A perfect fit

## Through synchronized skating, junior Amy Ji discovers her place

by CLARE McROBERTS  
Assistant Editor

The beauty of the routine changed in an instant. One moment, the team members were gracefully gliding and intersecting across the ice. The next, a skater's leg was sliced open as she collided with another. As the injured skater was carried off the ice, her teammates watched in traumatized shock.

The frightening moment last year at a competition in Boston captured both the excitement and peril of a unique sport: synchronized skating.

"We share a lot of like laughter, even through all the pains that we have to go through," Amy Ji said, "in the challenging times, during practice and even if there's a really scary moment."

In synchronized ice skating, a group of eight to 16 skaters perform coordinated routines, and what sets it apart is its combination of some of the most challenging aspects of other events: the thrill and danger of figure skating, the collaboration of a large team sport and the precise coordination of dance.

For Amy, a junior and synchronized skater, these features are what make the sport a perfect fit for her.

To prepare for competition, Amy spends about 14 hours a week practicing in the rink.

Amy began solo skating about nine years ago and started synchronized skating five years ago.

Now a member of the Teams Elite synchronized skating team, she has competed at international competitions and represented the United States with her group.

The group dynamic of this type of ice skating brings additional challenges to the already demanding sport.

"It's pretty difficult," Amy said. "You have to use your peripheral vision a lot. There's a lot of counting and staying on beat because even if you're slightly off, it can be really noticeable to the judges and the panelists."

Each skater has an equally crit-



Midway photo by Ishani Hariprasad

**SMOOTH SKATING.** Junior Amy Ji glides across the ice at the skating rink at the Midway Plaisance. As a synchronized skater for the past five years, Amy has learned communication and collaboration, and is now a member of the Teams Elite skating team which competes internationally.

“  
I think they’re basically my second family. There’s so many things we have to go through together. We have a really strong relationship from that.  
”  
Amy Ji, junior

ical role, Amy said. Supporting a struggling teammate is crucial to success at this highly collaborative sport.

"Sometimes when one person wouldn't be doing as well," Amy said, "learning how to really support and keep them going and

keeping optimism throughout the entire atmosphere has been really important."

Despite the strenuous nature of synchronized skating, Amy said that the team's close communal aspect is what makes the experience so special for her.

"I think they're basically my second family," Amy said. "There's so many things we have to go through together. We have a really strong relationship from that."

The close bond Amy has with her teammates has taught her valuable lessons. She has gained a more positive outlook on her experiences on and off the ice.

"I'm able to make sure that, as a person, I can be more optimistic and that I'm still very self-driven,"

said Amy. "That can sort of permeate throughout the entire rink, or to the entire team so that you can cheer each other on."

Such communication is fundamental to the sport. Amy's teammate Jamie Hyun, a senior at Glenbrook North High School, said Amy excels at this.

"She's able to easily communicate with the team and coaches when there is an issue," Jamie said. "She can quickly make corrections when given by the coaches."

One of Amy's favorite memories with her team is their most recent competition in Switzerland, where the team represented the United States.

Despite the pressure, Amy wasn't nervous to compete at an

international level; the camaraderie she and her teammates had developed gave her that confidence.

"I was super excited to really just show everyone — basically show the whole world — that we've put in so much work," Amy said, "and that we're all very passionate and really into it."

It's that team spirit that allowed Amy and her fellow skaters to pull through and complete the competition even after that terrifying moment in Boston.

Although it was very frightening, they were determined to finish. The memory has stuck with her.

Amy said, "I really think that I wouldn't be able to find any other group this amazing."

# Student athletes use Pilates as form of exercise



Midway photo by Matt Petres

**POWER OF PILATES.** Junior Leyton Mueller practices pilates on the reformer machine. Pilates utilizes controlled exercises to promote flexibility and strength.

by TAARIQ AHMED  
Reporter

Breathe in ... and out. Breathe in ... and out. A deepening visualization of a positive, relaxing environment is illustrated inside the mind of each participant as the narration of the instructor leads the dynamic of the atmosphere. All five senses are used to decrease stress and anxiety and to overcome any fears or worries that one may carry. This is the scene of a guided imagery session, one similar to an exercise that the varsity boys soccer team participated in during the fall season.

After listening to P.E. faculty, soccer coach Josh Potter decided that implementing mindfulness would be an effective method to sustain wellness within the team.

"I wanted to put an emphasis on ideas like, 'How do we relax? How do we take a deep breath? How do we recover and get our bodies ready to play again?'" Mr. Potter said. "So I think that's where it really came from — thinking about how do we prepare our bodies best so that they don't break down and we don't experience injuries all throughout the season?"

Pilates is a system of controlled exercises meant to promote flexibility and balance. Mr. Potter explained that Pilates can be an effective substitute based on technique for, or addition to, exercises focusing on pure strength.

“  
Pilates is a little bit more of an eloquent balancing act where you’re using all of your muscles to really keep yourself in place.  
”  
Josh Potter, P.E. teacher

"In terms of resistance training, we think of it as just weightlifting in the weight room. You put weight on the barbell, you pick up a dumbbell, and you're just throwing metal around," Mr. Potter said. "Pilates is a little bit more of an eloquent balancing act where you're using all of your muscles to really keep yourself in place. And so I would say for someone who doesn't enjoy resistance training, Pilates is a great alternative for it. Now, a combination is even better, but I would say if someone is to try this or explore this option, then I think it's a fantastic way to stay in shape."

After taking a Pilates class for P.E., junior Stella Sturgill recently started her own Pilates schedule. As a player on the girls soccer team, Stella believes Pilates will help to avoid injuries. Stella said she was surprised by the unexpected difficulties Pilates posed but enjoyed the challenge overall.

