

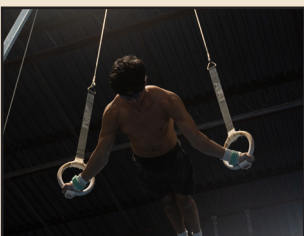
PAGE 6-7 • IN-DEPTH

Overshadowed with negative stereotypes about poverty, violence and instability, the South Side does not get the credit it deserves as a place with scenic parks and world-renowned museums.



PAGE 8 • LEISURE

For senior twins Akshay and Kavan Puri, gymnastics runs in the family, and the sport has taught them important lessons of perseverance, discipline and family they will take into college and beyond.



PAGE 9 • SPORTS

Director of Athletics Dave Ribbens retires after 20 years at the school, leaving a legacy of success and growth. Under his watch, Lab has won 102 IHSA championships in 10 sports.



Nathwani chosen in second election

Objectives include communication and transparency

by CHLOË ALEXANDER
Assistant Editor

In a second all-school election on May 1, the student body elected Zoe Nathwani as the all-school president for 2023-24. Brandon Chang will be all-school vice president.

Zoe has been Class of 2024 president since ninth grade.

Zoe's responses have been lightly edited for length and clarity. Read an extended version of this Q&A with Zoe at uhighmidway.com.

With the unauthorized change in votes that happened on the first Election Day, how do you suppose students will believe that you were fairly elected as all-school president?

That's definitely a concern that I have, but I just hope that people can trust that we ran the entire election — again, a huge amount of work for everybody involved, and I just hope that people can trust that I was elected fairly. Even if they don't, I think I'm going to be able to prove myself throughout the course of the year that I deserve to be elected.

Do you have any plans to create/maintain confidence with the student body?

One of my main objectives is to increase visibility and accountability for Student Council members. One of the ways that I plan to do that is a quarterly update, because right now, Student Council has a semesterly update, but

I think it's important that we actually keep people more updated on what we're doing every single quarter.

How do you want to get more students involved in forums and allow students to voice their opinions?

So this is a huge thing for me, because since I've been on Student Council, I've noticed that while we give people opportunities to get involved, not everybody's taking advantage of those and just speaks to us either not publicizing them enough or not having the right opportunities.

How do you plan to listen to student voices while working with faculty and the administration?

First and foremost, as a Student Council, our responsibility is to the students, not to anybody else, not to ourselves, not to the administration, but to the students. So, I mean, as a president, I'm going to make sure that I'm available for people to talk to on an unofficial basis with the concerns that they have, but as a Student Council, making ourselves more available and making it known, our meetings are entirely open and we want students to come in and tell us what's going on.

How do you plan to create a more inclusive environment within the student body?

I've noticed that we need a positive voice in a whole discussion around DEI. I think we need to be focusing on cultural enrichment and cultural understanding and mutual understanding.

So I have this idea called international day, and basically what this would be is students would

election results

Midway photo by Kaden Moubayed

LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP. Zoe Nathwani will continue her fourth year of student government and wants to increase transparency with students.

2023-24 Student Council

ALL-SCHOOL:

- **President:** Zoe Nathwani
- **Vice president:** Brandon Chang
- **Secretary:** Kaavya Shriram
- **Treasurer:** Carter Chang
- **Cultural Union president:** Adam Cheema
- **Cultural Union vice president:** Maurice Neuman

CLASS OF 2024:

- **President:** Sam Pastor
- **Vice president:** Cassia Collins
- **Cultural Union representatives:** Tara Sawhney, Cheresa Turek

CLASS OF 2025:

- **President:** Lisa Tao
- **Vice president:** Joshua Carter
- **Cultural Union representatives:** Sinéad Nagubadi, Ben O'Donnell

CLASS OF 2026:

- **President:** Sophie Li
- **Vice president:** Daniel Chang
- **Cultural Union representatives:** Clara Blucher, Bayaan El-Bawab

VOTER TURNOUT:

- **Schoolwide:** 88%
- **Class of 2024:** 89%
- **Class of 2025:** 91%
- **Class of 2026:** 86%

Google Form implemented for greater election security

Turbulent election resulted in re-run on safer platform

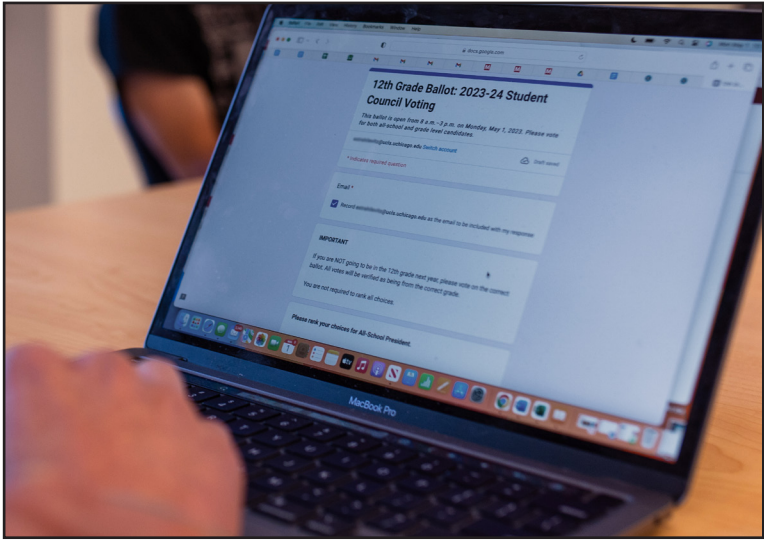
by LOUIS AUXENFANS
News Editor

Unauthorized vote changes in the election database during the Student Council election April 28 caused the results to be set aside and a new election held on May 1.

Around lunchtime on April 28, Jeffrey Huang, one of Student Council's two directors of student technology services, noticed irregularities in the voting database but there were no vote changes, so they thought little of it, Jeffrey said.

Then, during 8th period, there were huge concentrated bursts of vote changes which favored specific candidates over others, which Jeffrey said he deduced was caused by a script.

That afternoon, Student Council and Dean of Students Ana Campos also received reports from multi-



Midway photo illustration by Matt Petres

SECURING THE COUNT. Students used a Google Form to vote May 1 because of unauthorized vote changes on the original election April 28.

ple students that their original, intended vote was different from what was recorded, which could be verified by the database.

Upon discovering these changes, Student Council leaders knew they would have to run a new elec-

tion.

"At that point, we realized that the election basically lacked integrity at that point, because we couldn't call an election obviously based on fraudulent voting and vote changes," Jeffrey said.

miliar with somebody else's ethnic background.

What are some lessons that you've learned from your time on Student Council that you plan to make use of next year?

I think the biggest one is that we need to kind of think outside the box because when I first came into Student Council as a freshman, I was terrified. I was literally so scared because there was all these big upperclassmen who had been

elected, who were well liked, who knew what they were doing, so I was really scared to kind of branch out and try new things because there's kind of an established mold there and I didn't want to be sticking out. But as I've gotten older, and I've spent more time on Student Council, I've realized that the most important thing is that we are thinking outside of the box and being a little bit more creative with the initiatives that we have.

“

We took all the measures we could to make sure it was fair and secure. The Google Form is fairly impenetrable, so the votes themselves are safe.

”

Fermi Boonstra, all-school president

Jeffrey acknowledged that he and Asher Grossman, the other student technology director, did not set up strong security for the voting database. They never thought someone would hack the database to change votes, so they focused on developing other features of the website.

For the May 1 election, Google Forms was used instead of voting on the Student Council website because of the higher level of security. Despite the higher security, Google Forms are more difficult to configure for ranked-choice voting.

All-School President Fermi

Boonstra said that students should have confidence in the results of the new election because of the measures Student Council took.

"We took all the measures we could to make sure it was the most fair and secure," Fermi said in an interview. "The Google Form is fairly impenetrable, so the votes themselves are safe. And we're not using the website, obviously, so we don't have the same issue."

In addition, Fermi said that they kept the names of the script-preferred candidates under wraps and did not allow candidates to campaign over the weekend in order to prevent election influence over the weekend.

For the next election, Student Council still plans to use its website for voting and work on identifying and patching its vulnerabilities.

"The amount of time we've had, which was essentially two days to create security roles, wasn't enough for us since we've basically never done security before," Jeffrey said. "And a lot of it is also a learning process."

Chicago educator named principal

Martin L. Woods of Wolcott Prep will lead U-High

by CLARE McROBERTS
Assistant Editor

Martin L. Woods, who has served on the leadership team at Wolcott College Prep in Chicago since 2018, has been selected as U-High's next principal.

Director of Schools Tori Jueds sent an email to the Lab community on April 21, following a national search to replace Principal Paul Beekmeyer, who is departing this summer.

Mr. Woods, who is director of student life, dean of students and director of diversity and belonging at Wolcott, was picked from a large pool of candidates and was among four finalists who visited.

In Ms. Jueds's announcement email, Mr. Woods said, "I look forward to getting to know the members of this community as we join together to honor our past and look to the future of U-High."

Before working at Wolcott, Mr. Woods, who was born in Chicago and comes from a family of educators, worked as a classroom teacher at Noble Charter School Network. Earlier, he served as an assistant executive director and performing arts director at St. Margaret of Scotland School. He has studied music at Morehouse College and Roosevelt University, and is also an opera singer.

During interviews before his selection, Mr. Woods said that a goal of his is to truly connect with the student body and the communities within it.

"What I would love to do is first connect with the groups that you have already established. I think that's a great way to kind of get to know you," he said. "So whether it be your affinity groups, your sports teams, Student Council, etc., I will love to spend some time with you all to hear your thoughts." Ms. Jueds, a leader of the principal search committee, said Mr. Woods seemed to connect strongly with all members of the Lab community.

"Out of a large, diverse and talented pool of candidates, Martin drew admiration from our community and wholehearted support from our Search Committee for his warmth, embrace of Lab's mission and values, and success in furthering impactful academics, supporting students and building bridges."

As Mr. Woods moves into his new role, one of the challenges he may contend with is the tension that has emerged in recent months between the administra-



Midway photo by Sarah Abdelsalam

LOCAL HIRE. Incoming principal Martin Woods said his goals as principal will be to connect with the student body and support DEI initiatives.

résumé

Here are some fast facts about new principal Martin Woods:

- Director of student life, dean of students and director of diversity and belonging at Wolcott College Prep in Chicago since 2018
- Implemented diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives at Wolcott for anti-bullying and identity-affirming program
- Ensure inclusive hiring practices to recruit highest number of Black and LGBTQ faculty
- Work with enrollment admissions director to enroll highest number of African American and LGBTQ students
- Music teacher at Noble Charter School Network and St. Margaret of Scotland School from 2010-2018
- Bachelor's in Music and Marketing from Morehouse College; Master's of Music from Roosevelt University

— compiled by Louis Auxenfans

tion and students over accounts of an unwelcoming and discriminatory school environment, sophomore and Asian Students' Association member Karis Lee said.

"I hope to see Mr. Woods really connect with the affinity groups that were not satisfied with the way the administration treated them," Karis said. "Considering the things BSA and JSA talked about in their assemblies, I really want to see Mr. Woods take that into account and do his best to ensure each student feels comfortable."

Camille Baughn-Cunningham, a U-High counselor who was a member of the search committee, echoed Karis' hope for a stronger bond between the administration and students.

