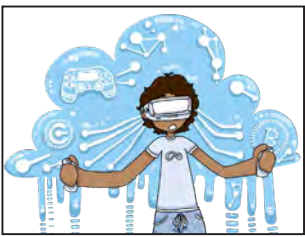


The pingpong tournament in the senior lounge is a positive, competitive and exciting way to connect classmates and faculty members.



The metaverse is a network of 3D platforms that lets users live another life through avatars, and it is taking over the tech space.



Chicago designated 2022 as the “Year of Dance.” Whether through ballet or Kathak, dance has enriched and transformed the lives of students.



University of Chicago Laboratory High School

U-HIGH MIDWAY

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Mistreated: Faculty of color speak out

They detail microaggressions, poor treatment, lack of accountability

by **PETER PU**
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

A remark from a colleague from three school years ago has been particularly memorable for Person A, a current faculty member of color. The colleague is white. The remark came in the context of a conversation concerning a student who the colleague had taught previously and would enter Person A's class.

“A white teacher said, ‘You know, the parents are Black, but they’ll like you because you’re Black or brown, or whatever the hell you are.’ And that sat with me the whole time I’ve been here,” Person A said.

Person A's experience is not unique. Some faculty of color at the Laboratory Schools say that they are treated poorly by certain white colleagues in their daily experiences, and they say they have limited opportunities to resolve these issues.

The experiences of faculty of color vary across the schools and among different individuals. Some faculty of color say they face microaggressions during interactions with colleagues. Some have expressed that white faculty tend to resolve professional disagreement by reporting incidents to the administration rather than seeking direct conversation with the parties involved. The names of some sources in this story have been withheld at their request to preserve anonymity. The experiences documented reflect the views of only a fraction of the faculty of color at Lab and do not represent the experiences of any faculty of color not referenced in the story.

Lab affirmed its commitment to support a diverse student body, faculty and staff in its Diversity Ac-

A note to readers:

This story addresses sensitive topics not often reported by the U-High Midway. As part of a community that values diversity, equity and inclusion, we decided to report on some of the issues that some faculty of color say they face, even though the story must invoke these topics. Our objective in publishing this story is to inform members of the Laboratory Schools community that these issues exist and to describe them with specificity. This story documents select experiences of only the faculty of color referenced. These faculty represent only a portion of the faculty of color at Lab, and consequently, this story does not characterize Lab as a whole or the faculty as a group.

We welcome comments and reactions at uhighmidway.com.
— THE EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

tion Plan published in June 2020. At the start of the 2020-21 school year, the school launched a bias reporting system to address harassment, discrimination, prejudice and other antagonistic behaviors.

Diversity, equity and inclusion remains a commitment. In an interview about this story, Laboratory Schools Director Tori Jueds, who joined Lab in August 2021, reiterated Lab's institutional ambition to address issues of equity and inclusivity.

“We are not unique in manifesting a culture that can make it really difficult for people of color, for women, for members of the LGBTQ+ community, for folks who identify in any respect with historically marginalized groups



MIDWAY ILLUSTRATION BY DALIN DOHRN

or backgrounds,” Ms. Jueds said. “We’re not unique in that. But that does not mean that we don’t have an urgent obligation to make that better.”

Yet the concerns of faculty of color come in the context of a series of incidents communicated to the Lab community in the past few years including a social media post from late 2019 that was described as containing racist language and an instance in early 2020 of a high school student using what was described as racist language off campus. The “Black Faculty Response to Recent Events” letter sent to the community following the 2019 incident raised the question of whether Lab's institutional goals of diversity were actually upheld.

Another current faculty member of color, Person B, said micro-

aggressions have been a contributing factor causing some faculty of color to leave their position at Lab. These microaggressions target personal characteristics such as racial identity and cultural heritage. While the frequency of microaggressions varies among schools, Person B estimated that some faculty of color face three to four racist remarks per week. As an example, a colleague assumed Person B held a support role at Lab.

“This white colleague looked at me and asked me if I was part of the custodial crew, and then asked me if I was the gardener,” Person B said.

Yet another instance involved Person C, another current faculty member of color. Person C said that while the Lab community has been generally supportive, Person

C remembered a faculty member suggesting last year that Person C was admitted to the Lab community for identifying as part of a minority group.

“It was a little scary, like ‘Oh is this how, you know, others perceive us at Lab?’ You know, are we just a number?” Person C said. “Are we a checklist?”

While faculty of color have avenues to report such incidents to the administration, Person B said they are often not reported. While Person B is comfortable seeking assistance from the principal, concerns deterring faculty of color from reporting these incidents include the potential repercussions of when the action of the report is disclosed to colleagues.

Please see *Mistreated* on Page 2

Russian invasion surprises, concerns Ukrainian students

by **AUDREY MATEI**
CONTENT MANAGER

In the early morning hours of Feb. 24, strikes against Ukrainian targets were initiated by Russian forces. This invasion comes after a long history of aggression from Russia toward Ukraine, starting in 2014 with Russia's annexation of Crimea and the recent amassing of thousands of Russian troops at the Ukrainian border.

Like the rest of the world, people in the U-High community felt the repercussions of the attacks. While many teachers addressed the incidents in classes, students still feel anxious, concerned and hopeful of what is to come.

Sophia Shimanska, a ninth grader who started at Lab in September, has strong ties to her Ukrainian heritage and relatives in Ukraine. She said the invasion wasn't something she anticipated.

“Just in general it was all really unexpected,” she said. “I was surprised and worried because I still have family that lives in Ukraine. My immediate response was, ‘Are



MIDWAY PHOTO BY MATT PETRES

UNITED UKRAINE. Hundreds gathered in Ukrainian Village Feb. 27 with flags and signs to protest the invasion of Ukraine.

my family OK?”

Similarly, Andrew Razborov, a senior of both Russian and Ukrainian descent, said the invasion was a shock that he never foresaw as a possibility.

“We are very fortunate to live in one of the most peaceful times

in human history, and you realize that all that can go away at the snap of a president's fingers,” he said. “I was anxious because I relied on the supposition that everything would be resolved peacefully after this long-mounting tension at the border.”

Sophia's cultural identity impacted her perception of the war profoundly. For Andrew, even though the war isn't in his direct vicinity, it still has a personal effect on him.

Sophia said, “I learned to read and write in Ukrainian at a Ukrainian school, so I feel like being Ukrainian deeply impacts who I am.”

She explained her heritage “has really shaped my outlook on this.”

Andrew said that “It's easier to be dismissive of events that happen halfway across the globe.”

“But for me, even though this is happening geographically far away, it's happening close to my cultural identity.”

Andrew said the conflict has been a part of his daily life for a long time, and because of that, he made sure to do his own research and news from both eastern and western sources to understand the war as best as possible.

“Whenever we're at the dinner table with the entire extended family in Moscow, it's always

a topic of conversation,” he said. “We have input from a lot of different sides like my Russian and Ukrainian grandfathers.”

The invasion is still developing, leaving millions wondering what's to happen in the near and long-term future.

Sophia said that she has hopes for Ukraine to persevere through the attacks.