"You have to use a lot of flexibil-

ity and balance, and it targets very specific, isolated muscles," Stella said. "It's definitely a different kind of working out for which you need a lot more focus and need to be a lot more conscious of what you're doing. You have to be more in tune with what your body's movements are going through and all that, because it's a lot more about balance than any other form of working out. But, I really liked it, [...] and I'm actually planning to do it throughout the season."

According to Tribe Pilates, since individual routines can be adjusted to specific preferences, anybody can do Pilates, regardless of age or activity level.

Mr. Potter shared the same message.

"I often think about my parents now. One of the things I'm always talking to them about is, like, 'You need to stretch, so your muscles don't tighten up and you can't walk up the stairs at a certain point,'" Mr. Potter said. "I would all in all say Pilates are a really good thing for everyone in the community to be doing."

Motives for developing a Pilates or mindfulness routine may differ depending on the person. While student athletes may want to prevent injuries, faculty may want to maintain flexibility into old age.

After all, the bottom line is that everybody knows how to breathe in ... and out. Breathe in ... and out.



# Junior uses writing to reflect, grow

Sasha Watson  
earns accolades  
for poetry, stories

By ZARA SIDDIQUE

Audience Engagement Mangaer

A pencil scratches at the page and the cursor blinks on her document as she sits pensively at her desk. The piece she's editing has a part she just can't quite get. As she patiently sits, it finally comes to her. The keys of her computer furiously clack as the final piece of her story settles into place.

When Sasha Watson first started writing in middle school, it never occurred to her that it would be something she'd want to do for the rest of her life. But with support and encouragement from teachers Sasha is now an accomplished writer, an editor-in-chief of the Renaissance Literary Board and a recent winner of 16 Scholastic keys.

Through writing Sasha said she has reached certain parts of her identity. She feels it allows her to look at the bigger picture and see the whole story.

"Writing is a bridge for my thoughts and the world around me," Sasha said. "It helps make sense of a lot of things."

Sasha uses writing as a way to reflect on her life from a more thoughtful lens. She finds this helpful especially when in high school as a way to express herself and reflect on her emotions. Writing is a huge part of her life.

"On the daily it affects me because I'm always feeling in tune

“  
Writing is a  
bridge for  
my thoughts  
and the world  
around me.  
It helps make  
sense of a lot of  
things  
Sasha Watson,  
junior  
”



Midway photo by Sarah Abdelsalam

**REWARDING WRITING.** Sasha Watson listens to a classmate talk about a writing assignment in the library classroom. Sasha is an avid writer, serving as the editor-in-chief of Renaissance Literary Board and using writing as a way to reflect on her life.

to things that I think would be interesting to write, even words or phrases that I think are inspiring," Sasha said. "Ever since I started writing, I've tried to be observant."

Sasha's favorite part of writing is editing, especially in her role on the Renaissance Literary Board.

"I think my favorite part about writing is editing a piece, so once I get through the hard first drafts and all of that, reaching that stage where you're honing in on something specific and feel close to articulating an idea accurately," Sa-

sha said.

Sasha also enjoys collaborating with other students who share the passion for writing. Co-editor Sara Kumar appreciates Sasha's love for writing and the energy she brings to the club.

"She has such a strong work ethic paired with incredible creativity, which makes every late-night planning call and afterschool editing session quick and exciting," Sara said.

Renaissance Literary Board's faculty adviser Mark Krewatch

said she brings energy and excitement to the club.

"Sasha is a steady, encouraging hand," Mr. Krewatch said. "She's a writer as much as she is an editor, and she looks at submitted work with the perspective of someone who knows how hard it is to create, and share and be vulnerable."

The rule Sasha holds herself to is that she must always be writing or working a piece. Because of this, throughout her years in U-High, Sasha has had numerous pieces of work to submit to the Scholastic

Art and Writing Awards in various regional categories. This school year she has won six keys, the previous year she won nine, and in ninth grade she received one. As Sasha continues with her writing, she acknowledges how comfortable it makes her feel and how helpful it is in unpacking and understanding the world around her.

"I feel like I'm at the beginning of this process of writing," Sasha said. "It is really comforting that I know I will have it for the rest of my life."

## Museum exhibit reframes reality through photography

Smart Museum  
to exhibit images  
of 1960s Africa

by VICTORIA WASHINGTON

Audience Engagement Mangaer

When we think of the 1960s we think of a fixed period, 10 years to be exact. When we think of photography, we think of photographic prints depicting real life events. We lose track of the photograph as a document, particularly in the age of social media.

But Leslie Wilson, guest curator of the Smart Museum at the University of Chicago, asks: Does that mean we shouldn't take photographs? What is the potential and risk of capturing an image?

"Not All Realisms: Photography, Africa, and the long 1960s," is the first self-organized exhibition examining African Art at the Smart Museum of Art, celebrating the intersection of photography and ideas. The exhibition will feature an estimated 60 photographic prints and run from Feb. 23-June 4.

Dr. Wilson says the exhibition will demonstrate the complexity of the 1960s and the relationship between viewers and the photograph.

She said, "I really wanted us to look at what people wanted out of the photographs they were making. How were they circulating them? How were they presenting them? Why were they making photographs?"

In addition to the photographic

“  
‘Not All Realisms’ can  
represent a testament from  
the oppressed. It’s a refusal  
to silence themselves and let  
their oppressors control the  
narrative.  
Dr. Leslie Wilson,  
guest curator of the Smart Museum  
”

prints, the installation will feature over 130 publications from as early as the 1950s as well as contemporary works. The more recent examples reimagine and build upon the photographic techniques of the era.

"It became really interesting to me, in terms of ways the 1960s aren't just a decade but bound up in all the ideas of that moment, ideas about liberation and ideas about representation," Dr. Wilson said.

The exhibition will feature four sections "making matter," serving as the foundation for the show; "before & after," centering on juxtaposition; "us & not-us," a reflection on viewers identification with art; and "again & again," in which we see the 1960s imagery return in contemporary art.