"I think what we look forward to is having a community where

there's a greater connection between the faculty and the students," Dr. Baughn-Cunningham said, "as well as the administrators, and specifically, the principal and the students."

Dr. Baughn-Cunningham also said that something the committee had to consider in making their decision was the high staff turnover in the past couple of years. She said that she believes Mr. Woods will be able to take on this challenge.

"One of the things we knew, both as faculty as well as students, is that there's been a lot of turnover," Dr. Baughn-Cunningham said, "and that's hard on a community. So we were looking for someone who really wanted to be a principal, and could see themselves in that role for a good stretch of time."

Hosted forums lack student participation

by AMY REN
Assistant Editor

When finalists to be principal visited U-High over four days in early April, students had a chance to meet them at lunch sessions. But just a few students did.

Forums on incidents of hate expression and principal search input have only had four students voluntarily attend, while the principal finalist search meetings this month had around 10 attendees on average.

Some say low attendance reflects student apathy, while others say they don't believe their viewpoints will truly be heard.

All-School Secretary James McCullen has attended such forums

and meetings, and he thinks low attendance is because of a lack of trust that sharing opinions at meetings will initiate true change at Lab.

Dean of Students Ana Campos also observed a lack of student participation in community discussions since the pandemic, and that after distance learning, students spent more time with small groups of like-minded friends — and stayed in an ideological bubble.

"My perception is there's a lot more small groups of people that will talk with each other ... and so they might have complaints about something," Ms. Campos said, "but there isn't necessarily a de-

sire to bring it to a larger conversation and engage in conversation with other people."

Fermi senses a disconnect between the student body and the Student Council and believes that students are hypocritical in their lack of attendance.

"People criticize Student Council a lot for not doing anything, but it's funny that they say that, because whenever we do something or host something, people don't show up — even though we advertise it, even though we tell people to come, even though we posted on Schoology," Fermi said, "so it's just frustrating when we do those things and no one shows up, and then we get criticized for it."

news in brief

Two students selected to All-State Journalism Team

Senior Patrice Graham, a photo-journalist, and junior Audrey Park, U-High Midway managing editor, have been selected to the All-State Journalism Team from the Illinois Journalism Education Association.

The IJEA is a nonprofit organization that works with Illinois scholastic journalism teachers and advisers to "promote high standards in student publications." Just 12 Illinois student journalists were selected, and though U-High has had a student on this team almost every year, having two is an unusual occurrence.

Patrice feels that getting this award is a gratifying sign that his hard work for the Midway pays off and is seen by people outside of Lab.

"For me journalism is one of the things I take most joy in doing within the Lab community, so being able to do something I love and succeed while doing it is a dream come true for me," Patrice said. "It's nice to get a reminder that the work that you put in warrants a reward."

Audrey was surrounded by other members of the U-High journalism team when she learned about the award and said that was a memorable experience in itself. She feels connected to the Midway through both the academic side and her love for the work and the team.

"Journalism is a class and hobby I am very passionate about and dedicated to," Audrey said, "and being on the team is representative of that."

— Light Dohrn



Patrice Graham



Audrey Park

competition on April 25 after a strong performance at their fifth and final ICTM competition of the season.

The team won the competition by nine points, closely edging out rival Glenbrook North.

For next year, the math team aims to win state again, climb up the North Scholastic Math League leaderboard and develop a closer bond within the team.

"We felt an overwhelming sense of elation," team member Krish Khanna said about winning. "It seemed as though the culmination of our hard work over the past three months had paid off in a big win."

— Kabir Joshi

At TOC, debate duo makes elimination rounds

Varsity debaters Mahi Shah and Cyrus Esmailzadeh advanced to the elimination round for the first time, farther than they ever have before, at the JW Patterson Tournament of Champions, one of the most prestigious high school debate tournaments, held at the University of Kentucky in Lexington April 15-17. Led by debate coach Sonny Patel, the pairing won five rounds and lost two.

Mahi said that she and Cyrus, who are both juniors, competed at the virtual tournament last year, making this their first in-person attendance.

"It was a very different environment compared to other tournaments," Mahi said. "Everyone was locked in trying to prep before every round, just trying really hard to get ready for the rounds, making sure they had everything."

This school year was also Dr. Patel's last season as the debate coach for Lab after eight years.

"It was nice to, at least, end up where he got to experience a Tournament of Champions in which we made it to the elimination rounds," Mahi said.

Mahi said that the debate team is focused on improving different skill sets and ideas as they look toward the future.

"I think that we were happy with how we did, and we want to go really far next season," Mahi said. "I'd like to see, next year, we have high aspirations for getting further into the elimination rounds."

— Taariq Ahmed

latinos unidos



Midway photo by Matt Petres

PIÑATA PARTY. Senior Michael Ewing breaks a piñata at the Día Del Niño celebration hosted by the Latinos Unidos in Scammons Garden April 28 from 3-5 p.m. The event signified International Children's Day, which emphasizes creativity and joy. Other activities included face painting, races and competitions among students.

Artist raises \$2,000 to restore mural

Bronzeville public art fosters area's self-understanding

by VICTORIA WASHINGTON
Audience Engagement Manager

Every mural begins and ends in the community. Wheat paste, used like papier-mâché, covers the brick facade of the T.K. Lawless Building on 43rd Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, outlining Nat King Cole's face. The black-and-white film gives the mural a historic appearance, contrasting the vibrant cartoonish style used in most street art.

Since 2014, the Nat King Cole mural has been a meaningful part of the Bronzeville neighborhood. The artist, Chris Devins, an urban planner who has created over 20 murals across Chicagoland, centers his work on positive statements about the community.

Even when things could be better, Mr. Devins is committed to combating negative perceptions about any neighborhood he works in.

The Nat King Cole mural needs restoration, so Mr. Devins launched an effort on GoFundMe. He contributed \$1,000 of his own money and raised more than \$2,000 with contributions from the community and the support of city officials. The mural will be renovated to like-new condition. Mr. Devins is hoping to plan a community event celebrating the mural.

"One of the purposes of the fundraiser wasn't simply to raise money, because there's support from top down" Mr. Devins said. "For me, the GoFundMe is a measure of the community's involvement and interest in restoring the mural."

The Nat King Cole mural was a part of the Bronzeville Legends Initiative, a campaign to highlight Bronzeville's historical legacy. Mr. Devins' major goals for the program included arts and cultural awareness, education, community pride, inspiration and improved safety perception, which will hopefully draw new visitors to the area.



Midway photo by Henry Benton

FINISHED FUNDRAISING. The Nat Cole King mural, an important piece of public art at 43rd Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive in the historic Bronzeville neighborhood, was recently the subject of a fundraising campaign for much needed repairs.

Instead of being a stand-alone installation, Mr. Devins designed the mural with the community in mind, examining the intersection of Black faces and places. He describes his work as a walk down memory lane, a tour through Bronzeville's photo album. It provides the community with a sense of pride and purpose.

"Most murals are stand-alone. This mural works in concert with other murals in the neighborhood," Mr. Devins said.

Mr. Devins describes the effect of murals on the Bronzeville neighborhood as memory walls. He hopes that residents will see the interconnectedness of the murals.

"It starts to dawn on you that these murals are a part of our col-

lective memory," Mr. Devins said, "What makes a community is a collective memory."

Mr. Devins believes his success as an artist comes from talking with members of the community. Before he begins any work, he spends a year touring the neighborhood and speaking with residences. After, he holds a vote on the subject of the mural.

"From a technical urban planning point of view, these murals serve the function of highlighting the identity of the area and calling attention to the historical legacy Bronzeville has," Mr. Devins said.

Mr. Devins wants to develop Bronzeville into a center for African American arts, culture and entertainment, similar to what a Chicago resident would see in Greek-

town or Chinatown.

"African Americans contribute a lot to American culture," he said, "but everywhere you go throughout the United States, you're mostly confronted with two things: the nice African American neighborhood, where people go to work and live downtown, or you have areas of blight, like on the South Side."

Not every mural focuses on the historic identity of the neighborhood, but Mr. Devins saw an opportunity to revive some of the lost culture of Bronzeville through his murals, a form of public art, which he believes is crucial for a neighborhood like Bronzeville.

"Public art is the democratic side of art. Without having to be intimidated by going into a gallery,

“Public art is the democratic side of art[...] you don't have to be wealthy or have to have a certain educational attainment level. It's art for everybody.”

Chris Devins, artist and urban planner

which you may or may not feel comfortable with, public art is art that's on display for everyone," Mr. Devins said. "It's for all to enjoy of any background, and you don't have to be wealthy or have to have a certain educational attainment level. It's art for everybody."

New record store, and passionate owners, make home for music lovers

Pop-up founders open store west of Washington Park

by TAARIQ AHMED
Reporter

As gentle, crisp music drifts from the high wall speakers, enthusiastic customers bounce across the Persian carpet, sifting through plastic-wrapped vinyl records, sorted into bins resting on navy blue wooden furniture. Miyagi Records, a record store, opened April 14 at the heart of Washington Park, just off East Garfield Boulevard.

The store partners with the Creative Entrepreneurship Program of the Rebuild Foundation, founded and directed by Theaster Gates, a University of Chicago professor. The Rebuild Foundation aims to showcase cultural contributions from creators who are Black, Indigenous or people of color. Miyagi Records also emerges at a time when vinyl records appear to be experiencing a resurgence within the music consumer forefront.

After initially operating as pop-up traders, founders Marco Jacobo and Nigel Ridgeway, both former musicians and longtime record collectors, said that having a permanent brick and mortar location



Midway photo by Gabriel Issa

CRATE DIGGING. A customer looks through record bins at the opening event for Miyagi Records on April 14. The store was originally a pop-up founded by Marco Jacobo and Nigel Ridgeway.

for the business is a step forward.

"I can speak for the both of us when I say one of the dreams of record collectors is to someday be sitting around in their own shop,

listening to records and talking about records with people," Mr. Jacobo said. "Nigel started this in a storage unit during COVID, and it grew into what we're standing in

now."

Mr. Jacobo said they received immense anticipation with the store's recent opening and during Record Store Day on April 22, a

global celebration of independently owned record stores, which received substantial attention across Chicago.

"I actually haven't thought about the transition until the last couple of days," Mr. Jacobo said. "The first week was just hectic — people coming in and out for the opening weekend."

Mr. Ridgeway said they ran into numerous obstacles while attempting to start up the store.

"There's like three crunch points: time, money and labor," Mr. Ridgeway said. "What we needed was pretty specific since the space had to be a certain size for the sound system. But Theaster Gates helped us through a lot of steps to get here."

Mr. Jacobo said they wish for Miyagi Records to become a staple in the Chicago-area music trade scene. The pair also said they hope that despite how digital formats like streaming have transformed music, people will maintain and develop an interest in vinyl records.

"There's nothing tangible nowadays, to hold and collect, while you're listening to music on Spotify and YouTube," Mr. Jacobo said, "but records are special. For people who appreciate music, they're something cool to get into and check out."

Administration must engage differently

A stronger bond can prompt many positive changes

The coming school year marks a substantial change in U-High's administration and functions — a new schedule, principal, athletics director, assistant director of student services, and assistant director of diversity, equity and inclusion. With these changes will undoubtedly come shifts to student life.

Student concerns and wellbeing must be at the heart of these changes. Having more accessible and widespread opportunities for students to freely and completely share our thoughts to the administration will allow our voices to not fall to the back-ground.