“Ukraine has been fighting for its independence for such a long time. I just wish for Ukraine to get what it wants, which is independence and freedom for its people,” she said. “I just want everything to be OK. I don't want innocent people to be killed anymore.”

Andrew said he wants for Russia and Ukraine to be able to cooperate and coexist soon.

“What I would like to see come out of this is that there is peace and a long-term cultural understanding and a strong and durable political and economic relationship between Russia and Ukraine,” Andrew said. “Hopefully it's moving that direction.”

Robotics team qualifies for state

by **WILLIAM TAN**
ASSISTANT EDITOR

The robotics team Sprockets & Screws has qualified for the Illinois First Tech Challenge state championship after competing in the Chicago regional Feb. 19. The WeByte team also finished with a winning record, placing seventh after initial qualification rounds.

Sprockets & Screws finished qualification rounds ranked fourth. Then, through a series of complex alliances and ranking systems, the team placed into the semifinal bracket and won the finals earning spot at the state championship in Elgin on March 12 for the state championship. The top three teams from the competition will advance to the World Championship.

“At regionals, it was a very stressful — very fun — day, a lot of frantic last-minute fixes and, you know, excellent driving by Peter Cox and James Fry,” Joseph Bremer, a Sprockets & Screws team member, said. “We managed to get a slot to state, so I’m really excited about that.”

Although WeByte members didn’t advance deep enough into the elimination rounds to qual-

ify for state, Darren Fuller, robotics coach, said he was impressed with their achievements, especially as this was their first year competing.

“The rookie team did incredibly. They were doing things that no other team could do,” Mr. Fuller said. “There’s a part of the game where you have to pick up something and put it on top of something [else]. They’re the only one that did that throughout the day.”

Both teams won additional awards. Sprockets & Screws won the Think Award for the best engineering design process. They also placed second for the Motivator Award that evaluated team spirit and third for the Inspire Award that evaluated the team overall. WeByte placed first for the Motivator Award and second for the Think Award.

In preparation for the state tournament, Sprocket & Screws will continue to hone their robot by adding new features, refining existing characteristics and testing out their changes.

“Their goal is to fix the mechanics, refine their code and then also just driving practice,” Mr. Fuller said. “That’s the next three weeks — getting ready.”

IDES OF MARCH



MIDWAY PHOTO BY MALCOM TAYLOR

RECREATING HISTORY. On March 4, senior Andrew Swinger “stabs” English teacher Colin Rennert-May, dressed as Julius Caesar, with a prop knife as a crowd of students looks on. For the first time since 2019 the famous assassination of the Roman emperor was recreated in Café Lab. Students in the Latin program dressed in togas.

After spring break, masks will be optional at school

by **TÉA TAMBURIO**
DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR

Starting March 21, mask wearing will be optional for Lab community members and guests ages 5 and older, according to a March 5 email from Director Tori Jueds. While mask-wearing will be optional, individuals must bring a mask to campus in case it’s needed.

Individuals who test positive for COVID-19, or are identified as close contacts, are required to wear a mask for 6-10 days. If Lab experiences a COVID-19 outbreak, those affected will be required to wear a mask.

This change follows an update from the Chicago Department of Public Health on March 3. Community members can choose whether to wear a medical-grade



MIDWAY PHOTO BY MATT PETRES

SHIFTING POLICY. Students can currently only take off masks when eating, but masks will be optional all day starting March 21.

or cloth mask, face shield or no face covering in indoor and outdoor settings.

The email was sent on a Saturday, hours before the Spring Fling

“I wondered if we’re opening ourselves up for a mass spread of COVID,” English teacher Ian Taylor said about the updated policy. “I know we are vaccinated to the gills and that there are fewer cases, but I don’t know.”

“I was super surprised,” Saul Arnow, Cultural Union president, said about reading the email. “I’d heard rumblings about it, but I didn’t realize how quickly it was coming. It did feel like a first step to going back to normal, which was cool.”

According to Saul, about half the students there choose to wear masks.

“It was pretty even, about 50:50 or so,” Saul said.

Mr. Taylor attended the dance as a chaperone and observed students both with and without

masks.

“I wore my mask most of the time,” he said. “I thought there might be a minority of students who are still not quite ready, so I kind of kept my mask on for that reason.”

While mask-wearing policies are changing, SHIELD testing will remain available for those unvaccinated or identified as close contacts. Rapid antigen test kits will also be distributed to community members before spring break.

“I want to be optimistic about it but we’ll see about the covid,” Saul said, regarding Lab’s new COVID-19 mitigation strategies. “I feel like it can go to where it was or it can end up being a great thing, where people don’t have to wear their masks and COVID doesn’t spread.”

Mistreated: Colleagues avoid direct conversation

Continued from Page 1

But Micyleia Sanders, a former lower school science teacher who left Lab in January 2022, said in an interview with the Midway that in her experience of reporting racist incidents to the administration, the perpetrators may not be held accountable.

“These teachers will say the N-word. They will hear about incidents of racism and not report it,” Ms. Sanders, who identifies as Black, said. “They will perform incidents of racism and think it’s OK, you know what I mean? It is the lack of accountability at this place that makes it more racist than any place I’ve ever worked at.”

Naadia Owens, a former high school history teacher who identifies as Black, cited an incident with a colleague during the 2018-19 school year, her third at Lab, that she later said made her feel unsafe. She said she reported the incident to human resources, which Ms. Owens said somewhat fixed the situation. But she said other colleagues never checked on her and acted as if the incident “never happened.” Ms. Owens said that among other reasons, her interactions with this colleague contributed to her decision to leave her

position at Lab in June 2021.

Ms. Owens said, “I also very much felt like once the issue was over, that the school kind of abandoned me, kind of left me to fend for myself.”

Another key issue that some faculty of color have expressed is the aversion to conversation to resolve professional disagreement. Thomas Toney, the service learning coordinator for nursery to middle school who identifies as Black, said his colleagues sometimes did not extend to him the professional courtesy of a direct conversation when they experienced difficulties working with him or took issue with the DEI conversations he held in class or the books he purchased for his curriculum. In an email response to questions, Mr. Toney wrote that sometimes the concerns of colleagues are not disclosed to faculty of color until they are brought up by an administrator during an evaluation conversation.

“For some reason, colleagues feel like they can’t come directly to you with something that’s in the large scheme of things very superficial and minor,” Mr. Toney said. “That it rises to, like, ‘Let me call an emergency meeting with the principal.’”

Person D, a current faculty

member of color, independently echoed Mr. Toney’s experience. When issues have arisen in the past, Person D felt “gaslighted” by colleagues reporting these issues to the administration rather than seeking resolution through a direct conversation. Person D described having to be “super mindful” of tone, clothing and body language.

“As a faculty of color, I feel uncomfortable having hard conversations with my white colleagues,” Person D said, “because they might turn it around and say I was attacking them or being aggressive.”

Middle school principal Ryan Allen, who identifies as Black, said that he mediated issues of race among faculty about once every two or three weeks in the fall quarter of 2021. A measure to bring forward conversations centered around DEI are professional development workshops occurring on the third Wednesday of each month. These workshops are currently organized by Nicole Williams, DEI director.