Dr. Wilson hopes these smaller sections will prompt the viewer to think critically about photographs and how they are portrayed.

"I wanted to think about these uneven histories and different kinds of experiences. Who's finding their way to liberation which is very much mired in struggle," Dr.



Source: Malick Sidibé, *Nuit de Noël (Happy Club)*, 1963, Gelatin silver print. Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, Gift of the Estate of Lester and Betty Guttman, 2014.720. Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

**SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES.** The Smart Museum at the University of Chicago will be displaying the exhibit "Not All Realisms" through June 4, 2023. The goal of the exhibit is to show the relationship between people and media in African countries during the 1960's.

Wilson said.

The idea of narrative and how the ideas of the 1960s continue to live on in the modern fight against

oppression is an important theme in the exhibition.

"Actually, there's a way that the '60s kind of lives as unfinished

business. We're still trying to get to that place where we're living in more equal societies, the gap between rich and poor has collapsed, children are having better outcomes," Dr. Wilson said, "And thinking about the way it often exists as a beacon for more work to be done — a kind of hope."

The title, "Not All Realisms" originates from the essay by American photographer Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive."

His commentary on Ernest Cole's project, who is one of the many artists featured in this exhibition, examines the idea of realism in the hands of oppressors.

Dr. Wilson believes "Not All Realisms" can represent a testament from the oppressed. It's a refusal to silence themselves and let their oppressors control the narrative.

"I started to read 'Not All Realisms' like a hashtag. Similar to the 'Not all' hashtags," she said. "That's how it got its name."

Dr. Wilson says the constant battle we have with photographs is balancing their potentially problematic nature with the truths and stories they can reveal.

"I want viewers to hopefully think about what is missing and how we often use these as models for narrative- but we often leave a lot out," Dr. Wilson said. "So how can we look and think critically about how we use images?"

"Not All Realisms" encourages the viewer to reevaluate their attitude toward the literal while simultaneously acknowledging that not all realisms represent untruths.



# Stereotypes harm identity

Indian American representation oversimplifies, generalizes diaspora’s culture

By **TAARIQ AHMED**  
Reporter

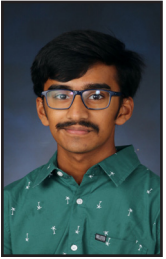
As a little kid, I used to rush home after school to catch my favorite television shows, “Phineas and Ferb” and “Jessie,” on Disney Channel. While most of my peers loved the shows for more general reasons, I cherished the fact that each one featured an Indian American: Baljeet Tjinder from “Phineas and Ferb” and Ravi Ross from “Jessie.”

I enjoyed the shows from the eyes of a small Indian American child. Look Mom and Dad, he looks like me! As a result, I barely noticed the recurrences between Baljeet and Ravi’s personalities. The obsession with getting good grades. The pathetic awkwardness. The constant state of embarrassment.

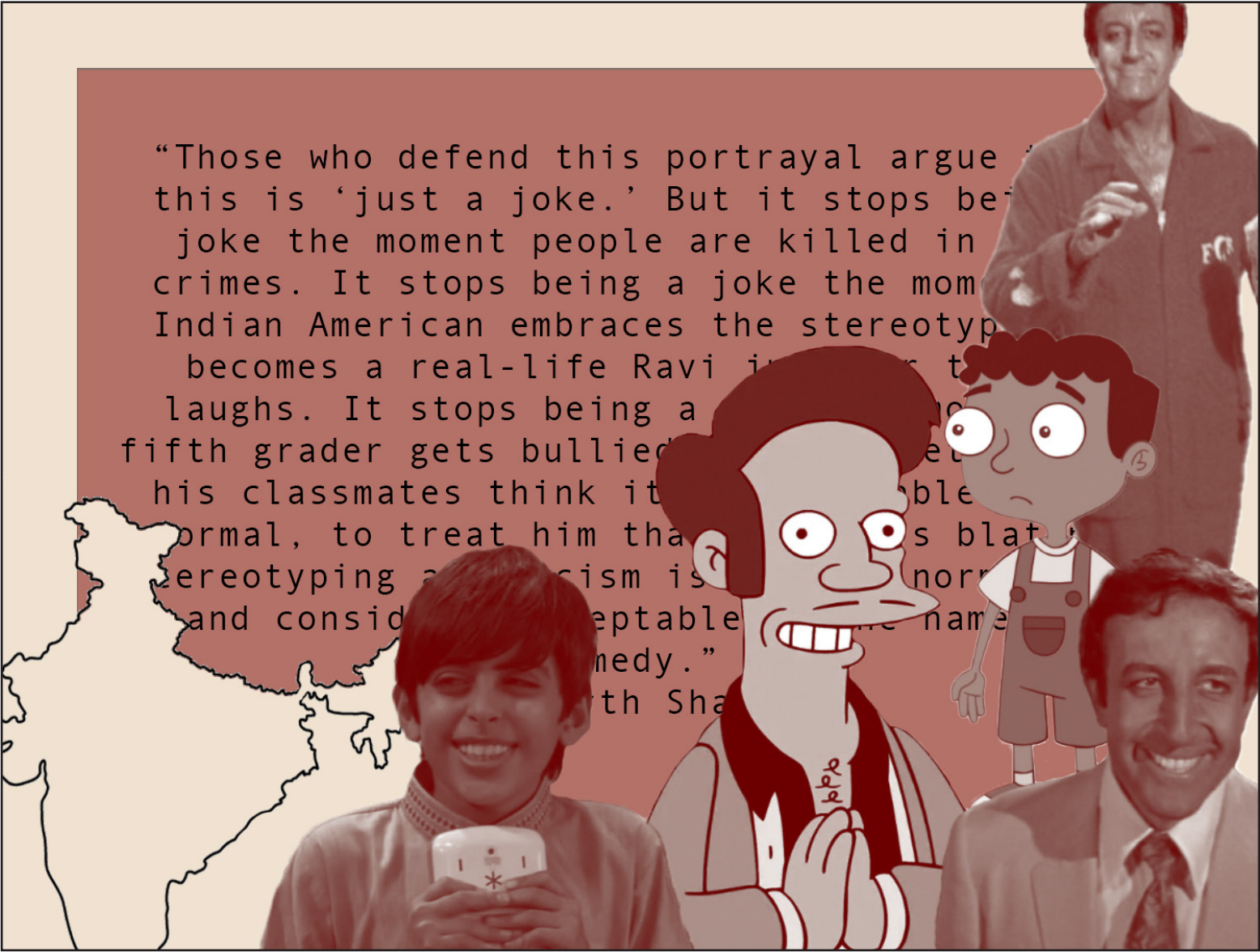
As I grew older I started to identify this disturbing trend of stereotypical depictions of Indian Americans across entertainment and realized how these portrayals can negatively impact people, including me. By oversimplifying the identities of an entire diaspora, movies and television had left a generation of Indian Americans searching for representation.