While this communication does currently exist, the scale needs to increase. The administration should reconfigure these guided student forums to utilize the opportunity to broaden communication to a wider audience and increase student involvement, feedback and expression. While students hold responsibility for low attendance, transparent platforms to communicate could promote interest in attending administration-led forums as the student body would be confident their voices would be properly heard.

This problem was emphasized during the later stages of U-High's principal search, where each can-

didate hosted a drop-in session during lunch for students to get to know each potential principal. While participation was limited, the forum itself did not allow for complete expression.

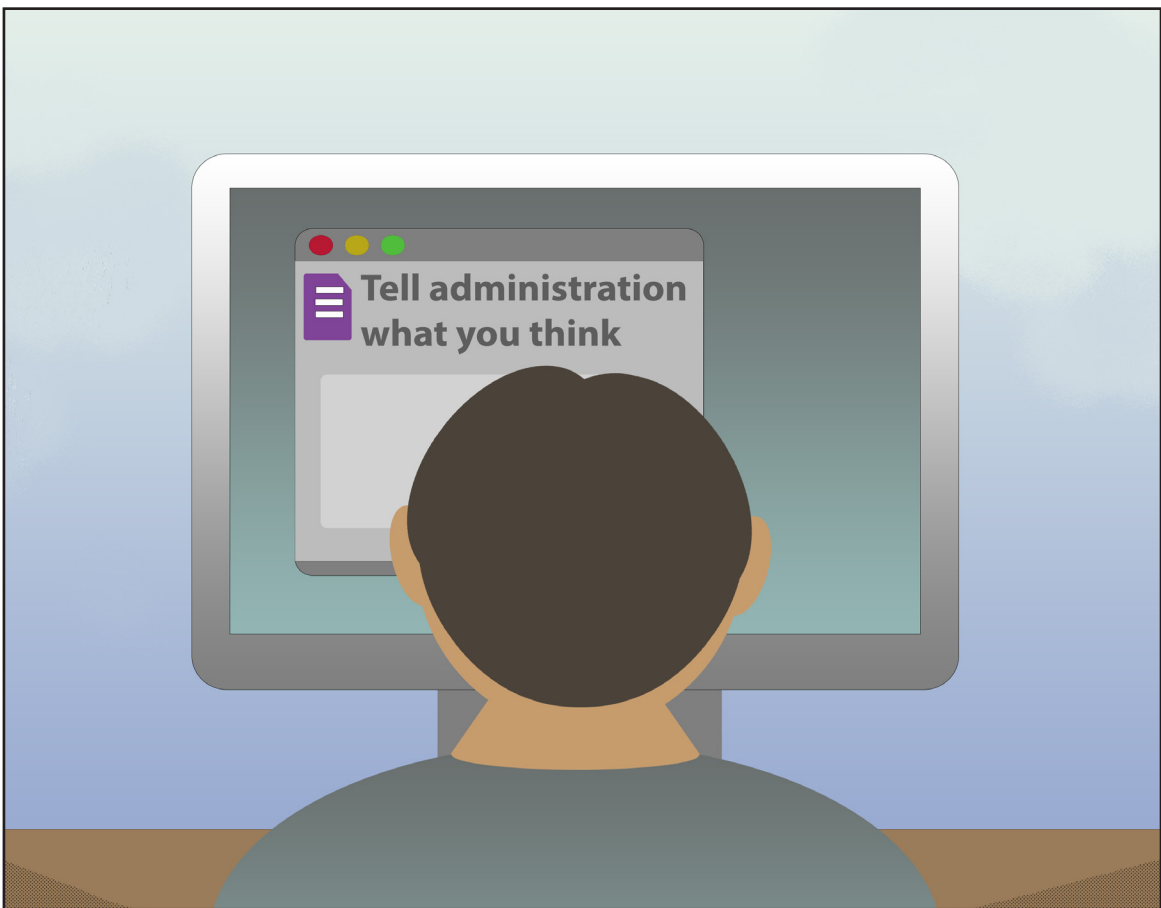
The students present were only permitted to ask a limited set of pre-approved questions which were printed on a list, therefore restricting their communication between students and the potential administrator.

These actions dampened the efficacy of hosting an event designed to promote communication and clarity with the student body. The administration takes strong steps toward communication in organizing events such as this one, but in the future alternate arrangements of these forums could allow more people to share their voices

The structure of future forums could promote more interaction and openness among the administration and students. New communication pathways could also be formed to increase accessibility, transparency and ease.

Rather than hosting optional sessions for students to attend during their open time, with the help of advisers, administrators could join advisories or small groups during free periods and talk with students in a relaxed, private setting when all are present. Sessions that take place during

open times, lunch or after school often leave students unable to attend due to clubs, sports or other commitments, so these fo-



Midway illustration by Amon Gray

as the midway sees it.

Allow female athletes to display emotions during competitions

by **VICTORIA WASHINGTON**
Audience Engagement Manager

Maybe you watched the NCAA women's basketball championship game on April 2. Maybe you didn't, but you probably saw or heard about the subsequent Twitter war and online rage about the feud between Louisiana State's Angel Reese and Iowa's Caitlin Clark.

The LSU Tigers defeated the Iowa Hawkeyes 102-85, winning the school its first-ever March Madness Title. While the game stayed close until the end, much of what viewers remember about the event

was the competitiveness and trash talk between Reese and Clark, two of the biggest standouts of the tournament.

With sports fans praising Clark's "You Can't See Me," hand gesture yet calling out Reese's use of the same gesture as disrespectful, viewers in recent years have pointed to the hypocrisy and per-



Victoria Washington

ception of trash talk in women's sports compared to men's.

Just as male athletes are praised for their sportsmanship and display of emotion during the game, women should be allowed the space to trash talk their fellow competitors, and Black women in particular should be allowed this space.

Reese was criticized throughout the season for being "too ghetto" or "hood," she said in a press conference following the championship game. The frequent scrutiny of Black women's portrayal

in sports media has shone a light on a larger pattern of difficulty for Black female athletes.

While Clark and Louisville guard Haley Van Lith were celebrated for their trash talk and emotion, Reese was criticized the most.

WNBA player and 2012 NCAA national champion Odyssey Sims praised the performance of Reese and finds trash talk to be part of the game. Sims says sports provide a way for athletes to express themselves. Women shouldn't be criticized for not being lady-like

enough, it's all part of trade.

Ketra Armstrong, director of the Center for Race and Ethnicity in Sports at the University of Michigan, said Reese's performance in the championship game demonstrates proudly showing up authentically and representing herself.

In the future, Black female athletes shouldn't be criticized for showing the competitive nature of their sports, they should be judged by the quality of the game they play and allowed to be authentically themselves.

Men of color face intricate mental health barriers that must be solved

by **TAARIQ AHMED**
Reporter

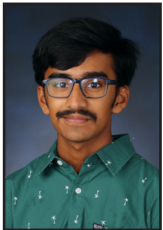
Growing up, I was always more outspoken about my emotions than other boys at school and more expressive than other South Asian Americans in my community. That's why I love writing as an outlet so much. However, sharing my feelings openly among groups of young men or kids of color is a constant struggle of mine. It feels like we talk about everything besides how we truly feel inside, out of a fear of being told to "be a man" or being called "soft" and "sensitive."

With these stigmas in place, it's

not difficult to see how men of color often find themselves at the

crossroads of the social and emotional boundaries that both people of color and men face, which in turn restricts them from accessing mental health treatment and other resources.

The issue of mental health for both men and people of color is serious. The number of men suffering from de-



Taariq Ahmed

pression annually is over 6 million, yet less than half seek treatment for mental health issues. And more than 15% of people within both the Black and Latino communities, respectively, face a mental illness, while beyond 45% of Asian Americans report discrimination-induced stress.

For men, traditional ideas about gender roles create a lack of specific emotional intelligence and skill sets, and for younger boys, these notions are only enhanced by the internet "manosphere" pipeline. I've spent plenty of time surrounded by guys who aren't conscious of the harm their words

inflict upon others, or even myself at times, leaving no room for vulnerable conversations about hurt feelings. The environment where I was brought up also conditioned me to internalize my experiences with prejudice. Racism is stressful, depressing and traumatic, but until I arrived at U-High, where there are programs like Young Men of Color and Being Racially Aware and Valuing Ethnicity, I lived with an absence of healthy spaces for people like me to express oneself.

The barriers that men of color have to navigate through are undeniably products of larger societal issues that can only be solved

through the creation of safe spaces for discussion as well as the spreading of awareness. The mental health crisis wreaking havoc across the country is affecting so many more groups and individuals beyond men of color. Whether it be peer and community support or wider advocacy and representation, we all have to take part in fighting the stigma around mental health.

We can start by telling our individual stories. Because if one person feels heard, then they'll be inclined to voice their own experience. And so the love spreads, and along comes the change.

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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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SEEING RED

Flower display
presents impact of
Chicago redlining

by **AUDREY MATEI**
Arts Editor

Gray and brown buildings jut from fields of saturated spring grass. The dark asphalt streets starkly contrast with the light blue sky above. Along the horizon, the Green Line rumbles on its journey south. However, amidst this South Chicago spring scene is a colossal sea of crimson. One-hundred thousand red tulips erupt from the earth over several plots of land representing buildings that had once stood and have been demolished due to the corrupt practices of redlining. In each coming year, these tulips will regrow, meandering and migrating from their original plots in a state of perpetual change, perhaps representing the lasting and unpredictable effects of redlining.

The tulips at the corner of 53rd Street and Prairie Avenue are part of artist Amanda Williams' "Redefining Redlining," a project that is both beautiful and striking, utilizing space, color and symbolism to convey a message that reverberates throughout the South Side, the city and the United States.

Ms. Williams, a Chicago-based



“Redlining is just a powerful term, in many ways, because it’s so illustrative. It illustrates itself. It’s a red, line.”

Amanda Williams



Midway photo by Patrice Graham

ROWS OF RED. As part of her project, “Redefining Redlining,” artist Amanda Williams planted 100,000 tulip bulbs in vacant lots near Washington Park to represent 21 demolished buildings. The display exhibits the impacts of redlining on the South Side and beyond.

artist and 1992 Lab alumna, often features themes of spatial justice and “the built-environment” in her work. This project focuses on the issue of redlining, a widespread range of real estate practices used to exclude marginalized groups from specific areas, which continues to contribute to the lasting segregation that exists in Chicago and beyond. Using old insurance maps, Ms. Williams, with the help of many volunteers, planted thousands of tulips bulbs last October in the place of 21 demolished Washington Park residential buildings.

Ms. Williams said part of the project’s inspiration was the visual connection of color and space to the abstract issue of redlining.

“So redlining is just a powerful term, in many ways, because it’s so illustrative. It illustrates itself. It’s a red, line” she said. “So I think having a term that’s identifiable, and then it’s so easy to translate into something visual, just kind of makes it a no-brainer in terms of something that I would be attracted to, given my love of color.”

Ms. Williams has used color to explore similar themes of the built environment before in the project “Color(ed) Theory.” In 2014 and

2015 she secretly painted multiple houses on the South Side slated for demolition in a solid and vibrant color. She intentionally used colors linked to products marketed towards the Black community throughout the late 20th century.