However, Mr. Allen said that conversations addressing incidents involving a racial component or context can be uncomfortable. While some parties are willing to hold these conversations, others are not.

“As a faculty of color, I feel uncomfortable having hard conversations with my white colleagues because they might turn it around and say I was attacking them or being aggressive.”
— PERSON D

“I think there’s a fear that that microaggression unequivocally defines them as a person that is racist,” Mr. Allen said. “And so I think that if a person says, ‘Hey, this is a microaggression,’ people are so fearful of being the person that does that. Then, it’s really hard to have a conversation around that microaggression. People don’t want to be labeled or canceled.”

Music teacher Francisco Dean, who identifies as Black, independently expressed that it is very difficult to have conversations about race at Lab. He wrote in an email response to questions that every category of Lab’s membership has contributed to this culture in some manner.

“It’s not just administrators, as some would purport,” Mr. Dean said. “It’s also faculty, staff, students, parents, whites and non-

whites.”

The experiences documented do not reflect those of all faculty of color. Physical education teacher Pete Miller, who has worked at Lab for 22 years, said he has never felt any disrespect from his colleagues in terms of behavior or speech. He signed the 2019 “Black Faculty Response to Recent Events” letter out of solidarity with his colleagues responding to racial issues at Lab. Physical education teacher Michael Moses, a Lab alumnus who has worked at Lab for 31 years, said his colleagues have always treated him with respect.

Some faculty of color are sharing their experiences at Voices of Color at Lab, a faculty affinity group that meets monthly. Its mission is to create a safe space for faculty and staff of color to find solidarity and identify sources of racist policy and ways in which voices of faculty of color are not utilized. Person D has formed a personal support group and has taken opportunities to reach out to new faculty of color to ensure they have a support group from the start.

“I am always uncomfortable at Lab,” Person D said. “There is not one moment when I do not think about how I carry myself and whether I belong here.”

SAT changes: Shorter, adaptive and virtual

by LUCIA KOURI
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

No. 2 pencils, grids of multiple choice letters and three hours in a testing room. Many juniors and seniors have personal experience taking what has historically been one of the most prominent national standardized tests — the SAT. Soon, however, the SAT won't look the same as most remember. The College Board has revealed plans for a new format of the test, and while many underclassmen are appreciative, others wish the changes had come sooner.

In January, the College Board announced that starting in 2024, the SAT will be fully virtual. While the test will still be offered in person at testing centers, it has been shortened to two hours, with scores made available within days. Calculators will be permitted for the entirety of the math section, and reading passages will be reduced

in length with only one question per passage.

Perhaps most significantly, the test will be adaptive, meaning that students will be presented with different sequences of questions depending on the accuracy of their preceding responses. If a student answers correctly, the following questions will be more difficult.

According to college counselor Patty Kovacs, there are still many questions to be answered regarding how the test-taking will play out over the following years. She predicts that the new system will benefit the College Board above all.

"The benefit is that they don't have to write as many new test questions. Constructing the test is one of the most expensive things about any standardized test," Ms. Kovacs said. "The technology will allow them to reorder, and to pull from a variety of different silos."

Ninth graders such as Paola Al-

meda, who will have the option to take the new form of the SAT, is relieved not only that the test will be offered in a shorter form but also that the test may still be optional to submit at many colleges should she decide to take it. To Paola, the ability to take a test virtually with less dense reading sections makes the idea of a standardized test much more approachable.

"It's nice — I feel really relieved now that it is easier," Paola said. "It takes off a lot of the stress if it's optional, too."

Ninth grader Hana Javed, who struggles with written tests, finds the switch particularly impactful. And classmate Ace Ma, who has multiple learning disabilities that could affect test taking, feels that the new format is more manageable.

"I'm happy," Ace said. "I've been stressed about the SAT since fifth grade."

Rohan Chadha, a junior who has already taken the SAT, has mixed feelings about the timing of the changes.

"It is annoying for everyone like for the juniors and seniors that already have taken it," Rohan said, "but I kind of do like the idea. I feel like it does take off pressure for the next juniors, like the upcoming classes."

According to Rohan, these changes were a long time coming, especially given that the SAT has been made a non-crucial component of the college application process in recent years. He thinks this may be the first of many changes to the SAT in coming years.

"They might keep on modifying their tests in order to keep on making money," Rohan said. "I think they'll probably do everything they can to stay relevant."

Though many students are optimistic about the changes, Ms.

Kovacs says some big important questions still remain. Namely, many are wondering what these changes will mean for the SAT's main competitor — the ACT — who have been working on their own online version of their test for some time. Others wonder how test prep will work, and whether the new format will offer a more equitable experience for students with less testing experience. Most importantly, the question still remains as to whether testing will be weighed differently in a college admissions setting as a consequence of new testing standards and the vastly changing college climate.

"If the entire public system of the state of California is dumping testing forever, how soon will it be New York, Texas, Ohio and then the rest of the country?" Ms. Kovacs said. "This is at a moment of peak change, not just in testing but in college admissions."

ARTSFEST



ARTSY FESTIVITIES.

Ninth graders Xander Maxcy and Chip Moehrke intently focus while shaping their clay on the spinning wheel in the Pottery Wheel Throwing workshop led by art teacher Brian Wildeman.

JUMP INTO ARTSFEST.

Sophomore Brandon Chang participates in the Chicago Boyz Acrobatics team's gymnastics performance during the ArtsFest opening ceremony in Upper Kovler Gymnasium on Feb. 24 for ninth graders and sophomores. The group's routine was interactive, allowing students to engage in many occasions during the group's performance. Chicago Boyz Acrobatics team also led the Double Dutch and Super Ropes workshop. The opening ceremony marked the beginning of U-High's annual ArtFest activity, where students embark on a day full of workshops and artsy activities.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Take-home COVID-19 tests to be distributed

Students will receive two rapid antigen test kits March 9 in advisory, so they can take a COVID-19 test before returning to class from spring break. Employees will also receive tests.

The tests are intended to be used March 20 and 21.

"We are hoping that students will take one test on Sunday after spring break and one on Monday morning, before they come back to Lab," assistant principal Zilkia Rivera-Vazquez said.

— AMY REN

Students can submit social justice session

The form to submit a workshop proposal for Social Justice Week is open and will accept submissions until March 25.

Social Justice Week is dedicated to bringing the Lab community together by spreading awareness on various social justice issues through workshops. This year's theme is BELONG (Begin, Equity, Learning, Ownership, Narrative, Gratitude).

Program leader Natalie Hultquist, senior, sees capacity to have meaningful discussion regarding current events.

"The political climates are always changing, and this year right now with the Ukraine war going on as well as other things, there is a lot of opportunity to engage in conversations that we might never have been able to have had in the past," she said.

— KATIE SASAMOTO-KURISU

Ethics bowl team makes it to regional

During a one-match playoff on Feb. 25 to determine the Illinois winner of the National High School Ethics Bowl Competition, U-High's team beat Marion High School after receiving winning scores. They received an invitation to compete in the national competition at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill in early April.