In the 20th century, American filmmakers used exoticism to out-cast Indian culture: from Peter Sellers’ “brownface” imitations in “The Party” (1968) to the ridiculous portrayals of Indians in the blockbuster “Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom” (1984).

Soon, Indian Americans became popularly misrepresented in American television, the most notorious example being Apu from “The Simpsons” (starting in the 1990s). But the development of the stereotypical image of the “nerdy” and “puny” Indian American child became truly dangerous



Taariq Ahmed



Midway illustration by Ellis Calleri

for the identities of young Indian Americans. So when other kids my age started to call me “Baljeet” and “Ravi,” it made sense because their misconceptions about me were only amplified by movies and television.

Still, I run into countless Indian Americans who believe otherwise. Why are you shaming these shows and movies that have entertained an entire generation? I love Baljeet and Ravi! Plus, there are a lot of us just like them!

A lot of Indian Americans’ objectives center on academic success, and the pressure often comes from our own families and our own community. But whether you choose to pursue the lifestyles of Baljeet and Ravi, there is no right or wrong way to be an Indian American. Just different ones. Therefore, when the Baljeet-and-Ravi system is asserted as the only correct way, a much

“As I grew older I started to identify this disturbing trend of stereotypical depictions if Indian Americans across entertainment and realized how these portrayals can negatively impact people, including me.”  
Taariq Ahmed

larger cultural struggle that Indian American kids have long undergone is ignited. What does it mean to be Indian? And am I Indian enough?

For those who believe stereotyping for comedy’s sake is a fair rationale, I turn to what Paarth Sharma wrote for The Economic Times: “Those who defend this

portrayal argue that this is ‘just a joke.’ But it stops being a joke the moment people are killed in hate crimes. It stops being a joke the moment an Indian American embraces the stereotype and becomes a real-life Ravi in order to get laughs. It stops being a joke the moment a fifth grader gets bullied like Baljeet because his classmates think it is acceptable, even normal, to treat him that way.”

Coincidentally, Indian American comedians have become the face of progress. I can still remember the first time that my Indian American friends and I watched Indian American comedian Hasan Minhaj’s stand-up special, “Homecoming King,” in which he described the intricacies of the immigrant experience.

Mr. Minhaj exposed harsh truths about our background and shared stories that left us enlightened and empowered, and he does

in much of his work. And other Indian American comedians, like Aziz Ansari, Hari Kondabolu and Kal Penn, have all spoken out against racial stereotyping in entertainment.


Movies and television have made strides. “Never Have I Ever” stands out for portraying Indian Americans differently, especially protagonist Devi Vishwakumar, the star of the show. The show is far from perfect, but Devi’s character is new and fresh.

The integration of Indian Americans into mainstream entertainment has been unsteady, but we are becoming painted as more complicated.

We must continue to push for complexity because the next generation of Indian American kids who come running home after school to watch their favorite television shows deserve better representation.

## Pieces of pop culture: Read reviews-in-brief

The Midway staff has reviewed multiple recent releases. Featuring movies, TV shows, music and books, scan this QR code to read the full reviews and view more content reviewed by Midway writers.



Source: Netflix

**movie**

When sisters Yusra and Sara Mardini witness the unraveling of political turmoil across Syria, the amateur swimmers decide to embark on a journey across the Mediterranean and Europe under devastating circumstances, all in the hopes of competing at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics.

As nations across the world determine how much aid they can afford to give to displaced people, “The Swimmers” illustrates a dramatic, yet all-too-realistic portrait of the ongoing refugee crisis without any sugar coating or glorification.

— Taariq Ahmed



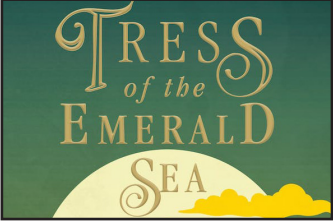
Source: YouTube

**music**

On Jan. 10, K-pop group TWICE released its second all-English single, “Moonlight Sunrise,” which precedes its 12th mini-album “Ready to Be.” The mini-album is scheduled to debut March 10.

While TWICE’s first all-English single, “The Feels,” is upbeat and energetic, “Moonlight Sunrise” is far more relaxed and mundane, making it forgettable and generic compared to the group’s previous English, Korean and Japanese tracks.

— Téa Tamburo



Source: Macmillan Publishers

**book**

After learning the boy she loves has been kidnapped by the Sorceress, a young girl best known as Tress navigates the many perils of her world as she leaves the safety of her desolate island for the first time.

“Tress of the Emerald Sea,” the first of four “secret” novels to be released by fantasy author Brandon Sanderson, takes a more lighthearted tone than most of his books but is regardless compelling with its blend of high fantasy and classic fairy tales.