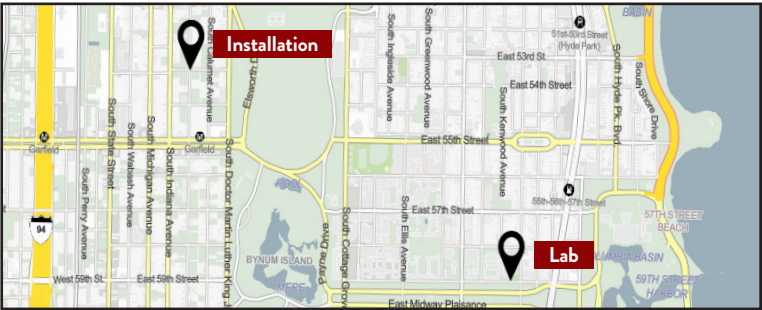
Today, Ms. Williams uses art to explore spatial justice, and her art is a product of the culmination of her experiences: specifically growing up as a Black person in two parts of Chicago’s South Side and studying architecture.

Ms. Williams said being trained as an architect and to think about how to move bodies through space has always been one of her preoccupations.

She said, “So my own spatial experience in relationship to Chicago was very influenced by going to Lab School and going between two different neighborhoods every day.”

Ms. Williams said that although she doesn’t think the project will solve the issues stemming from redlining, she believes the project can still have an expansive impact.

“There’s not an impact in terms of, ‘This is gonna solve the problems that redlining created in the first place,’” she said. “But I do think that there’s an element of un-



Midway graphic by Audrey Matei

The tulips are located on multiple plots at East 53rd Street and South Prairie Avenue. As spring flowers, their bloom only lasts several weeks.

derstanding that things on a temporary basis can bring joy. They can bring imagination. They can sometimes bring about legislative change.”

She said her project is only a small part in exhibiting the impact of redlining and making a change for the community.

“I think I’ve understood that you can’t do a single action all of a sudden and magically impact the community,” she said. “This is one note on many points that are happening that aren’t just the work that I’m doing. It’s the work of other artists, of other organizers, elected officials, teachers, community groups, and so on and so forth.”

Because tulips are perennial and

will regrow in coming years, Ms. Williams says an exciting part of the project is watching how it will evolve with or without her.

“I have no idea how much [the tulips] will adhere to the footprint that we created. If they’ll start to meander. If the neighbors will continue to steward the tulips after the project and the season of the blooming has ended. Will they invite me or other artists back to do things or will they do things themselves? These are all open-ended question marks that make this type of work so exciting,” she said. “You have to make the space for what the next iteration or evolution of a project is going to be.”

Drama Queen:

A leading actor in the spring musical, Lena Valenti finds connection through acting, choreographing and directing

by **KATIE SASAMOTO-KURISU**
Assistant Editor

When she was 10 years old, Lena Valenti participated in her first-ever professional show, a production of the musical “Oliver” at the St. Bonaventure Oratory. During one of the first rehearsals with the whole ensemble, Lena felt overjoyed by the energy in the room — artistic passion, creativity and pure love for theater permeated the air.

This was the moment when she knew she wanted to do theater for the rest of her life, an activity fueled by her passion for connecting with people.

Lena started taking singing lessons at 4 and acting classes at 6. Her early classes at the Emerald City Theater formed her first memories in theater. In the following years, Lena’s passion for performing only grew. At 11 she started performing at a professional theater, Theatre Above The Law.

A Lena got older, she continued to explore her interests with theater and expand connections among her ensemble. She became



Scan this QR code to watch a video of Lena directing and choreographing.

a leader in U-High’s theater, where she took on numerous positions around production, becoming an assistant music director, head choreographer and director.

Fellow head choreographer Anna Bohlen, a senior, has worked with Lena since last year. She said that Lena’s ambition and kind personality toward others are what makes her an effective leader.

“She’s very, very driven,” Anna said. “When you need someone to get things done, Lena’s the person you ask. She is very motivated and she works so hard at everything she does. She’s also a really, really sweet person, and she makes everyone feel welcome in the theater.”

Theater director Liucija Ambrosini said Lena shares the passion and intellect of students she sees pursuing theater in the future.

“It’s really interesting to see somebody already in high school come in and know that that’s what they really want to go after,” she said.

For Lena, now a junior, theater is not only a space for practicing leadership but one that provides comfort. This comfort stems from both how she feels acting onstage and how she knows acting will be an irreplaceable part of her future, surrounded by other passionate people. She said theater has saved her many times.

“This is what I’m going to do with my life. I love that I’m able to do what I love for a living,” she said. “It makes me feel very at home — I have something to work for and be passionate about.”

When Lena performs, she wants to make the audience feel something. She said that it is a privilege to be able to influence and impact an audience.

“There’s nothing that I love more than performing and being on stage,” she said. “If I’ve made the audience feel something, then I’ve succeeded. That’s what being



Midway photo by Mathew McGehee

LEADING LADY. Junior Lena Valenti has a leading role in the upcoming spring musical, while also taking on several additional roles. Her passion for different aspects of theater like choreography, directing and music stems from her drive to connect with her peers.

a successful actress is to me — being able to just give to a receptive audience. It’s such an unbeatable feeling.”

In one of her favorite shows, a compilation of poet Edgar Allan Poe’s works, Lena was the lead as well as the youngest actor in the production at 12. She helped guide

the show, offering short anecdotes to the audience. Upon the finale, she stood on a platform with the other actors kneeling beneath her, and was instilled with excitement and power looking around the audience.

This was an image — and a feeling — she would never forget.

World-renowned museums, historic landmarks, scenic public parks and ornate architecture — these aren’t always what people think of when talking about Chicago’s South Side. Sometimes, these fundamental aspects are overshadowed by stereotypes and negative rhetoric about violence, poverty and instability. With U-High students representing the South Side and other parts of Chicagoland, do students see through the...

stereotypes of the SOUTH SIDE

Cultural offerings overlooked

by PETER COX
City Life Editor

The South Side of Chicago is one of the most important urban areas in American history. The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, which was held in Jackson Park, is conventionally seen as the beginning of a great period for the South Side. Representatives from nations around the world created exhibitions showcasing their nation's culture. The United States exhibitions at the event focused on showing off the scientific and cultural advancements of the country. This was a pivotal moment for the United States because it demonstrated that the country was becoming a leading power in the world's new Industrial Age. In turn, Chicago, and its South Side, were the beating heart of this industrializing America.

While many of the landmarks and monuments from the event, including the Museum of Science and Industry, the Midway Plaisance Park and the Garden of the Phoenix —part of the Japanese exhibit at the fair — still exist today, the South Side has dramatically changed since then. Currently, the most commonly held perceptions of the South Side are overwhelmingly negative. Violence and poverty, instead of industry and innovation, are now what Americans think of when talking about the South Side. However, various marks remain from the more prosperous periods in these neighborhoods' histories. Museums and monuments, as well as some of the most robust parts of the Chicago public parks system, are in these neighborhoods.

Jay Molony, a senior who grew up in the suburbs but whose family moved to Hyde Park, has enjoyed exploring the different landmarks of the South Side. "They're cool because they're more actually significant in a way — there's a statue that's dedicated to a specific person, instead of, 'Here's a park, there's a playground here,'" Jay said. "The historical el-

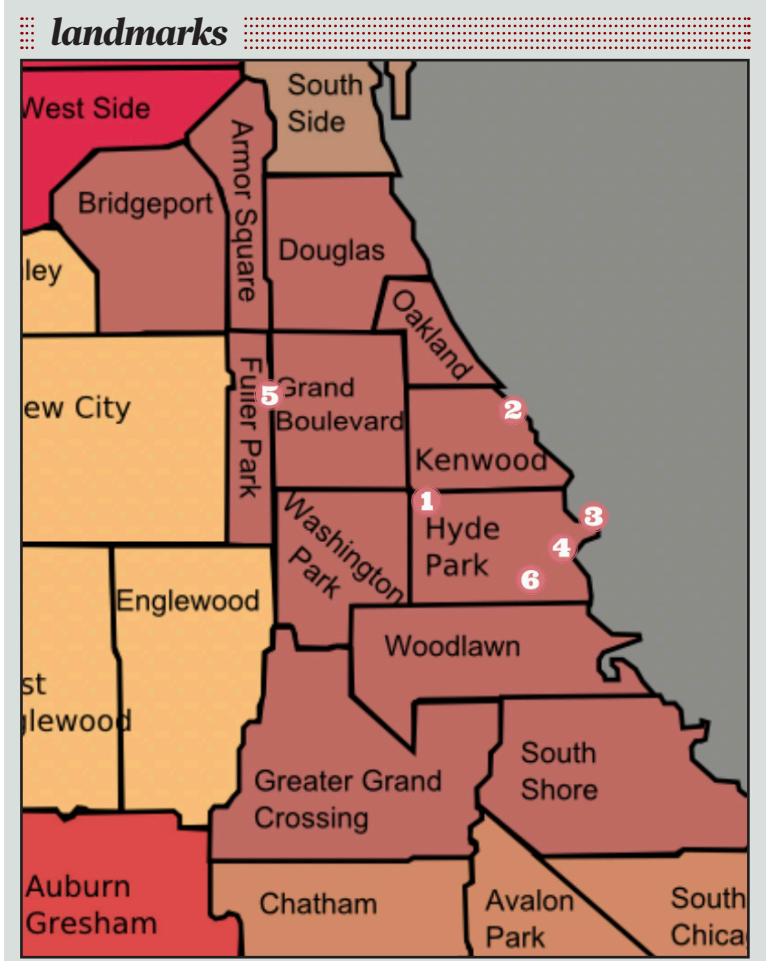
ement is a little more interesting than the suburbs."

Chicago's problems with violence are so well known, they have become an issue in national politics. Former President Donald Trump proposed deploying the national guard to the city to deal with the gun violence problems in the majority Black and Latinx neighborhoods on the South and West sides.

William Montague, a senior whose family has lived in South Shore for three generations, thinks that the neighborhood has physically remained similar, but demographic changes damaged the neighborhood. "It basically looked the same exact way it did. There was a cultural center and that was a big golf area; a lot of families golfed there," William said about the former South Shore Country Club, a segregated institution which closed in 1973. "And then white flight happened, and pretty much everyone left, and I guess the neighborhood got worse."

The South Side was highly diverse and populated largely by immigrant communities working in the steel and meat packing industries. Starting in 1910, the Great Migration drew thousands of Black people from southern states to the industrialized North, many settling in Chicago to seek opportunity and build new lives. There was significant housing discrimination in Chicago — policies and practices such as redlining, which forced Black people to live in an area of the South Side called the "Black Belt." Despite these policies, the area was not uniformly poor or Black.

Hyde Park and Kenwood were wealthy, majority-white neighborhoods. The University of Chicago was founded in that area in 1890. During the 1910s and '20s, Bronzeville was a hotspot of Black culture and business comparable to Harlem in New York. The South Side has not always been the way that it is, and there's



1. **Francis M. Drexel Memorial Fountain**, 5100 S. Drexel Boulevard. Mr. Drexel initiated growth of the South Side by donating property to become a street. The fountain was installed in 1882 to honor him and features ornate bronze and gold details.
2. **Former home of Blues legend Muddy Waters**, 4339 S. Lake Park Ave. This historical landmark was a gathering space for musicians and entertainers to create their music.
3. **Promontory Point**, 5491 S. DuSable Lake Shore Drive. The Point is nationally recognized as a historic place. It sits on a human-created peninsula and offers an unobstructed view of downtown Chicago.
4. **Osaka Gardens**, 6300 S. Cornell Ave. The gardens symbolize the allyship between Japan and the United States. The Phoenix Temple in the gardens was built for the World's Columbian Exposition.
5. **Eden Place Nature Center**, 4417 S. Stewart Ave. Using natural landscaping to support plants and animals, it is the only nature center on Chicago's South Side.
6. **Statue of the Republic**, 6401 S. Stony Island Ave. The statue commemorates the 25th anniversary of the World's Columbian Exposition. It's a smaller, bronze version of the original statue from the exposition.

no reason why it has to stay that way now. Recent years have shown positive signs. Developments, such as the construction of the Obama Presidential Center in Jackson Park, are indicative of revitalization in the South Side. "Property taxes in my neighborhood are basically on a sky-

rocket, especially because of the Obama library. I think that's really improving my neighborhood," William said. "I notice a lot more people having a good time, walking their dogs outside more often, than I have in previous years. That's just something I've noticed. It's definitely on an uprise."