After not making it to the 2021 national competition, co-captain Abe Callard, a senior, said he and co-captain Ryan Clark, also a senior, feel satisfaction about their win.

Others on the team are Sygne Stole and Yaseen Qureshi.

— CHLOE MA

Girl Up starts online clothing fundraiser

The Girl Up club started an online fundraiser Feb. 28 to raise

money for Connections for Abused Women and their Children. The fundraiser will go until March 18.

The online fundraiser offers T-shirts along with masks, tote bags and other products to raise money.

"In the past we've also done T-shirt fundraisers," Girl Up vice president Sarina Zhao said. "So that's what we're doing this year. We've added some extra products like tote bags, masks and other stuff."

T-Shirts are \$25, face masks \$15, pullover hoodies are \$45 and tote bags are \$30-\$35.

Lab's chapter decides on an organization to receive the money they raise each year.

— CHLOE ALEXANDER

Mock Trial will attend Illinois Invitational

The Mock Trial team will compete in the Illinois State Bar Association Invitational via Zoom at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign March 11.

The team, comprised of 10 students in grades 9-11, began competing at the end of February, and since then have participated in two competitions.

In the state competition, half the members will act as witnesses for the case and the other half will act as attorneys, according to co-captain Lena Stole, who runs the club with juniors Olivia Jessen and Samara Arain. On March 11 the team will present one side of the case, and then on March 12 they will present the other side of the case. The top six teams will advance to finals and the winner will go to the national competition.

— JOAQUIN FIGUEROA

Seniors selected for state academic team

Two cross country and track and field athletes, Amanda O'Donnell and Zachary Gin, were selected to the 2020-21 IHSA Academic All-State team with honorable mention honors. The all-state team recognizes academic and athletic achievements for senior student athletes.

One girl and one boy were nominated from each of the 800 IHSA participating schools. The nominees were required to have a minimum 3.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale and to have participated in at least two IHSA-sponsored varsity sports seasons. After Amanda and Zachary were nominated to represent U-High, they had to fill out an application and an essay.

They represent the top 4% of applicants from a pool of about 1,600 students.

— LOUIS AUXENFANS

Self-censorship threatens free press

As the Midway sees it ...

Unmute yourself. It's a request, nay, a command, and in the age of Zoom meetings and built-in laptop microphones, we've all gotten used to hearing it. As it so happens, it was also the theme for Student Press Freedom Day on Feb. 24, a reminder to young journalists that, often, we take the gift of our own voices for granted.

When most young people hear the word "censorship," they imagine something ordained and codified. Totalitarian governments, overbearing school administrators — the list goes on. However, censorship is more than just a legal stronghold. It's something we as students internalize, and thus something we as students must work to unlearn, beginning with the capacities in which we censor ourselves.

The stakes are, in all likelihood, relatively low at a school like Lab. We're a private school, yes, but not one with much of a relevant precedent for censorship. As Midway staff, most of us have never faced threats of disciplinary action, let alone legal action. However, students of all backgrounds want to

be accepted, and sometimes we find our desire for acceptance to be at odds with our desire, our imperative, to speak truth to power.

While our teachers, administrators and peers probably couldn't get us expelled simply for criticizing them, their reactions to student activism can — and do — affect us, be it feelings of guilt, hesitation or embarrassment. We've all had the experience of sitting in a classroom and listening to our classmates, or even the teacher, take one of our articles to task. While we're honored our community holds us to a high enough standard that our work is worthy of critique, we'd be lying if we said it didn't force us to develop thicker skin.

If you are a lone student, operating outside the institutional fabric of a school newspaper or well-funded club, these challenges are easily exacerbated. Thus, we as Midway staff hope to extend our platform to you, welcoming guest columnists and further diversifying our sources, but beyond that, we hope to see you take a leap of faith. That fundraiser, that campaign you've always wanted to start, now is the time to try it. It's undoubtedly nerve wracking, but we are an undoubtedly courageous community. The Midway believes in our capacity to question, challenge and overcome.

It's only natural that students



MIDWAY ILLUSTRATION BY DALIN DOHRN

fear ostracism or ridicule, especially as young people still learning to navigate an ever-expanding social landscape. These days, however, progress can't wait. Will you? This editorial reflects the opinion of the U-High Midway Editorial Board.

Support and listen to sexual assault victims

by ANNGO and WILL TRONE
CITY LIFE EDITOR, GUEST

Every time a victim at our school makes an allegation of sexual assault against someone, there's reinvigorated fear about fake allegations, both for the specific case at hand and for sexual assault allegations generally. Yet this narrative of fake allegations is overblown and denies the experiences of sexual assault survivors at U-High and allows perpetrators to get away with their actions.

In reality, sexual assault is under-reported, not over-reported. According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, two-thirds of sexual assaults go unreported. Further, studies have demon-

strated that false allegations are in the minority, only making up 2% to 10% of sexual assault reports. In fact, research shows that most rates of false reporting are usually exaggerated due to inconsistencies with definitions and protocol as well as an inadequate understanding of sexual assault. To assume that every allegation fits into the 2%-10% is against common sense and can often harm the person alleging the assault. And further, this culture of



An Ngo



Will Trone

disbelief only makes it more difficult for survivors to come forward. Lab is no deviation from this trend of sexual assault and disbelief. As much as the school community may act otherwise, sexual assault is present at Lab. According to the 2021 Student Wellness Survey Results, 4% of high school respondents reported that they were "forced to do sexual things" in the last year. While this may appear to be a small proportion of the student body, this statistic means that

of the 523 respondents in the high school, about 21 students were sexually assaulted in the past year. In the context of sexual assault, this is not a small number.

When coming forward, victims of sexual assault at Lab face doubt, fear of retaliation and a lack of options; they are climbing an arduous uphill battle. They face excuses like "They're just being dramatic" or "They just want attention" and overall distrust. Yet, assuming that national statistics apply, the vast majority of allegations at Lab would be truthful, and it is time the community starts acting like it.

Lab is a small community. The reason so many of us are hesitant to doubt victims is that oftentimes

it's our own friends or peers who have committed wrongdoing. Many of us have heard stories of sexual assault and harassment that was perpetrated by our peers. Yet few, if any, of these stories include accountability for the perpetrators.

It's imperative that the community prioritize supporting victims of sexual assault who come forward or who are considering coming forward. This is harder than it sounds. It means dissecting and rejecting the ways in which rape culture and the trivialization of sexual assault have infiltrated daily life. We must educate ourselves, disassociate from those who commit acts of sexual abuse and, most importantly, believe survivors.

Inconsistent Olympic doping rules are unjust Spotify must prevent podcast misinformation

by SOPHIE BAKER
REPORTER

After testing positive for three substances used to treat heart conditions, one of which has been banned by global anti-doping officials, 15-year-old Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva was allowed to compete in the individual short program and free skate at the 2022 Olympic Games, which sparked outrage and criticism of a double standard.