— Sahana Unni



Source: Universal Pictures

**movie**

“Puss in Boots: The Last Wish” opens with an electric sequence, following a singing orange cat as he dances through a crowd and then, shockingly, dies. Immediately, the tone of the DreamWorks Animation film shifts as the title character, Puss in Boots, discovers that he is on the last of his nine lives.

The film is startlingly introspective, managing to earnestly present complex topics while remaining engaging and accessible to audiences of all ages.

— Clare O’Connor


**ArtsFest**

For only one day in the year, all U-High students can be found chucking clay in wheel throwing, burning cookies in an oven, or scribbling down stanzas in poetry during workshops at ArtsFest.

ArtsFest will occur on Wednesday, March 1, as opposed to the Thursday in late February that it usually takes place on. Art in the Dark, an event with student performances, will take place the evening of Feb. 28 in Café Lab.

While students can expect many of the same activities as years prior, some notable workshops offered this year such as acroyoga, ice cream chemistry and a medieval fighting intensive.

— compiled by Ethan Swinger





# In service, students understand selves

While giving back to their community, students connect to their own identity

by **AUDREY MATEI**  
Arts Editor

While her friends all have plans to hang out together after school, Lusia Austen drives to her local synagogue, KAM Isaiah Israel, every Friday at 4 p.m. Walking into the place that hosted her bat mitzvah five years ago, she prepares to teach a group of students that she was a part of only a few years prior. The kids are full of energy on a Friday afternoon, and she works hard to make Hebrew school as engaging, relevant and fun as possible.

Lusia is one of many students involved in activities that allow them to connect with their own identity and give back to their community.

Throughout the city, students participate in multiple organizations that specifically serve and target certain demographics. Among them is Jack and Jill of America, a group that advocates and serves Black children through service projects, fundraisers, educational materials and policy work. Multiple Lab students participate in one of the Chicago chapters, and junior Katie Williams is the vice president of hers.

Katie said her biggest takeaway from working with Jack and Jill of America has been the connections she's formed within the group.

"Since I've been a part of Jack and Jill since I was 3 years old, it's been the lifelong friendships and bonds I've made with others and I appreciate how that started my web of connections with other people," Katie said.

Lusia shared a similar sentiment about forming connections. She said her favorite part of working at the synagogue is building relationships and a community.

"A big part of it for me is con-

necting with the children," she said. "It's also building a community space, and the classroom is a really important part of that."

Junior Yolotzin Martinez is involved in YolloCalli Arts Reach, an initiative hosted by the National Museum of Mexican Art in the Pilsen neighborhood that offers culture programming for youth. She participated in their radio journalism offering and spent a month last summer working on a two-hour show that focused on the overturning of Roe v. Wade and its effects on specific communities.

As a Latina, Yolo said that it was important for her to share these stories to help inform the communities around her.

"The biggest thing I learned was the importance of staying informed," she said. "History does repeat itself if it's not talked about enough, and we're kind of seeing it, even now aside from reproductive rights, in other issues for people of color as well."

The show shared resources for listeners, information from experts and overlooked impacts of its overturning that pertained to groups such as LGBTQ people.

She said the work she did had a positive and intersectional impact on her own communities and others.

"It had a very big positive impact for people that probably didn't think that they have options," she said. "Everything that Roe v. Wade included should be a fundamental right for every single person, no matter, like, their race, gender or whatever they identify as."

Katie is involved in the Mayor's Youth Commission, a cohort of young people who advise the mayor on policy issues that affect



Photo by Marla Blair

**COMMUNITY TIME.** Junior Katie Williams lights a candle as she takes part in the Carole Robertson Remembrance Ceremony, an event hosted by Jack and Jill of America. Since age three she has participated in the program's Chicago chapter, where she has formed valuable connections within her community.

Chicago youth. As a commissioner, she acts as a representative for people in Chicago of similar experiences and advocates for initiatives like "My CHI My Future," a program that connects Chicago youth with out-of-school activities.

Katie said that being able to learn about the Chicago community from new viewpoints has been extremely rewarding.

"I've learned so much from my peers and their different perspectives," she said. "Without this ex-

perience, I would have zero to limited knowledge about the different policies and actions the city is taking to help youth and having the perspectives of others has been extremely enlightening and life-changing."

She also said her motivation for joining the Mayor's Youth Commission was to help uplift her community during the pandemic.

"Over quarantine I gained a lot of awareness of the political structure and parties," she said. "I just

felt very suffocated as a youth, so to combat that I tried to involve myself in different things to uplift my community, so I can make change."

Lusia said that above anything else, she appreciates the act of giving back to the community that has done so much for her.

"One of the reasons I wanted to start working was because I had such a great experience there when I was a kid," Lusia said, "and I want to give the same experience to the current kids."

**volunteer views:**  
**U-High students participate in activities that connect to their personal identity, where they can form strong connections with others and foster growth in an initiative they care about.**

**Katie Williams**



**Initiative:**

Katie is a leader of Jack and Jill of America and participates in the Mayor's Youth Commission of Chicago.

**Yolo Martinez**



**Initiative:**

Yolo is involved in YolloCalli Arts Reach, a youth program hosted by the National Museum of Mexican Art.

**Lusia Austen**



**Initiative:**

Lusia teaches Hebrew every week to young kids at KAM Isaiah Israel, her local synagogue in Hyde Park.

**Zara Baig**



**Initiative:**

Zara dances Kathak, a form of Indian classical dance. She has done it for more than 11 years.

# Desi community gains overdue visibility

Cultural group hosts celebrations, expands presence

by **KRISHITA DUTTA**  
Opinion Editor

After years of dancing to Bollywood music and drawing mehndi prints on her palms, senior Kriti Sarav was finally able to share these experiences with her non-desi peers at U-High this year.