Boundaries of South Side viewed as subjective Hyde Park regarded as safer than nearby areas

by KRISHITA DUTTA
Opinion Editor

At Lab, 45% of students reside in Hyde Park. To many students, both those who do and don't reside in Hyde Park, the University of Chicago campus around our school has become a second home. After all, this school is in the South Side — and that sparks a different reaction out of everyone.

Students find that people make assumptions about Hyde Park based on South Side stereotypes, but they believe the South Side shouldn't be generalized due to its large size and diverse neighborhoods. Students also believe the comments that students hear from outsiders on going to school in the South Side are fueled by harmful stereotypes.

According to Hyde Park resident Brandon Jones, a junior, living in Hyde Park is quite different from the rest of Chicago, but also from the rest

of the South Side.

"I think Hyde Park, especially near UChicago, is a lot safer than the rest of Hyde Park," he said. "I also think, while it is different from the rest of Chicago, it's in ways different than just safety. It has more suburbs vibes, and I find it more homey."

The stereotypes he hears are dangerous.

"But I think the stereotypes of it being gang-infested and super violent are wrong and harmful, especially to the Black community, since the South Side is predominantly Black," Brandon said, "and to make assumptions about Hyde Park based off that shows implicit bias."

According to Hyde Park resident Blake Dunkley, a senior, the boundaries of what is considered the South

Sophomore Helen Kraemer, a resident of Lincoln Park on the North Side, hears similar stereotypes. "I think Lincoln Park is different from Hyde Park in the way that soil and sand are; they're just totally different and difficult to compare. Which is why I find it frustrating when people who aren't familiar with Hyde Park make immediate assumptions about the South Side whenever I bring up Lab's locations," she said. "There's just these associations with safety that are harmful to marginalized races when enforced."

According to Hyde Park resident Blake Dunkley, a senior, the boundaries of what is considered the South

"People need to realize how big of a region it is and how different each little neighborhood within it is."

— Marie Hurley, ninth grader

by ETHAN SWINGER
Assistant Editor

Chicago's South Side is famous for its diverse culture, historic neighborhoods and rich music. Despite this, the area is also challenged with the underlying assumption that those who reside in it are from low-income households.

While the average income on Chicago's South Side is lower than that of the city as a whole, the area is often assumed to be exclusively lower income, and the income discrepancies that exist are often overlooked.

The median income of the South Side is \$39,798, while the median income of the city as a whole is \$62,097. That's just something I've noticed. According to a 2022 census from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency For

Planning. Hyde Park households have a median income of \$52,423, nearly identical to that of Kenwood families. In comparison, households in the Woodlawn area have a median income of \$27,541, according to the same census. Despite the varying economic situations, many students and residents assume that income in the South Side is equal across the board.

According to senior Ege Halac, who lives in Woodlawn, there is a disparity in wealth among the South Side, which can partly be attributed to expansion from the University of Chicago. "The university also built some dorms really close so I think that this leads to that disparity and I think that

definitely exists," Ege said. "Especially since there is a limited area around the university and the university does need to expand their residents."

Additionally, both neighborhoods have a significant discrepancy in wealth. This is often overlooked, as the areas are stereotyped as low income: 16.2% of Hyde Park households make over \$150,000, as do 4.3% of Woodlawn households.

Ninth grader Daniel Chang, who moved to Hyde Park from the western suburbs at the beginning of the school year, believes there is a presumption of a lower socioeconomic status for families that live on the South Side.

"I think there definitely is an as-

sumption of poverty if you live [on the South Side]," Daniel said. "There have been comments from my friends from my previous school."

Sophomore Lyra Luu, who has lived in Hyde Park her entire life, acknowledges the assumption that the South Side is less wealthy than the North Side.

She also believes that Hyde Park is unique from other neighborhoods in the South Side because of gentrification in areas near the university. "Stereotypes about the South Side are that it's the less wealthy side of Chicago in comparison to the North Side," she said, "but I think it's sort of different in Hyde Park, because Hyde Park is sort of gentrified, just because it's right by the university."

Alleyways were made private and dozens of streets were converted to one-way traffic, making the neighborhood difficult to navigate for an outsider. The city worked with the university to seal Hyde Park off from the communities around it. Geographically, Hyde Park might be in the southern part of Chicago, but its access to resources, culture and community are starkly different from its neighbors. "I definitely feel safe around Hyde Park, despite where it is," said senior Kajus Nakas, who lives in the Bridgeport neighborhood. "I think there are a few different definitions of the South Side — you can talk about the part of Chicago that is geographically in the south, but some people are talking about a very specific set of neighborhoods when they talk about the South Side."

"Where we are right now, it's almost as if we are in 'University City,' than the greater Hyde Park area," Nathan Greeley said. "You look at a map of food deserts, housing prices, crime... In all of those, you are going to see a little 'oasis' around the university. There is a bubble. There is absolutely a bubble."

by the numbers

Here are some notable statistics about Chicago and its South Side.

- 50 wards in Chicago
- 10 landmarks in Bronzeville make up the Black Metropolis District
- 12 total public train stops in South Side neighborhoods
- 62 square miles is the area of Chicago's South Side
- 19 or more neighborhoods are part of the South Side
- 57.8% of homes on the South Side were built before 1940
- 7% of elementary students who don't attend their zoned school travel an hour or more
- 99.85% of Riverdale residents, who live on the South Side, live more than 0.5 miles from the nearest supermarket
- 0% of residents on the Near North Side live more than 0.5 miles from the nearest supermarket

— compiled by Amy Ren and Téa Tamburo

by **WILLIAM TAN**
Editor-in-Chief

Walking into the Lakeshore Academy gym is like entering the big top tent of the Ringling Bros. Circus — chalk dust swirls through the air and gymnasts of all ages tumble from every direction.

At the center of the excitement are the ringmasters, team captains Akshay and Kavan Puri, who alternate leading warmups with practicing their own difficult skills on equipment like the rings, bars and pommel horse.

People like to say the phrase, “talent runs in the family.” For senior twins Kavan and Akshay, this couldn’t be more true, but it’s more an intense dedication and a strong family dynamic that push the twin brothers for long hours in the gym and motivate them to embrace the life of a student athlete. Now the brothers are taking their passion to new heights, flipping and flying their way to the peak of the men’s gymnastics world.



Kavan Puri



Akshay Puri

Gymnastics genes run deep in the Puri family. At age of 3 or 4, the twins were introduced to the sport by their two older brothers, both now also collegiate gymnasts. From then on, gymnastics became a central commitment in their life and an activity to form close relationships.

“When I was younger, my practices were in the city from 4-6:30 every day, and then Saturdays, I’d practice in the morning — Sunday was my day off,” Akshay said. “Now, practice is at 6 p.m. for us now, because I’m an older guy, then we go until 9 p.m. every day of the week, and then Saturday again in the morning until 12:30 p.m. We’re looking around three to three and a half hours every day.”

At its core, gymnastics is about discipline and repetition, and the slightest separating factors between top competitors can come from the turn of a foot or the straightening of an arm. Akshay and Kavan have learned to rely on the other for advice and critique,

BALANCING ACT

A brotherly bond drives twin gymnasts Akshay and Kavan Puri to success



Midway photo by Matt Petres

TUMBLING TWINS. High up on the rings, senior Akshay Puri engages in a difficult routine at gymnastics practice. He and his twin brother, Kavan Puri, are accomplished student athletes who find strength in family.

each bringing an attention to detail which competitively pushes the other to improve.

“We can watch videos of each other doing gymnastics, and we can correct things. We can make comments on things, we can describe the feeling of the skill and be better to each other,” Kavan said. “I think that’s been a huge contributor to our improvement in the sport is the fact that like, whenever we want, we can always get better with the other’s help.”

Being exceptional high school gymnasts doesn’t always feel like soaring through the air on the high

bar.

As student athletes, both have faced the often-grueling and mundane responsibilities of balancing a challenging high school curriculum with long practices. Sometimes the twins don’t start homework until after 10 p.m. and don’t sleep until much later.

When this happens, Kavan and Akshay turn to their gym community and the teammates who have supported them their entire lives. As co-captains and seniors, both brothers embrace the team’s mutual camaraderie and support system.

“Being a leader to my friends, as well as letting them help carry me through life is what has kept me so attached and so committed to the sport,” Akshay said.

Kai Uemura, teammate and world championship team contender, echoed Akshay’s sentiment and complimented the twins as inspirations for the whole team.

“They’re really good at making us work hard. They’ve both been trying to get into college teams, and the way they’ve been working to get onto those college teams has just been amazing,” Kai said. “They’ve had like a ton of adver-

sity, injuries and stuff, but all the time they bounce back.”

Now they’re headed to college, with aspirations to continue their gymnastics careers.

Akshay has committed to the University of Michigan men’s gymnastics team, and for him, the training and struggles from battling and overcoming countless injuries have culminated in this honor.

“I’ve spent so much time in sports, sacrificed so much for the sport, and now that it did happen, I just feel so, so thankful,” he said. “I can say confidently that everything I’ve worked so hard for — all of it’s come to full fruition as of this point.”

While injuries this past year set back Kavan’s goals of recruitment to a D1 team, he will take valuable lessons with him to the University of Michigan as well and apply them in a club or intramural setting.

“I’m a person that’s very goal-oriented, I want to set a goal and achieve it — it’s about the journey to get there. If it’s a tough practice, these are the days you’re gonna look back on when you’re where you want to be,” Kavan said. “So even right now, as I didn’t really reach that goal of being a Division I college athlete, I’m better for it. I’m better for the steps that I took to get there.”

Most of all, the two find that the years they’ve committed to gymnastics have taught them important lessons of leadership, of perseverance, and of what being a real family means.

Akshay and Kavan have practiced side by side together from the start, and no matter where they end up in the future, their unique bond — forged from successes and failures, critiques and compliments — will continue to make an impact on their growth as gymnasts and as humans.

“I will say when it comes down to it, Akshay is my best support. He is always there,” Kavan said. “Without him, I don’t really know where I’d be with gymnastics, let alone if I would even be doing the sport.”

Rowing pushes teamwork to the limit, demands discipline

by **PETER COX**
City Life Editor

One of the most physically demanding athletic activities in high school and college, rowing is the oldest intercollegiate sport in the United States.

Though U-High doesn’t have its own team, several students participate in rowing clubs, committing to its grueling training regimen of at least six weekly practices, and building its essential teamwork.

Races happen in either singles, doubles, fours or eights, with fours and eights being the most common.