There should be a universal method of prosecuting athletes who test positive for banned substances that is governed by the World Anti-Doping Code.

Minors have more protection in the eyes of many anti-doping organizations, but these rules must be consistently regulated. During the 2000 Summer Olympics, 16-year-old-Romanian gymnast Andreea Raducan was stripped of her gold medal after testing positive for a banned substance she had inadvertently consumed.

Later, bobsledder Nadezhda Sergeeva,

who tested positive for the banned drug that was found in Valieva's urine sample, was disqualified from the 2018 Winter Olympics.

American sprinter Sha'Carri Richardson was barred from competing in last summer's Tokyo Olympic Games after ingesting marijuana, and other Black athletes, including two Black sprinters who were recently disqualified from a race at the Olympics because of their naturally high levels of testosterone, are disproportionately and unfairly affected by doping regulations.

The minor differences in these cases — the countries that the accused athletes represented and the athletes' races — and the inconsistencies in how they were handled show that a universal system to prosecute athletes is needed to avoid injustice.



Sophie Baker

by CLARE MCROBERTS
REPORTER

Joe Rogan's podcast, "The Joe Rogan Experience," has generated a debate as to whether Spotify should remove the podcast from its platform because he spreads misinformation about COVID-19, vaccines and other matters.

Eleven million listeners were already tuning in to Rogan's show long before Spotify made a deal to promote it exclusively. But by investing money to promote the podcast as Spotify's exclusive brand, the platform is spreading Rogan's message still further and sending a false, anti-vaccine message to millions more people who might have never heard him.

Spotify's enormous spending on the licensing agreement with Rogan, of as much as \$200 million, only raises the company's responsibility to remove him: it's conceivable that those dollars might help Rogan create future episodes featuring guests who

promote more false information.

A governing principle in America is free speech, but a platform with as much reach as Spotify has a duty not to amplify views that it knows to be false to listeners who may see Spotify's backing as giving those views credibility.

The removal of Joe Rogan from Spotify will not prevent him from telling the world whatever he wants. But it will prevent him from spreading his damaging and potentially deadly falsehoods to an even wider audience with the stamp of legitimacy that a name like Spotify carries. For the time being, it is important to alert those who are unaware of the fallacies that Rogan is spreading, and Spotify carries as much responsibility as Rogan does.



Clare McRoberts

U-HIGH MIDWAY

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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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Standardized Testing

Relic of the past or necessary benchmark?



MIDWAY PHOTO BY MALCOLM TAYLOR

Colleges should adopt a test-optional policy in favor of grade point average for evaluation

by **BERK OTO**
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

When entering my SAT testing room, I already knew nearly everything that would be on the test. I didn't just know the material, I could also predict the phrasing of the questions, the tricks that would be employed to throw me off and the order that would maximize my chance at getting a good score. All of this was because my parents could afford a private tutor who taught me everything I needed and gave me access to around eight full-length practice tests to master. My studying had nothing to do with learning reading, writing or math skills, and everything to do with learning how to game the SAT.

My experience suggested that standardized tests can only measure how good you are at taking that particular standardized test. Students who come from a family with an annual income greater than \$200,000, have a one-in-five chance of scoring above 1,400, according to the Hechinger Report, a nonprofit journalism organization covering education. In comparison, students from poor families have a 1-in-50 chance. Practicing the test even once has a substantial positive effect on the overall score, according to the College Board's internal data. A testing-based college admissions system ultimately serves to help students with wealthy families get into elite colleges and preserve their wealth.

Primarily due to existing socioeconomic inequalities in American society, tests also overwhelmingly favor white, male applicants according to sociologist Joseph A. Soares. Although this reflects circumstances outside the test, the inequality puts into question the validity of tests which rely on the false assumption of equality. Thus, university claims of valuing diversity are irreconcilable with test mandatory policies, which reinforce racial inequality.

Advocates for mandatory testing policies claim that colleges need objective measurements to determine college readiness, so standardized tests are an imperfect necessity. Although it's true that objective metrics are useful, the College Board's data shows that high school grade point averages are more predictive of future college success than SAT scores. Social psychologist Claude Steele, also provost at the University of California, Berkeley, studied the issue and found the test only measured 18% of the skills necessary to do well in college, painting a dangerously reductive picture of readiness.

The College Board argues that considering a student's SAT score in conjunction with their GPA provides the most effective evaluation. To their credit, their data shows that considering SAT scores and GPA together improves prediction of college readiness by 8% in comparison to GPA alone. The company claims that considering standardized testing is valuable to address inconsistencies in difficulty of similar courses between schools and course loads. However, admissions officers can and do correct for inconsistencies in academic rigor by com-

paring the course load and rigor in high school transcripts. Such an advantage is made further inconsequential by other methods of standardization.

Results from the last few years of test-optional policies have demonstrated that this analysis is accurate. A 2014 study published by the National Association of College Admissions Counselors showed that non-submitters have comparable academic performance to students who submit their scores. This indicates that test-optional policies don't lead to students going to

schools where they won't succeed, nor do these policies dilute the quality of the student body. Instead, selective colleges saw the most diverse undergraduate bodies in American history, according to a 2021 study published by the American Education Research Association. Test-optional admissions isn't a solution to end all educational inequality, but it's a step in the right direction. Test-blind policies, which eliminate standardized tests altogether, may also prove to be a good idea, but keeping the submission of test scores optional has some merit. A test-optional policy lets students with strong scores and test-taking skills submit them as a piece of supporting evidence for their admission, while allowing students with lower scores to compensate with strong transcripts, powerful essays and robust extracurriculars.

The data shows that test-optional policies have no substantial negatives and provide modest, yet consequential gains in tackling racial and economic inequality. Take it from someone who gamed the system: the only thing these tests can accurately measure is how experienced you are at taking them.

Pressures from the pandemic and questions about equity and education have precipitated rapid changes to standardized testing: the SAT is transitioning to a shorter, digital format; an increasing number of colleges

are going test-optional or test-blind; and recent admissions cheating scandals have prompted more scrutiny on testing. Should these tests become a relic of the past or will they be renewed as important universal academic benchmarks?

Standardized tests should remain as objective pillars in college application selection process

by **PETER PU**
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Sometimes hear comments from seniors and certain proactive juniors comparing college applications to rolling dice or playing the lottery. They're not wrong. As an admissions committee draws arbitrary distinctions among a pool of too many qualified applicants, the outcome must partially rest on factors that are subjective.

The truth is that these comparisons of the college application process are not entirely fair. Standardized tests have been one of the objective measures safeguarding the process from unraveling into these totally unpredictable models.

Two years into the coronavirus pandemic, American colleges along with organizations such as the College Board are reevaluating the role of standardized tests. While testing organizations strive to reform their exams to increase access and evaluate students fairly, American colleges should reaffirm the importance of standardized tests as objective pillars in the application process.