Despite members of Lab's desi community organizing events in an effort to draw the attention of the greater school population to desi culture, they have felt overlooked for a long time now. Recently, however, the desi community has received an increase in participation at events, like Diwali celebrations, helping promote visibility and appreciation of a culture growing in prevalence.

The U-High desi community's most active representatives are the Asian Students' Association, advised by counselor Aria Choi, and the Desi Culture Group of the Parents' Association, led by Masha Sajdeh and Bhawna Singh. According to Ms. Singh, it's great to finally



Midway photo by Ishani Hariprasad

**DESI CELEBRATION.** People in the Lab community celebrate Diwali on Oct. 14, 2022, in a space with both desi and non-desi identifying families. Recently, the desi community has seen an increase in participation at events.

gain visibility, but is overdue.

"Lab prides itself in diversity, so it's great that we are now becoming a part of that diversity statement that Lab strives to adhere to so strongly," Ms. Singh said.

Many desi students are excited by the presence of non-desi people at recent events because they

get to share their culture with new people. Asian Students' Association president Zara Baig, a senior, said seeing such an increase in participation is incredibly meaningful to her.

"Non-desi participants attending desi events is an opportunity for us to share our cultures, and it

shows that our peers are also interested in learning about ours," Zara said. "Members of different identity groups or backgrounds showing up for each other is a sign of mutual respect and understanding. It builds community."

Kriti, the treasurer of Asian Students' Association, is also excited by this shift in perception of desi culture that she finds evident in the newfound interest and engagement from non-desi peers, a stark contrast to the mockery she believes the Desi community has faced for so long. This excitement is largely rooted in her own personal experiences.

"I grew up being called all kinds of names for the color of my skin or for my Indian name, so I understand the reality is that our culture is not widely appreciated. And it's to the extent that such ignorance toward our culture even exists at Lab," Kriti said. "So I'm really excited at the new appreciation we're seeing at least at Lab. But I definitely think we have a long way to go in making sure that this appreciation and participation is sustained, and also to keep it growing and fight mockery."

According to Ms. Sajdeh, to sus-

at a glance

**What does desi mean?**  
Desi refers to the collective identity of the Indian subcontinent.

It involves people of South Asian descent, but it could also include people from various religions.

Desi culture is celebrated through communal gatherings for holidays such as Diwali.

— compiled by  
Katie Sasamoto-Kurusu

tain appreciation toward desi culture, students need to continue to advocate for participation at events.

"I think South Asian and desi culture are such that it's a lot easier to learn about how beautiful it is if you experience it. And the best way for students to grow appreciation, then, is to actually attend the events," she said. "These events that we take time to put together just makes the culture very real and authentic for people to see and understand."



# MORE THAN MATH

*Jeffrey Chen reaches apex through determination, hard work and talent*

By **AUDREY PARK**  
*Managing Editor*

When Jeffrey Chen came to Lab in sixth grade and joined the math team as a ninth grader, it did not take long for his classmates, math team coach and teachers to recognize his passion for and natural talent at math.

Jeffrey, now a senior and co-captain of the math team, is one of the nation's top high schoolers in math, but beyond that, he is known as an enthusiastic leader, hard worker and outgoing friend.

Jeffrey's interest in math began in sixth grade and ignited through his relationship with former math teacher Christopher Freeman, who died in 2020. Jeffrey said Mr. Freeman was his biggest inspiration.

"He recognized I was pretty good at it and showed me how fun math can be," Jeffrey said. "Over time, we grew very, very close, and I saw him as a father figure who always gave me advice on mathematics and even outside of it."

Math teacher Joseph Scroll has coached Jeffrey for four years. Mr. Scroll said Jeffrey is the most talented math team competitor he has seen in the 15 years he has taught at Lab, and one of the most talented people the high school has ever produced.

"When it comes to these kinds of math competitions, Jeffrey Chen is better at this than anyone in this building has ever been at doing anything they have done," Mr. Scroll said. "That is how good he is at this. There is no one at our school that's better at anything than he is at this."

Jeffrey credits his math success to his pure passion for and enjoyment of the subject. Although math has come naturally to him, he believes hard work is critical.

"I do believe that most people, if they work hard enough and put

## top test

The main competition Jeffrey Chen has competed in this year is the American Mathematics Competitions series.

The AMC series consists of five stages to determine the International Mathematical Olympiad. Over 100,000 people participate in the first round, the AMC 10A 12A, and then are invited to 10B and 12B. Six qualify to compete in the IMO, the final stage, where 104 countries compete against each other.

Jeffrey is one of 30 currently trying to qualify for the IMO. Last year, he qualified for the competition but did not make the top six. Jeffrey has completed two of the four exams before the team is chosen in the summer.

enough effort into math, they can become good at it too," Jeffrey said. "A big part is once you really learn how to enjoy math and see it as something fun, you naturally become really motivated to work harder and learn more."

During middle and high school, he has competed in countless competitions, including the Harvard-MIT Mathematics Tournament, the Princeton University Mathematics Competition, the ICTM competition and the North Suburban Math League — and has placed in them frequently. More recently and perhaps notably, out of over 100,000 initial participants, Jeffrey is one of 30 students nationwide competing to make the International Mathematical Olympiad team.

Mr. Scroll has recognized Jeffrey's natural talent since "day one" but views him as incredibly hardworking.

"I have seen a lot of natural talent on his part, and to be at the lev-



Midway photo by Gabriel Issa

**TALENTED AND OUTGOING.** One of the nation's top high schoolers in math, Jeffrey Chen is involved in a number of activities outside of math, including computer science, physics and the Diplomacy Club.

el that he is at, you have to be naturally talented — and that's true with anything," Mr. Scroll said, "but I don't think you could be where he is without a great deal of preparation, and it is a credit to him because it is difficult to be that talented and also be that hardworking."