Though there are other people in the racing shell, athletes are generally focused on themselves as they strain to keep the shell moving as fast as possible. This is compounded by the fact they’re not facing the way the boat is moving, instead relying on a coxswain, someone in the boat who isn’t rowing, to direct them.

“You’re doing a lot of work and you don’t know where you’re going because you’re going backwards,” said U-High senior Smith Bumpers, who rows at The Chicago Rowing Foundation.

Because of this, even though

team spirit is very high, rowing encourages a kind of teamwork that also emphasizes the individual. Crews are picked by coaches to fill shells with athletes of a similar skill and strength.

“The interesting thing is that it’s a team sport in the sense that there are four or eight of you racing down a course. But it’s individualized in the fact that everybody earns their own seat,” said U-High junior Frances Lewis, another member of the Chicago Rowing Foundation. “Even though we’re all rowing down the course together, we all had to individually get in the boat.”

Participating in a sport that isn’t affiliated with the school at all has both upsides and downsides. It allows athletes to interact with peers outside of the U-High environment, but there are also some issues with the administration’s constraints on nonschool activities.

“In some ways it’s nice branching out, meeting new people. It definitely helped prepare me a little bit more for college,” Smith said. “Also, I think sometimes not being a school sport definitely has it cons, like with attendance, be-

“
It’s a team sport in the sense that there are four or eight of your racing down a course. But it’s individualized in the fact that everybody earns their own seat.
”
Frances Lewis, junior

cause your absences aren’t counted the same way.”

Rowing is different than any other sport that high schoolers do. It’s a combination of individual racing, team coordination and a brutal full-body workout. It’s a massive time commitment that has an impact on other parts of their lives.

“The discipline and competitiveness and failure, in a sense, translated to working harder and trying again,” Frances said. “And especially in school, it’s translated to, OK, it doesn’t matter if you do bad on one test, that doesn’t mean you can’t learn the material. You just have to figure out a different way to learn it.”



Midway photo by Patrice Graham

PUSH AND PULL. Senior Smith Bumpers supports her boat of eight rowers. The sport combines individual intensity with difficult team coordination.

video extras

Scan this QR code to watch Akshay perform his impressively difficult rings routine, with narration by his brother Kavan.

Closing on an outstanding career

Athletics director Dave Ribbens has built up programs over past 20 years

by AMON GRAY
Sports and Leisure Editor

When Kovler Gymnasium was opened in 2000, it promised room to grow for Lab's athletics program. Twenty-three years later, this growth is made clear. The wall is nearly completely covered by over 100 IHSA championship plaques. Turning off the main hallway, more than 50 group pictures represent teams across grades. Across the hallway is the office of the man who cultivated that growth: Director of Athletics Dave Ribbens.

Mr. Ribbens will retire at the end of this year, following a celebrated 20 years at Lab in which he built the athletics program into a robust and competitive collection of teams that reflect Lab's values.

Mr. Ribbens has focused on three categories of athletics expansion in his time at Lab: increasing the number of sports offered, expanding the rosters of teams and hiring of new, qualified coaches.

"Fencing, squash, sailing, diving, dance troupe — dance team now — and we've got water polo in its infancy that seems to have grown some momentum for students, so that growth came internally from the students, and I think that that's a real indicator that it wasn't coming from a strategic plan, a five-year plan, or a 10-year plan; it came from within our student body," Mr. Ribbens said.

Laura Gill, assistant director of athletics, has been working with Mr. Ribbens for the past four years.

"When I was at Parker, a lot of my colleagues in the ISL would always talk about how Dave was such an important figure, not only in the ISL, but in the entire IHSA," Ms. Gill said. "So when I applied for this job, and knew I had the opportunity to work under him, that really excited me because he's such an accomplished director."

Ms. Gill has admired Mr. Ribbens's initiative and decisive leadership in the face of adversity. Mr. Ribbens was committed to ensuring that the fall and winter seasons would take place during



Photo provided by Jayna Rumble

IN THE HALL OF FAME. Dave Ribbens delivers a speech at the Athletics Hall of Fame ceremony on Oct. 15, 2022. The Hall of Fame was one of many additions Mr. Ribbens made to the athletics program in his time at Lab.

the COVID-19 pandemic to improve students' physical and mental health.

"He just really understands the moment, and I think that's the most impressive thing about him, and I've really learned from him about understanding the moment and knowing when to react and how to react," Ms. Gill said.

Ms. Gill said that she has enjoyed sharing the athletics office with Mr. Ribbens, and she will miss his sense of humor and collection of sports memorabilia.

"Mr. Ribbens loves to print," Ms. Gill said. "I would say the sound of the printer is the sound that, when Mr. Ribbens is gone, I will miss the most because that man prints everything."

Joyce Grotthus, a P.E. teacher and coach for middle school girls basketball and volleyball teams, was on the committee that hired Mr. Ribbens, and she has been able to see the results of all the work he has done in his time at Lab.

"I think he was also able to do a lot with creating the Hall of Fame, creating the pictures. We never had the team photos on the walls. Those are all things that kind of made the students proud and wanted to be part of the athletic program," Ms. Grotthus said. "When people walk through that hallway, they like looking at their old picture from like eighth grade. They walk through the hall and they'll look for their little face and their friends, and they smile."

Mr. Ribbens remained supportive of the no-cut policy for sports and continued to support the expansion of the program to whoever wants to compete.

"For some people, it means that we're really not that competitive and that we're not that serious about athletics. And I think that we're both," Mr. Ribbens said. "I think there's students who are competitive, that are serious about it, and it's good for our students who need that encouragement

to be a part of the team that they belong to, and that's a good thing for all students."

Mr. Ribbens's success as an athletics director can be seen in the numbers. From 1983 to 2003, when Mr. Ribbens was hired, Lab won 21 IHSA championships in regionals, sectionals, super sectionals and state competitions across four sports. From 2003 to 2023, Lab has won 102 IHSA championships across 10 sports.

"My favorite part is watching the students and seeing them mature and develop. By far, it's enormously rewarding to see students do well, compete well and to see them in some ways from sixth grade," Mr. Ribbens said. "It's very unusual that we've got middle school and high school together, as far as one athletics department — most schools don't have that. So I literally can see kids from sixth grade who are, you know, very small and inexperienced to kids who graduate years later."

U-High athletics through the years

- 2000 Kovler Gymnasium opens, increasing capacity for programs
- 2003 Dave Ribbens hired as first full-time athletics director
- 2004 Athletics trainer and minibuses added to athletics program
- 2005 Midway Aquatics program starts with 38 students
- 2008 Fencing becomes a varsity high school sport
- 2013 James Wherry-Willis Award and Bill Zarvis Awards established
- 2014 Squash becomes a varsity high school sport
- 2015 Sailing becomes a varsity high school sport
- 2017 Sailing, squash and fencing are added to middle school sports
- 2017 Sixth graders are added to all sports offerings in middle school
- 2018 Jackman turf field and track opened and fitness center moved
- 2019 Inaugural class of Athletics Hall of Fame inducted in ceremony

Midway graphic by Amon Gray

Field team stands out from track with designated coach



Midway photo by Patrice Graham

TAKING THE FIELD. Junior Jace Chen practices throwing the discus. This season, Jace has worked alongside U-High's new field coach, Brandon Davis.

by ETHAN SWINGER
Assistant Editor

Observing closely, the coach studies how the athlete spins before ripping the discus away from his body. It cuts the wind as it soars before slamming into the grass. It is several meters short of the 20-meter goal.

Despite the good throw, he knows how to make it even better. After careful coaching and eagerly demonstrating to the athlete how to better center his body mass, he watches the discus be flung once again. This time it lands just inches shy of that elusive 20-meter mark.

Brandon Davis is the new field events coach for U-High and began working with the track teams in January. He is the first designated coach for field athletes.

According to Mr. Davis, U-High's field team competes in the long jump, high jump, triple jump, shot put and discus. Occasionally he assists with the sprinting events as well.

He wanted to become a field coach after not having the same opportunities in his own high school track and field career.

"To come here and be that new field events coach and help give people guidance and the events that I wish I had a little bit more guidance is just a really, really good feeling," he said.

According to Mr. Davis, U-High's field

team has undergone a recent expansion and has focused on getting more people to participate in field events.

"We're kind of in that building foundation phase, so just building up interest of having people experience different events," he said.

Mr. Davis says there are eight or nine athletes who do field events this season.

Junior Jace Chen is the head discus thrower and has been on the team for two years. He believes that Mr. Davis initiates a vibrant and motivating environment for current and potential team members.

"He has very positive vibes. He's energetic and gets people to participate," Jace said. "He's pretty warm around incoming freshmen or sophomores that want to join track, and encourages everyone to do their best."

Track and field coach Austin Warner notices Mr. Davis's enthusiasm and the improvements students have made this season.

"He is somebody who puts in a lot of energy," he said. "He's very passionate about the sport and is helping other student athletes achieve results."

Mr. Warner acknowledges that Mr. Davis's coaching has been essential for the growing success of U-High's field team.

"A lot of students are hitting personal bests as the weeks go on," he said, "which is great."

Pre-workout: Popular yet precarious

by **AUDREY MATEI**
Arts Editor

Scoop. Gulp. Lift. Run. Crash. Repeat.

This is the routine of many student athletes who use pre-workout products to elevate their athletic performance while exercising. The substance has gained popularity with teenage athletes even though research on the usage and effects of the substance in adolescents is limited and therefore should be used with caution.

Pre-workout products usually come in the forms of powder and pills that can be added to liquids and are specifically used for athletics. Most are a mix of high amounts of caffeine and different vitamins, and they are believed to increase energy levels and endurance while working out.

Experts in nutritional health suggest that pre-workout substances are not thoroughly studied and are not a necessary part of increasing one's athletic performance.

Adriana Luster, a school nutrition specialist at Chicago Public Schools, said there just isn't enough research on pre-workout products to understand the full impacts it has on users, specifically young ones, in the short or long term.

Furthermore, Devanee Washington, a registered dietician, notes that pre-workout products are not approved by the Food and Drug Administration and have complicated compositions and impacts.

She suggested that users of pre-workout evaluate what they want out of the supplement and replace it with whole food sources that provide the same vitamin or benefit.

Despite this, many U-High students use pre-workout products because of the high levels of caffeine that are easy to ingest quickly.

Senior Sydney Tyler is a fencer and uses pre-workout powders before she trains, specifically for weightlifting. She prefers pre-workout to other caffeinated products because it allows her to ingest caffeine easily through consuming the raw powder, or "dry-scooping."

all the products

From powders to pills pre-workout products come in many forms. Varying in flavor and taste, many offer similar ingredients including caffeine and creatine to boost energy before exercising.

Kaged Pre-Kaged: Coming in seven flavors like fruit punch and cherry bomb, Kaged Pre-Kaged is \$44.99 for 19.8 ounces. The vegan-friendly pre-workout contains plant-based Citrulline which is proven to increase blood flow and electrolytes to support stamina.

Cellucor C4: For 30 servings, Cellucor C4 pre-workout powder is offered for \$20.99. With 150mg of caffeine, the powder also contains creatine, citrulline and Beta-alanine, which are meant to increase energy and boost endurance.

Kwerks Ignite: Kwerks Ignite is \$49 for 10.97 ounces and comes in four flavors, including green apple and orange. It contains ingredients like Vitamin B12 and Rhodiola Rosea, which improve mental alertness and performance.