Any college in which the number of applicants significantly exceeds the number of students in the incoming class should require standardized test scores as a component of the application. Intertwined with re-evaluating the role of standardized tests is establishing assumptions about what it means to be a qualified applicant. Presumably, the ultimate goal of an admissions committee is to select those students who will best utilize the resources of the college and obtain success in their careers. We define success as the exceptional ability of those students to fulfill their responsibilities in these careers. Because predicting success is practically impossible, many selective colleges have implemented the principle of holistic review, considering academic and non-academic achievements in the context of an applicant's circumstances.

Now among the enormity of factors considered within such a flexible selection process, the education that a student has attained at the time of application should certainly be one of them. After all, attained education partly determines a student's ability to handle the academic rigor in college and take advantage of other opportunities. A standardized set of questions designed to evaluate foundational skills such as reading comprehension, grammar and basic algebra is ideal for measuring attained education on an absolute scale. Consequently, high proficiency in these areas demonstrated by high standardized test scores should boost the qualifications of an applicant. No, I am not advocating for standardized tests to trump all other factors in the selection process. Standardized tests are clearly inadequate for assessing the totality of skills contributing to an applicant's qualifications, but they objectively assess attained education. Standardized tests have recently faced backlash for being less effective predictors of college success than factors such as grade point average. Recent studies have demonstrated grade point averages as stronger predictors of college readiness using metrics such as freshman grades. But such is not a reason to de-emphasize their value. Indeed, the assumption of standardized tests as the gold standard is reasonable. Imagine that a highly selective college accepted 2,000 students with perfect grade point averages but below-average standardized test scores. Given the current state of the SAT and ACT, with questions that are mostly fair, I would not blame standardized tests for being faulty. I would question those grade point averages and wonder why the admissions committee chose not to select those applicants who achieved perfect scores. I doubt this hypothetical scenario would ever occur, but without standardized tests, we would not even know when it did occur. That's discomforting to say the least. Now it seems that the current disparity between grade point averages and standardized test performance may be best addressed by reforming standardized tests to more effectively evaluate students. In my experience, some of the SAT reading comprehension questions are written in a confusing manner, and the ACT science section seems to be especially susceptible to certain test taking strategies. It remains to be seen whether the newly digitized and shortened SAT will be an improvement. At its current state, standardized tests are an essential but imperfect component of the college application process. American colleges should recognize the value of standardized tests and thereby incentivize testing organizations to reform the exam content to most effectively evaluate students. American schools should develop in students the foundational skills of reading comprehension, grammar and basic algebra. I'm optimistic that the concordance of standardized tests and grade point averages will perfect the assessment of attained education.



MIDWAY ILLUSTRATION BY ALINA SUSANI



DEDICATED DIVER. Senior Will Maharry begins a dive at Gerald Ratner Athletics Center during practice Feb. 17. Will has set several school records for diving, but his dedication to the team and unwavering support for his teammates makes him stand out.

MIDWAY PHOTO BY GABRIEL ISSA

Deep Dive

Senior diver sets records, supports teammates

by COLIN LESLIE
ASSISTANT EDITOR

When senior Will Maharry won the IHSA sectional diving championship on Feb. 19, he became the first U-High diver to qualify for state and broke his own record in the process. But according to his coach, Darlene Novak, Will wasn't focused on himself. To her, it seemed like he was more interested in congratulating his teammate, sophomore David Ren, who finished in second. That's who Will is.

Will has had a historic season, setting several records and breaking them again, and participated in the state meet Feb. 26, but what sets him apart, according to his coach and teammate, is his infectious dedication and support for his teammates.

Will said the importance of a strong mentality cannot be overlooked in diving.

"It's really not very physically taxing at all, but if you're not in the right headspace to do a dive, it's gonna be bad," Will said. "Supporting team members is the primary aspect, like being on the pool deck while someone else is doing a dive, more so than giving pointers is just giving them support."

The emphasis Will places on mental support is obvious, according to David. As a relatively new diver, David credits much of his improvement to Will, who he said pushes and motivates him.

"I was really bad at diving and he told me to just keep trying, to get the same dive over and over again," David said. "For me, that helped a lot because it just gave me a reason to keep going."

Will's dedication is contagious. "He brings lots of fun energy. Like, every time I practice, he's always ready to get going," David said. "He also motivates people, like, to do it again until you get it perfect."

Ms. Novak said she trusts Will to advise and support his teammates just as she would. According to her, if she does not see someone's dive at practice, she is confident the advice Will might give is the same as what she would say.

"As a teammate, he's incredibly supportive," Ms. Novak said. "Because of the knowledge he has of diving and has acquired, he can help his teammates."

While Ms. Novak is confident in Will's ability to coach, Will said he does not think

"He's courageous. Fearless. He's just absolutely fearless, and he has a desire to try new things. He enjoys the accomplishment of learning something new, and then mastering it."

— DARLENE NOVAK,
DIVING COACH

he would have gotten to where he is now without his coach's help.

"I'm just proud to have gotten that good. I also think a portion of the credit has to be given to Coach Dar," Will said, referring to Ms. Novak. "She really has helped me improve a lot this season."

Will's accomplishments this year come after taking two years off from diving. He quit after his freshman year because, he said, it just did not feel the same as when he started in middle school at Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School in Flossmoor, Illinois.

"It just seemed really stressful for me, honestly," Will said. "The social elements that had been present when I started was kind of gone, because as opposed to having 10 other people there were like two other people there."

According to Ms. Novak, Will had to learn a collection of new dives this year to prepare him for a trip to the state competition.

Learning flips is something that Will has always liked. His trampoline and tumbling background is beneficial for diving.

"The main thing that I kind of got into was trampolining and tumbling," Will said. "I kind of taught myself how to do a lot of the flips there, but at that point, I'd already been doing diving for a while, so those skills kind of translated and built off each other."

Ms. Novak believes Will's attitude and mindset will take him far in anything he decides to do.

"He's courageous. Fearless. He's just absolutely fearless, and he has a desire to try new things," Ms. Novak said. "He enjoys the accomplishment of learning something new, and then mastering it."

While his own dedication to mastering a skill brought him to state, his selflessness as a teammate is what stands out.

Back to school: Two alumni return to coach

Giving back to Lab, former U-High athletes coach where they once played

by ANNGO
CITYLIFE EDITOR

"Honestly, Lab is kind of in a time capsule," Elan Weiner, an assistant coach for both the boys and girls soccer teams, said.

Laboratory Schools alumni, like Mr. Weiner, who have returned to the school to coach the sports teams they once played on, now work alongside many of the teachers who they knew during high school. Mr. Weiner and girls basketball head coach Alexis Jenkins returned to Lab in hopes of passing on the lessons they learned through playing sports at Lab.

This past summer, Mr. Weiner returned to the Laboratory Schools to work in the athletics department, 14 years after graduating from U-High in 2007. Many of the faces at Lab have remained familiar to him, like Sharon Housinger and Terry Shanks, who both worked at Lab while he was in school.

During his time at Lab, Mr. Weiner played on the soccer team coached by Michael Mo-



Alexis
Jenkins



MIDWAY PHOTO BY ELLIOTT TAYLOR

ACTIVE ALUMNI. Elan Weiner, assistant coach for both the boys and girls varsity soccer teams, explains a drill during practice on Feb. 28. Mr. Weiner graduated U-High in 2007 and has returned to contribute to the soccer program he was once a part of.

ses, who is still a P.E. teacher at Lab. Similarly, Ms. Jenkins graduated from U-High in 2009 and was coached by P.E. teacher Meghan Janda.