Jeffrey is currently taking Linear Algebra and Multivariable Calculus, and AP Statistics. One of his math teachers, Farukh Khan, said Jeffrey thrives in math because of his dedication to the subject.

"I am sure he is extremely talented, but the thing about pure mathematics is you have to possess the ability to concentrate, and Jeffrey has that in spades," Mr. Khan said. "So that is what sets

him apart from others: his passion, the initiative and the ability to do what it takes to succeed."

Junior Adam Tang, the other co-captain of the math team and Jeffrey's friend, said Jeffrey makes math fun. Adam said Jeffrey is one of the most socially outgoing people he knows.

Adam said, "Most people have this conception that really smart people are socially awkward, but he is the opposite of that."

Currently, Jeffrey is working on a math project with a graduate student and professor at the University of Amherst through a program called MIT Primes. Jeffrey plans to major in math in college and pursue a math-related profession in academia. Aside from math, Jef-

frey is interested in computer science and said it is a large part of his life.

Outside of academics, Jeffrey enjoys playing board games. He is the president of the Diplomacy Club. Some of his other favorite games include Settlers of Catan and poker. A successful and eventful four years later, Jeffrey has created a profound impact on the math team and will leave a long-lasting legacy at Lab.

"He is a great leader, but he is also just one of the nicest kids I could ever remember having on the math team," Mr. Scroll said. "I mean, as far as I am concerned, he really is just a great kid and person. He is really just one of the best team members we have ever had."

## Winning formula: Club races to build model car for contest

by **AMON GRAY**  
*Sports and Leisure Editor*

The high-density polyurethane foam model block is a simple gray box that the U-High F1 team members began their season with. Yet, by the end of the year it will be a sleek, laser cut model car plastered with sponsor logos, and ready to race down the track.

The members of the U-High chapter of F1 in Schools combine their passions for STEM and racing by building and raising sponsors for the global model racing league, which they will compete in for the first time this summer.

Throughout the year the team works in the makerspace to build the model car out of the F1 model block. The current team will compete against other schools for the first time over the summer. The model that they build will be attached to a carbon dioxide canister to test the car. The team is working on testing their design for drag.

"I think running the test was really exciting because it's like a culmination of all the work we've done in the past," Ayush Mishra, club co-president said. "I joined this club in eighth grade at Lab, and it's been a lot of work, but that just felt pretty special."



Midway photo by Matt Petres

**CREATING CARS.** Members of the F1 in Schools club hover over the workbench in the makerspace as they work to design and build a model F1 car on their computers. They're preparing for their first competition in summer.

Along with the car, the team will raise money through sponsorships, simulating an actual Formula One team.

Their competitions the past two years have been canceled, so the team is excited to test their skills.

"In ninth grade we kind of hit the ground running," Ayush said.

"We did club shopping and all that, and then this year we've really taken up manufacturing because last year's competition was canceled, but this year it's gonna happen sometime in the summer."

Jashan Gill, the club's lead engineer, is looking forward to competition

"I joined the club because at my old school they also had an F1 schools team, and I was a member of that. I've been doing it since sixth grade and we did pretty well," Jashan said. "We didn't actually win the nationals, but since it was during the pandemic, and teams dropped out, we ended up

“  
Our goal for the upcoming competition is to build a competitive car, which means placing in the top three of nationals.  
Ayush Mishra, sophomore  
”

going up to the worlds, so that was quite an experience."

Raza Ali Zaidi, club co-president, said his favorite part of the club has been seeing everyone improve and work together to create the car.

"I think especially with our return to in-person competition this year, everybody's gotten to know each other much better," Raza said. "We've gotten much more used to working with each other."

As the team continues to develop, the members have learned to work together as creators and engineers.

"Our goal for the upcoming competition is to build a competitive car," Raza said. "Hopefully we'll qualify for globals [worlds], which means placing in the top three of nationals."



# RAMEN ROLLUP

Midway illustration by Dalin Dohrn

Warm noodle dish provides winter weather delight

by LOUIS AUXENFANS  
News Editor

Stacked upon grocery store shelves in plastic packaging, instant ramen has become a staple in American culture. The allure of a tasty, flavorful bowl of noodle soup that can be cooked in three minutes has led to dozens of instant ramen varieties. Yet, those quick bowls do not taste quite the same as those freshly prepared in a restaurant.

Ramen is a traditional Japanese noodle soup dish consisting of wheat noodles with toppings of nori (dried seaweed), menma (bamboo shoots), scallions, corn and a hard-boiled egg served in a broth.

Four categories of ramen are each distinguished by their broth. Shoyu ramen features chicken and vegetable broth flavored with soy sauce, resulting in a translucent brown broth that is tangy and light. Shio ramen contains a thinner chicken broth that gives the soup a clearer appearance. Miso ramen consists of a thick and hearty miso broth that gives the dish a nutty flavor. Tonkotsu ramen is made from simmering pork bone on high heat for many hours that results in a creamy and fatty translucent white broth.

The type of noodles also distinguish the type of ramen. Noodles are made from wheat flour, salt, water and kansui, an alkaline mineral water of sodium carbonate and potassium carbonate that gives ramen noodles their characteristic yellow color and chewy elasticity. The noodles range from thick and straight to thin and curly. Typically, the thicker noodles are paired with heavier broths.

As a winter dish, ramen is perfect to provide a satisfying, hearty meal. Just one bowl will provide much-needed warmth in rough Chicago winters and leave your stomach satisfied. For a comforting and delicious meal at a decent price, check out these three ramen restaurants with locations across Chicago.