— compiled by Audrey Park



Midway photo by Matt Petres

FULL SCOOP. While pre-workout is popular with athletes, the health impacts are unclear. Many student athletes utilize the substance as an energy boost for their workouts as it often features ingredients such as caffeine.

"I absolutely love using pre-workout because I feel like for other caffeine drinks, even energy drinks such as stupid Celsius, Alani Nu and Monster drinks, which I don't use, sometimes take a while to kick in and you have to drink a whole 16-ish ounces just to get 200 milligrams of caffeine, but with pre-workout, I just dry scoop it, and it's one or two sips and I'm good to go," she said. "I feel like I could run a whole freaking race in two seconds."

The caffeine, creatine and glucose found in pre-workout are responsible for most of the energizing properties of the substance. However the caffeine levels in pre-workout range from 150-300 milligrams per serving.

Considering the Food and Drug Administration's recommendation for daily caffeine intake is 400 milligrams, the high caffeine levels of pre-workout substances can negatively impact its users.

his includes "crashing," tiredness caused as the stimulating effects of the substance wear off, and withdrawals as users can grow dependent on caffeine chemically and develop symptoms like headaches and grogginess without using it for extended periods of time.

Sydney said that pre-workout can cause her to crash, but since she always goes to bed after working out, it does not adversely affect her significantly.

She said, "There's usually a huge crash because of pre-workout, but I always go basically right to bed after I use my pre-workout, so I don't care that much about it."

Ms. Washington said in an email that using pre-workout in addition to a daily caffeine intake can negatively affect its users and should be used with caution.

"Caffeine is also a key ingredient in pre-workout supplements that has been said to increase energy and endurance during exer-

cise. But if your usual diet already includes coffee, tea, energy drinks or chocolate, then you may want to stay away from these foods and beverages on the days you take pre-workout. Too much caffeine can have adverse effects."

Junior Adam Syverson, a U-High baseball player, regularly uses pre-workout powders. He attributes a short-term tingling sensation in his face and body to that of a naturally produced beta-alanine amino acid found in many pre-workout products, which increases muscle carnosine and is known to improve the efficacy of exercise.

"I have no idea what it actually does, but all I know is that it makes you tingle. The more there is, the more you'll tingle, and it can get very intense sometimes," he said. "It goes through different parts of your body. And once it gets to like your face, it makes your face itch for like a minute, but then it cools

down."

Sophomore volleyball player Emma Heo uses pre-workout exclusively while working out and weightlifting. However, she says she wouldn't use it while playing her sport or for general caffeine consumption.

"I use pre-workout pretty much every time I workout, primarily when I lift, because it gives me a lot more energy," she said. "I feel that it gives me really good results. However, outside of working out, I definitely don't use it playing sports or as a replacement for any coffee or energy drinks."

Many teenage athletes swear by pre-workout for one reason or another.

However, due to the lack of research on the substance, users should always be careful about what they're consuming and potentially work to break the cycle of caffeine rushes and crashes by looking into other options.

'Ingestible' skincare offers trendy but ineffective supplement

by **SAHANA UNNI**
Features Editor

Scrolling through social media, brightly colored sponsored posts regularly pop up on many teenagers' feeds, specifically advertising supplements or vitamins to help consumers with their skin, hair and nail health. Sophomore Leila Reza, upon seeing these advertisements on TikTok, went to Ulta to buy hair supplements to help recover from a bad haircut. However, after taking the capsules for an extended period, she didn't see an improvement.

Ingestible beauty supplements, while helpful to some, are not only often ineffective, but also pose potential safety risks due to their lack of federal regulation.

"I took, like, one for my hair and one for my nails," Leila said. "I took it every day for I would say, like, three months, maybe, but it just didn't do anything, I swear."

Similarly, sophomore Helen Kraemer did not see results from Here Comes the Sun, a skin supplement from the brand HUM Nutrition, and struggled with having to take it regularly.

"I don't use it anymore just because it's difficult when you have to continually have vitamins every single day for — I think it's like six weeks or something to really make an impact," Helen said.

According to dietician Marla



Midway photo by Ishani Hariprasad

BEAUTY BOOST. Often in the form of pills, beauty supplements are sold to help improve hair, skin and nail health, but they frequently lack efficacy.

Brodsky, who heads Luscious Life Nutrition, there are many possible reasons that could cause these supplements to be ineffective.

"Collagen can help to repair the lining of the GI tract," Ms. Brodsky said. "The problem is that a lot of these things that people eat also have sugars and artificial colors and flavors and chemicals that can become inflammatory, so it's kind of defeating the purpose."

When it comes to these supplements, Ms. Brodsky also recognizes the health risks.

"Vitamin supplementations can have toxicities, so people, for hair and skin for example, can take Vitamin A," she said. "That can build up. It's a fat, soluble vitamin, and it can build up in your liver and cause toxicity."

Rather than taking beauty supplements, Ms. Brodsky recom-

mends teenagers simply watch the types of foods they eat.

"Make sure that you're not overdoing it on sugar and processed foods, so ultra-processed foods. Make sure that you're getting enough protein, so keeping your blood sugar even by combining protein, carbs and fats equally," Ms. Brodsky said.

Some supplements have positive effects, as Helen saw after taking one to help with dry hair. She said she stopped using it because she was too lazy to remember.

"My hair was shinier and obviously not as brittle anymore," Helen said. "It just felt a lot healthier."

Leila described her experience with beauty supplements as disappointing but has instead found topical products that work in place of these supplements, such as the Miele Rosemary Mint Oil to help with hair growth and acrylic nails. In all, Ms. Brodsky said healthy eating habits are the best way to care for one's hair, skin and nails, rather than an ingestible supplement, despite their marketing.

"Looking at health from the inside is more important than trying to take a supplement or putting something on your skin from the outside," Ms. Brodsky said. "It's much more effective and you need to look at the root cause of why this is happening, not just treat the symptoms."

by the numbers

These statistics from a National Library of Medicine study show the negative impacts of supplement consumption.

\$6.8 billion

is the projected value of the global beauty supplement market by the end of 2024

51%

of dietary supplement manufacturing facilities were cited for noncompliance with FDA Good Manufacturing Practices in 2019

50%

of U.S. adults report using dietary supplements

23,000

emergency visits annually in the U.S. for supplement adverse events

— compiled by Clare O'Connor

Inspired to soar

Student pilots pursue unconventional hobby with long-term career in mind

by LOUIS AUXENFANS
News Editor

Pushing the throttle full power, junior Jackson Skelly accelerates the plane down the runway. The propeller spins faster and faster, and the world quickly falls away as the front wheel lifts off the ground. The back wheels follow, and the plane tilts up, climbing into the big, blue sky.

For Jackson and sophomore Nathan Lio, both students at flight school WAir Aviation, learning to fly fulfills a deep passion for aviation and marks the beginning of their career as a professional pilot.

Jackson began taking lessons consistently in January 2022 after a discovery flight in eighth grade where a professional flew him past the Chicago skyline. He got hooked. He always had an interest in different airplane models and enjoyed playing Microsoft's Flight Simulator, so the chance to take over the controls of a real plane was the next logical step.

Nathan started flying two years ago and had a similar start to Jackson.

"I was always fascinated with aviation, but then I started Googling around, like, actually able to fly, and that's what I kind of took it beyond just Microsoft Flight Simulator."

Jackson is working toward his student pilot license, so he tries to fly as often as he can — around once a week.

"I've 25 hours, so not everything is kind of burned into my head yet. So if I'm not flying consistently every weekend, I forget stuff," Jackson said. "Especially 'cause I'm starting on landings now, so kind of missing one week there would be like, 'Wait, how do

“It’s really cool to be able to just capture that moment in the air where you can just like see everything. You’re up like thousands of feet in the sky going super fast and you’re the ones in control of it.”
Nathan Lio, sophomore

I fly this pattern again?”
To obtain a student license, the Federal Aviation Administration requires a professional's endorsement and groundwork knowledge of regulation, weather, aerodynamics and ability to perform certain maneuvers. At WAir, this process is divided into four stages with a flight and ground check at each step to prepare students for the license exam.

Nathan already has his student license, which allows him to fly alone, and is working towards 40 hours of flying to receive his private pilot license when he turns 17. Since he has flying proficiency, he flies every other week to keep up his skills, biding his time for when he is old enough to get more licenses.

While Nathan and Jackson's experience has been fairly smooth, it hasn't been without some turbulence. Jackson's first flight school, Windy City Aviation, closed unexpectedly last November, so he didn't fly for over two months. And for both, learning the groundwork of flying can be dense and technical to comprehend. However, their diligence has paid off.

Benjamin Councell, Jackson's



Midway photo by Louis Auxenfans

PRE-FLIGHT. Nathan Lio, who began piloting about two years ago, prepares his plane for flight. Flying gives him a new perspective of the world, he said

flight instructor at WAir, said Jackson's attentiveness has made him a pleasure to teach.

"He definitely absorbs the instruction well, so he can absorb what I say and then do it," Mr. Councell said. "Versus some people you really have to spend a lot of time trying to figure out a way to communicate what I'm trying to explain or demonstrate."

Additionally, Mr. Councell was pleasantly surprised that on the first day of instruction, Jackson could fly using physical aviation charts, rather than iPads.

"It was impressive to see at that stage — stage one early in his flying career — he can already fly via

charts," Mr. Councell said. "We like that fundamental because we have technology, but should that fail, it's nice to know that you can do that and fly around without being lost in the air."

For both Jackson and Nathan, flying has felt surprisingly natural.

"That's one of the things I was kind of surprised about when I started flying, like it was very natural to me," Jackson said. "It wasn't like, 'Whoa, this is so new, this is such a crazy feeling,' and just this just felt normal to me."

Nathan said flying provides him with a new perspective of the world.

"It's really cool to be able to just capture that moment in the air where you can just like see everything," Nathan said. "You're up like thousands of feet in the sky going super fast and you're the ones in control of it."

For their next stages in the world of aviation, Nathan wants to join the Air Force, while Jackson wants to major in engineering in college, but both want to eventually pilot commercial airliners.

While they currently fly two-seater Cessna aircraft at a small airport north of O'Hare, Nathan and Jackson's aviation aspirations are just beginning to take off.

Summer jobs provide students glimpse at real world

by KATIE SASAMOTO-KURISU
Assistant Editor

As summer approaches, students face the decision of what to do during their free summer months. A common choice is finding a job, which gives them an introduction to the workforce and a source of income. Many jobs are available to high schoolers that are easily accessible within Chicago.

Jobs offered to high school students range in activity and difficulty. They can be held through big corporations like Morningstar and Citadel, nonprofit organizations like ACT Now Illinois and Inner City Impact, government institutions like the Chicago Park District and local establishments including grocery stores, restaurants and shops. The minimum wage in the City of Chicago for employees under 18 is \$12. The minimum wage increases every July 1.

Many programs are designed to provide teenagers job opportunities. They cater directly to individuals in the Chicago area.

Some strong networks include:

• **One Summer Chicago:**

Funded by the City of Chicago, One Summer Chicago offers jobs to those ages 14-24 in a range of fields and community businesses. Recent community employ-

the bottom line.

ers include Bank of America, Chicago Defender Newspaper, Goldberg Law Office, Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and Loretto Hospital.