When Ms. Jenkins found herself back home in Chicago with the opportunity to

coach a U-High basketball team, she happily took it with the hope of giving back to the team she played on. After she graduated from U-High, she played basketball at Illinois State University.

"Definitely enjoy giving back to the com-

munity and giving back to Lab," Ms. Jenkins said. "And just trying to foster kids who want to not just play basketball, but you know, learn sports and I really am an advocate for kids playing sports."

Ms. Jenkins said she still keeps in touch with players who have graduated and feels she's had a positive impact on many of the girls. She wants the girls on her team to learn how to be leaders and has enjoyed watching many of them develop from new players in ninth grade to senior leaders.

"Your life on the court and off the court is just so similar to how you play basketball, in it's learning accountability and trust, and ultimately love, you know, loving each other," Ms. Jenkins said. "And do whatever you need to do on that court to succeed and just have a heart and you have a goal and you set to do something."

Like Mr. Weiner, Ms. Jenkins said the school today still feels much like the school she attended 13 years ago. Though she did note that there have been advancements in the opportunities and support for girls sports teams at Lab.

Though not much has changed about the school, from the faces of teachers and staff to the gym building itself, these graduates certainly have changed, even if sometimes they forget.

"It's different being here as an adult," Mr. Weiner said. "I forget that I have the keys to things. I'm like, 'Oh yeah, like, let me get that.' Kids are like asking me for stuff. It's surreal."

Ping Pong Pals

Seniors connect with each other over table tennis tournaments

by WILLIAM TAN
ASSITANT EDITOR

A quick flick of the wrist sends a small white ball spiraling over a long table, the hollow pinging of racket-to-ball increasing in frequency and magnitude as two players hit back and forth over a net. This is the sound of table tennis.

More commonly known as ping-pong, the game is fast and fun and is frequently played casually in the senior lounge. But for some seniors, pingpong has become an essential part of their school life culture, more than just a casual pastime.

With the senior lounge designated as its home base, the game of pingpong has evolved to become a means of connecting with classmates as a daily outlet to de-stress and have fun.

Senior Eddie Christensen is organizing his second pingpong tournament this year with that exact purpose in mind. With both seniors and faculty members participating in the games, Eddie hopes the tournament will provide much-needed excitement and competition.

“I see this tournament as very competitive and oppositional. But I think that somehow brings people together and makes it so fun,” Eddie said. “Like, bringing people together, turning out new faces at

“I see this tournament as very competitive and oppositional. But I think that somehow brings people together and makes it so fun.”

— EDDIE CHRISTENSEN

the lounge, and overall, just being something to look forward to and contribute to the positive atmosphere has been just really awesome.”

The single-elimination bracket Eddie randomized pits 36 seniors and faculty members against each other. Matches between contestants will be played during open periods and lunch, and the overall winner will receive a \$50 Amazon gift card.

Senior Aaron Kim is competing in the tournament. He already enjoys playing pingpong during his free periods and looks forward to playing against his peers.

“It’s always nice to be in some of these tournaments because, obviously there’s a reward, but also, you see a lot of people who normally wouldn’t be playing pingpong joining, and you know, being able to play with them and talk to them,” Aaron said. “We kind of just bring half of the class together.”

For Eddie, the tournament was relatively easy to organize, espe-



MIDWAY PHOTO BY ANDREW-BURKE STEVENSON

PADDLE POWER. Returning a hit, senior Johnny Patras plays against classmate Theo Arado during a senior ping pong tournament. Johnny lost to Theo 12-10 in a win-by-two game.

cially because this is the second one he has arranged this school year.

“We basically just threw a post on Schoology asking people to sign up,” he said. “We just kind of went with how many people signed up. We got about 40 signups the first time, and this time around we have 36.”

One way this tournament that

differs from the first one is some faculty will now be participating. Science teacher Francisco Saez is set to play a match against fellow science teacher Kevin Nihill, and his strategy is already developed.

“The result is just being a little bit more defensive and trying to improve the defense. Yeah, that’s my only chance, you know with Dr. Nihill, just to have a good defense

against him,” Mr. Saez said. “And maybe he’s a little bit off. Then I have a small chance.”

Whether it’s a close game against Dr. Nihill or a casual match between two senior peers, over the next few weeks the senior lounge is sure to be ringing with the sound of pingpong, bringing more students and faculty together with every match.

Students build friendships through fantasy basketball

by ETHAN SWINGER
REPORTER

The ideal season comes down to the wire. Only 20 seconds remain in the head-to-head match. Nearly tied, the numbers on the scoreboard rise and fall. The blinding light from their phones flashes on their faces. The seconds tick down to the end.

In an instant, the last game ends. It’s over. The player won. The final score was separated by just a few points.

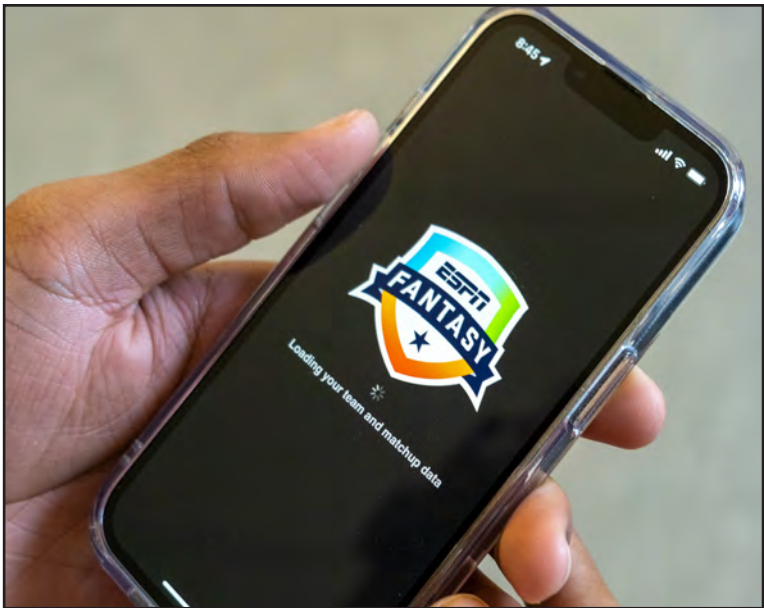
The rush of excitement washes over this student as a season of hard work has finally paid off. But this person is more glad to be able to compete with friends and make it to the end.

Every person who plays fantasy basketball wants their season to be as perfect as the hypothetical one above.

This intense scenario epitomizes the excitement participating in a fantasy basketball league brings, and the hopefulness of participating in one again.

U-High students participating in fantasy basketball have strengthened friendships and gained a conversation starter, as well as become more involved with sports.