Midway photos by Louis Auxenfans



## Gold: Kyuramen

Price: \$16.99

Chicken Ramen

Kyuramen has an energetic and bustling atmosphere in downtown. Recently opened in January, the restaurant is the first in Chicago for the chain with 14 locations across America. Their chicken ramen has a tangy, sweet broth that has just the right balance of flavor and sodium, with straight noodles providing a firm bite to complement the light broth. The best part is the toppings which bring different and distinct flavors to the bowl. The bamboo shoots add a

nice pungent taste to the aromatic broth and the uber delicious marinated egg provides rich creaminess to the dish. Additionally, nori and wakame (algae) sprinkle in a taste of the sea. The slices of grilled chicken in the dish are strangely served cold, but they help cool the palate against the warm broth. While it's certainly not cheap, Kyuramen delivers a tasty meal – just make sure to book a reservation as seats fill up fast.

## Silver: Strings

Price: \$13.95

Shoyu Vegetarian Ramen

With fresh noodles made daily in house, you cannot go wrong ordering at Strings Ramen Shop. Strings uses specially imported dough from Japan for its noodles and offers all four different types of ramen in its Chinatown, Lakeview and Hyde Park locations. Their vegetarian Shoyu ramen bowl has a light, earthy broth with just the right amount of sodium. Wood ear mushrooms and seaweed help accentuate the soy sauce-based broth, and the ad-

dition of pickled ginger gives a pungent aftertaste. The straight, doughy noodles taste similar to Chinese egg noodles, adding comfort to the bowl. The texture combination of the tender bamboo shoots and soft bean sprouts complement the chewy noodles to give the bowl a satisfying feeling. Additionally, the sprinkles of corn adds a much needed crunch. The different ingredients work well to provide a tangy, earthy and healthy bowl of ramen.

## Bronze: Ramen San

Price: \$16.00

Tonkotsu Ramen

Ramen San has an relaxed and chill atmosphere that is perfect for a weekend night out. It has locations in Lincoln Park, River North, Fulton Market and Streeterville, with a wide variety of tasty Japanese dishes on its menu besides ramen. Their Tonkotsu ramen has a rich, hearty but excessively salty pork broth. Adding water might be required to dilute the sodium-heavy broth. However, the

lardy broth combined with the soft Tokyo wavy noodles makes for a filling meal. The thin-cut pork belly tastes succulent and butter-like, providing an extra richness. In addition, other elements such as molten egg, bamboo shoots, wakame seaweed and fresh garlic come together well to make a fulfilling dish. The only downside to this hearty, fragrant bowl of ramen is the overly salty broth.

# Despite judgment, students enjoy comfort of fan fiction

by AMY REN  
Assistant Editor

A set of frustrated fingers jams the power button on a TV remote as credits roll. Another pair of hands slams a book shut. A third set of hands flings away the phone they held. All belong to fans unsatisfied by the media they consume, whether a show, book or video game. However, they can turn to something else to satisfy their hunger for more: fan fiction.

Written by amateurs, fan fiction uses copyrighted characters, settings, plots and other intellectual property while crediting the creator of the original work. Although some people value fan fiction as a way to explore additional possibilities untouched by the original creator, hone creative skills or connect with other fans, others characterize it as immature, embarrassing and shameful.

Since ninth grader Beatrice Park wasn't satisfied with the conclusion of the book series "The Hobbit" and "The Lord of the Rings," when Beatrice was in seventh grade, one friend recommended fan fiction.

Beatrice started with a 698-page fan fiction on Quotev, which, along with Tumblr and Archive of Our Own, is a website that hosts many works of fan fiction.

"I looked up 'Lord of the Rings' and read it and was, like, 'Oh my gosh, wow, that's so cool,'" Beatrice said. "It was a while, but it

was such a fun ride."

After Beatrice watched "Hunter x Hunter," an anime series, a friend recommended she read some works from that fandom. She discovered another style.

"I read through a few of them and they were... definitely a 180," Beatrice said. "The ones I'd read were more like books that were created by the authors, or like a character... created and put in the story, but this was like the author put you in the story."

This writing style, known as reader-insert fan fiction, differs from works written in third-person with a "canon" character from the original work or original characters created by the fan fiction author.

Junior Eliza Dearing — who mostly reads fan fiction of the shows "Good Omens" and "The Sandman" and the book "The Song of Achilles" — said some people look down on reader-insert fan fiction because it constructs a fictional relationship between the reader and someone else.

"That's seen as the most cringey because, 'Why are you shipping yourself with fictional characters or, like, band members, especially?'" Eliza said, referring to imagined relationships. "Real people also are iffy territory, because that's a real person... They're definitely seen as the lesser, more indulgent, more weird side."

People often believe that fan fiction is

embarrassing, due to how it can humor readers, according to Eliza. Both Beatrice and Eliza agree that another misconception about fan fiction is that it contains mature content, like overtly violent or sexual themes.

"I know there are definitely negative views of it, which I can understand... there could be mature things in it," Beatrice said. "That doesn't stop curious young readers from clicking."

Some websites allow readers to easily avoid or seek certain topics because creators can "tag" works with particular themes.

"It feels very reliable and very safe," Eliza said. "You're never really going to be surprised."

Both Beatrice and Eliza believe one of fan fiction's biggest impacts is how it encourages creativity among both individuals and communities.

"People create this base where people all over the world can read it, and see different perspectives," Beatrice said. "People can create a whole new world."

Eliza said the excitement of writing fan fiction for beloved characters can develop writing skills and spark a passion for writing.

"It's definitely a great creative vessel, and it's just really fun to read as well because you know that they're having fun with it and you're having fun with it," Eliza said. "It's



Midway photo by Ishani Hariprasad

**FAN FICTION FRENZY.** Offered by a multitude of websites, fan fiction allows students to read new stories within the world of their favorite works.

not supposed to be, you know, the 'height of literature.'"

Both Eliza and Beatrice emphasized that fan fiction is not its negative connotations or a ground for judgment.

"It's not something to be ashamed of," Eliza said. "If something makes you happy, don't stay away from it because other people might think you're weird."