Average pay: \$15 an hour

Application deadline: June 2

• **Chicago Park District Summer Job Portal:**

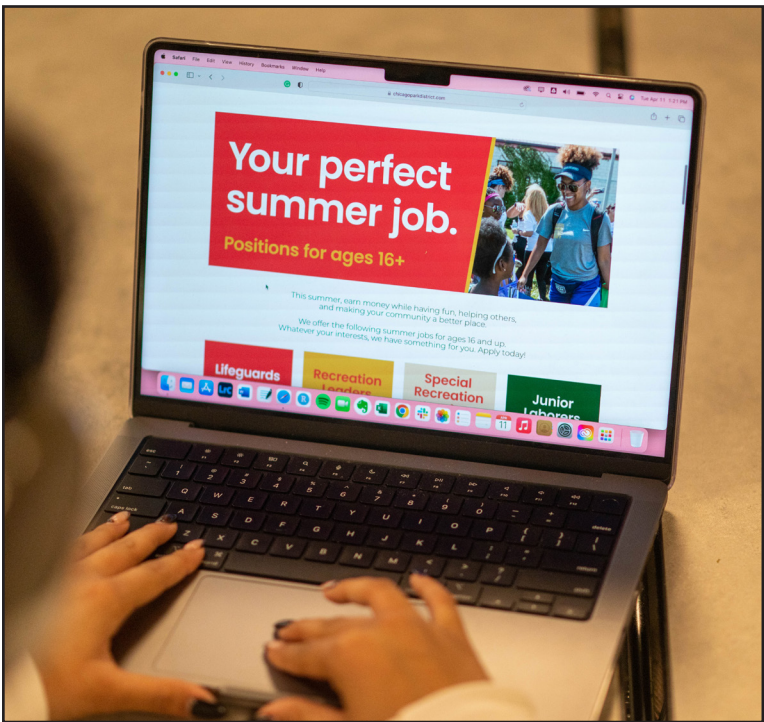
The Chicago Park District offers jobs to individuals 16 years and older through community-focused experiences. Positions are open for lifeguards, camp counselor recreation leaders, special recreation leaders and entry-level landscaping junior laborers.

Average pay: \$15.80 an hour

Application deadline: April 30

• **After School Matters:**

After School Matters is a nonprofit organization that provides Chicago youth ages 14 and older various professional opportunities in the arts, communications, leadership, sports and STEM. Programs are categorized into apprenticeships for those 14 and older, assistantships for those 16 and older and internships for those 16



Midway photo by Kenneth Peters

PERFECT POSITION. Summer opportunities provided through programs offer a range of jobs that cater to the individual.

and older.

Average pay: \$15 an hour

Application deadline: June 2

The bottom line: Beyond the work itself, getting a job is a worth-

while experience that invites the participant to build strong habits, both socially and professionally, while getting a glimpse at future financial responsibilities.

job forms

Once an individual is hired, they also have to complete a few forms. Certain institutions have varying requirements.

I-9: Used to verify the identity and legal authorization of individuals hired for work in the United States. Every employee hired is required to fill out the form. Minors may have a parent or legal guardian fill out their form.

Working Permit: Designed to comply with local child labor laws and regulate the employment of workers under 16 years of age.

W-4: Indicates to the employer the amount that will be withheld for federal and state income tax purposes.

W-2: Contains information about earned income and amount of taxes withheld from a paycheck. This form is used to file federal and state taxes. This form is used to file federal and state taxes.

Character creations

Cosplay provides escape from reality through favorite pieces of fiction

by AUDREY PARK
Managing Editor

In eighth grade, Ariadne Merchant was scrolling through social media when she came across a cosplay of the character an artist she followed drew. The picture sparked an interest, and ever since, Ariadne has been inspired to dress up and embody some of her own favorite characters.

Cosplay is a type of performance art where participants represent fictional characters or concepts from different media like comic books, video games or anime.

“Kosupure” or “costume play” was invented in Japan in 1984 and rose in popularity in the West during the late 2000s.

For students, cosplay allows for self-expression and serves as a fun hobby to pursue more intricate interests like sewing.

Junior Alex Fogel’s father introduced her to the concept as an infant. He hand-sewed Halloween costumes for Alex.

“As soon as I had enough consciousness to understand what the costumes actually were, I immediately wanted to start working on them, too,” Alex said.

Alex enjoys putting a lot of effort into their cosplays and seeing the cosplays come to fruition.

“I love when people ask for photos because it lets me know all the effort I put into a cosplay paid off,” they said. “It is just lovely to make things and be proud of them and look cool.”

Their interest in designing Halloween costumes developed into cosplaying for cosplay conventions. Alex attended their first convention in fourth grade and most frequently attends the Chicago Comic and Entertainment Expo convention.

“It is really cool to see how much time and effort people put into these creations,” Alex said. “You can bond over that, and there are many cool comic creators, voice actors and more.”

Similarly, senior Martin Oliver also enjoys attending C2E2 and has sporadically for the past five years.

Martin said some cosplay creators put more effort into their work than others.

“Some people might wear a T-shirt with armor drawings, whereas others might go as far as to 3D print theirs. I am somewhere

in the middle,” they said. “I make my cosplay by hand. I don’t tend to spend much money on my cosplays, but others do. It is more of a fun thing I do when cons are in town.”

For sophomore cosplayer Ace Ma, the design of a character’s outfit contributes to who they choose to cosplay. Ace said their Maki Oze cosplay from the anime “Fire Force” was inspired by the weapon the character uses.

“I usually make props and weaponry. Like once I made a really cool dynamite apron for one of the cosplays I wore to C2E2,” they said. “There are some very advanced cosplayers who style costumes in a creative way.”

Alex hand-makes most components of their cosplays with a sewing machine. The wings from their cosplay Crowley from the TV series “Good Omens” took two months to make.

“We used a pulley and lever system with rope and blocks of wood and EVA foam and lots and lots of hot glue,” they said.

Ariadne tends to buy and make her cosplays. At first, she bought most of her cosplays, but now she tends to make them because she said it makes them more personalized.

“It gives your own artistic touch to your cosplay,” she said, “so it looks different from everyone else’s, which typically tends to be store-bought. That’s what I did for my Strawberry Shortcake outfit.”

Ariadne said this connection is what distinguishes cosplay from a Halloween costume.

“The component that makes cosplay different from just being a costume at a party is that it includes roleplay most of the time,” Ariadne said. “So, you might want to embody the character, respect the character and the creator.”

Alex said she feels very connected to some of the characters she cosplays.

“When I’m walking around, I’ll usually strut like the character and embody them. I feel very connected in that sense,” she said.

Alex receives a lot of positive feedback from people about her cosplays and said some look forward to their Halloween costumes every year. However, they said some people are more judgmental.

“In the past, some people would make fun of me,” they said. “They were like, ‘You do so much for Halloween. Why do you care so



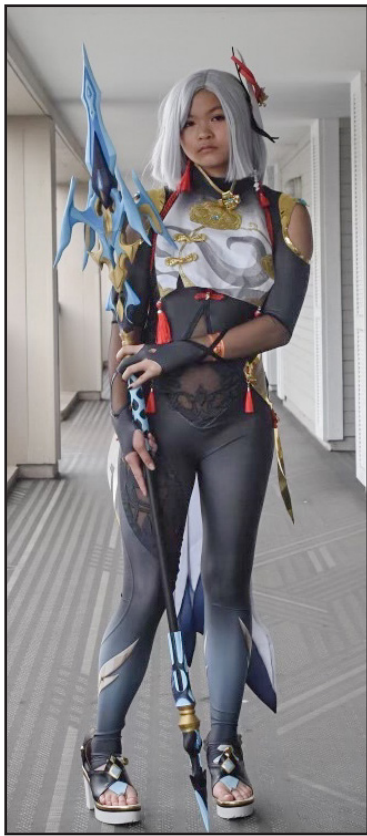
much?”

Martin said some people do not understand cosplay and regard it as weird.

They said, “What people don’t understand is that it is just a fun hobby we like to do, we just have an appreciation for a certain movie character or creator, and cosplay is one of the ways to show that.”

For Ariadne, cosplay serves as a way to incorporate her love for theater and passion for art into one art form — one where she can meet like-minded people and her favorite artists, customize and personalize her own iterations of characters, and further express her adoration for a piece of work and art.

“Cosplay is not just the costume. It really is a cosplay for the character you’re doing,” she said. “You want to do them justice. You want to do right by the character and get into the character. You take the time to put in the effort in the outfit, the makeup and everything else. The whole process really is just so much fun.”



DESIGNING DAPHNE. Senior Ariadne Merchant, who has been cosplaying since eighth grade, selects characters from her favorite media but tries to choose characters with the same eye and hair color, like Daphne Blake from “Scooby Doo.”

Midway photo by Matt Petres

STYLING SHENHE. While at a San Diego Comic-Con, sophomore Ace Ma cosplayed Shenhe, a video game character from Genshin Impact. When deciding who to cosplay, Ace said they consider the design of the character’s outfit.

Photo by Chloe Ma



Scan this QR code to watch a video of students’ cosplays.

With limited menu, chicken restaurant perfects dishes



Midway photo by Matt Petres

SPICE IT UP. Unlike the long menus featured in most fast food restaurants, Raising Cane’s offers only one entrée and three possible side-dishes, allowing the restaurant to exceed in their specialties.

by ERICH RAUMANN
Deputy Managing Editor

Anyone who walks into a Raising Cane’s expecting a standard fast food experience is bound to be surprised — instead of a slew of menu options ranging from spicy chicken sandwiches to soups and salads, there is only a single entrée: chicken fingers. It’s a unique business model which, according to their website, earned the founders, Todd Graves and Craig Silvey, a C- grade in business school and was rejected frequently by investors as they were trying to launch the company in the mid-’90s. However, the restaurant’s tight focus on a single product allows it to keep quality higher than competing chains while maintaining a standard, fast food low price. The service is fresh, consistent and fast

nearby bites

2 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago
(8.5 miles from Lab)

9570 South Western Ave.,
Evergreen Park
(10.9 miles from Lab)

in comparison to similar restaurants, giving it the strength and uniqueness to compete against the titans of the fast food world.

The chicken fingers themselves are, deservedly, the star of every possible meal at Raising Cane’s. The fine-flour bread-ing, while not always completely crunchy, is generously thick and well-textured with a light amount of oil compared to KFC or Popeyes. The spice in the breading is

minimal by design — with just a hint of onion and paprika — making it a perfect conduit for Raising Cane’s trademark sauce, an excellently balanced mix of mayonnaise, ketchup and black pepper that moistens and amplifies the flavor of the chicken.

The actual meat of the chicken isn’t from the traditional long cut strips of chicken breast, but are rather whole chicken tenderloins — a much more juicy and flavorful cut of meat. This unique cut gives a certain taste and texture that feels much more like real, off-the-bone chicken than their other fast food competitors.

The coleslaw is fresh and isn’t completely drowned in cream, making it a sweet, crunchy break from the chicken to round out the meal.

The crinkle-cut fries are decent but definitely the weakest part of the meal. Like many fast food fries, they’re molded mashed potatoes, not whole-cut, meaning they don’t have a crisp exterior or a fluffy inside. They are fresh and aren’t too salty, but they still don’t go beyond what you could find at other chicken-dealing restaurants.

The Texas toast is the side which shines the most: light, almost sugary white bread fried in garlic and oil, it’s perfect to soak up leftover sauce or just to act as a change of pace from the fingers.

The limited menu might appear simple at first, but Raising Cane’s has a little something for everyone, whether you are a chicken connoisseur or the only fried chicken you’ve had are the tenders in the cafeteria.