Fantasy basketball works like other fantasy sports. Participants strategically draft at most 16 current NBA players to their team in a fantasy league against other members. The team’s performance is



MIDWAY PHOTO BY MALCOLM TAYLOR

FANTASY FRIENDS. U-High students use platforms like the ESPN fantasy app to join a fantasy basketball league with friends.

then based on the real-life performances of players in games, taking into account statistics such as points per game, rebounds, assists and steals.

According to junior Henry Koyner, who plays fantasy basketball with other U-high students, each week participants are pitted head-to-head against another team. Whoever has the most points at the end of the week wins. At the end of the season, the winner is determined by the team with

the best winning percentage.

People can join a fantasy basketball league through Yahoo! Fantasy at age 13, the ESPN fantasy app if 16 or older or DraftKings, a fantasy sports betting app for those age 18 and older.

One of the most crucial moments in fantasy basketball is the draft at the beginning of the season. Although some select their players using an autopick draft, where players are distributed equally and automatically, many

participants in fantasy basketball value the skill and strategy that comes with drafting players manually.

Ameya Deo, a junior, who participated in both fantasy basketball and football leagues, uses a specific strategy for drafting players to a team, which involves taking numerous factors into account to ensure an optimal lineup.

“Are there any trades happening? Is there any off-season signing that’s going on?” Ameya said. “And then once you have that, you should have a pretty good idea of maybe your first- or second-round pick of who you want and who you realistically think you’re going to get.”

Nathan Kilkus, a junior who plays fantasy basketball with other U-High students, said he recommends choosing underrated and undervalued players who can have a breakout year.

Although fantasy basketball certainly involves skill, Henry believes it is not necessary to follow sports closely or research players. Fantasy sports certainly do not need to be a large commitment.

“It’s really, like, you don’t have to be super into sports,” Henry said. “I certainly wasn’t, in the first couple of fantasy basketball leagues that I was in, where you sort of draft the team and you maybe set your lineups once a week, but otherwise, it’s very low commitment.”

Top Picks:	
1. Nikola Jockic:	Denver Nuggets
Averages: 25.8 points, 13.7 rebounds, 8.0 assists, 1.4 steals, 33.1 minutes	
2. Joel Embiid:	Philadelphia 76ers
Averages: 29.7 points, 11.1 rebounds, 4.5 assists, 1.0 steals, 32.9 minutes	
3. LeBron James:	Los Angeles Lakers
Averages: 28.9 points, 8.0 rebounds, 6.4 assists, 1.6 steals, 36.7 minutes,	
4. Giannis Antetokounmpo:	Milwaukee Bucks
Averages: 29.4 points, 11.3 rebounds, 6.0 assists, 1.0 steals, 32.8 minutes	
SOURCE: FANTASYPROS.COM	

Even if you do not have a large interest in basketball, William Meyer, a junior who is also in a fantasy basketball league with other U-High students, appreciates how fantasy sports can bring people together and spur conversation.

“It’s just something that we can all do together, it’s something that you can talk about with people,” William said. “If you don’t know what to talk about you can always bring up your fantasy team and talk about how your players are performing. It’s a shared value that you are able to connect with people about.”

INTO THE METaverse

With Facebook changing its name to Meta, countries announcing virtual embassies and teenagers making millions of dollars developing virtual land, the metaverse is the newest buzzword taking over the tech space. The potential applications in business, gaming, education and investing excite many. But will this idea remain a Silicon Valley fever dream, or is it the future of the internet?

Decoding the metaverse: Key questions answered

Glossary

Graphical processing unit: A computer chip that renders graphics for display on an electronic device. GPUs act as a sort of engine to present graphical content on computer or VR screens. All metaverses will rely on GPUs.

Blockchain: The blockchain provides a decentralized solution to verifying ownership of digital assets. The metaverse will require use of the blockchain for all transactions.

Cryptocurrency: A digital currency that is not backed by a centralized authority, such as a government or central bank. Cryptocurrencies will become essential to buy basic digital goods and services in the metaverse.

Artificial intelligence: With all the new data that companies will have access to, AI will become more predictive than ever. With data on physical movements, virtual AI people in the metaverse could quickly become indistinguishable from human users.

3D reconstruction: 3D reconstruction technology, developed by companies like Google and Matterport, allows users to scan real-world environments into digital ones. Using this technology, houses, stadiums and even cities will be realistically transformed into virtual space.

Augmented vs. virtual reality: AR places digital objects into the real world using a lens, like a phone camera. VR is an immersive experience that transports the user into a digital world using a headset. Both are part of the metaverse, but VR is much more immersive.

Internet of things: The IoT is a network of physical objects which connect to the internet. “Smart” products — speakers, thermostats, TVs, phones, refrigerators — are all examples of the IoT.

by BERK OTO
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The metaverse is a decentralized network of immersive 3D platforms that provide the possibility of living another life, entirely online. Instead of the internet, which allows users to access computers, the metaverse places users directly in them. This allows users to “live” essentially any experience through avatars, or virtual representations of people. Like the internet, the metaverse does not consist only of a single service or company. Rather, the term describes the totality of experiences and services in virtual or augmented reality.

Why should I be excited?

The metaverse has a multitude of uses. Microsoft invested heavily in the gaming industry, most recently through its \$68.7 billion acquisition of Activision Blizzard. The metaverse will revolutionize video games as they become more immersive, realistic and fun to play.

The company is focusing on making working from home a more viable option for everyone. Microsoft’s vision for the metaverse includes office spaces, schools and productivity-related software, all in virtual reality. Bill Gates even claimed that most business meetings would occur through the metaverse in two to three years.

The metaverse could also be a gateway for people to gain new, previously inaccessible experiences like traveling the world, attending digital festivals, socializing with new people, reliving historical events among other interesting applications. The latter is what Meta (formerly Facebook) is focused on developing. The unparalleled accessibility of these experiences could revolutionize education.

Another reason some people are rooting for the metaverse is the opportunity for money to be made with virtual land sales for millions of dollars, cryptocurrency investment, stocks for metaverse companies and more.

Why are companies excited?

Because the metaverse is completely immersive, companies involved in its development will be able to harvest data on every aspect of your life, from business to entertainment. This also includes data on your physical movements as virtual reality headsets will come with hand (and eventually foot) trackers to register real-world movements. This data can be useful for companies and governments, pri-

marily hyper-targeted marketing. The all-encompassing access that companies and governments will have into personal lives triggers privacy and security concerns in some experts and consumers.

Does the metaverse exist today?

Not exactly. Although softwares like Zoom may seem like an example of the metaverse, that’s not quite it. By definition, the metaverse must be immersive and 3D. Gaming is where the metaverse is most developed. Major companies have been pouring money into developing VR gaming as consumer graphics chips become more powerful and VR technology improves. Games like Roblox already have VR modes, social opportunity and robust in-game economies. At the same time, companies like Decentraland are offering their early versions of the metaverse, albeit quite rudimentary and often pointless. The hope for metaverse enthusiasts is for each of these pieces — communication, gaming, work, money-making — to develop sufficiently in VR to fit together and create a network.

Who owns the metaverse?

By definition, no one company can own the metaverse just like no one can own the internet. Massive companies like

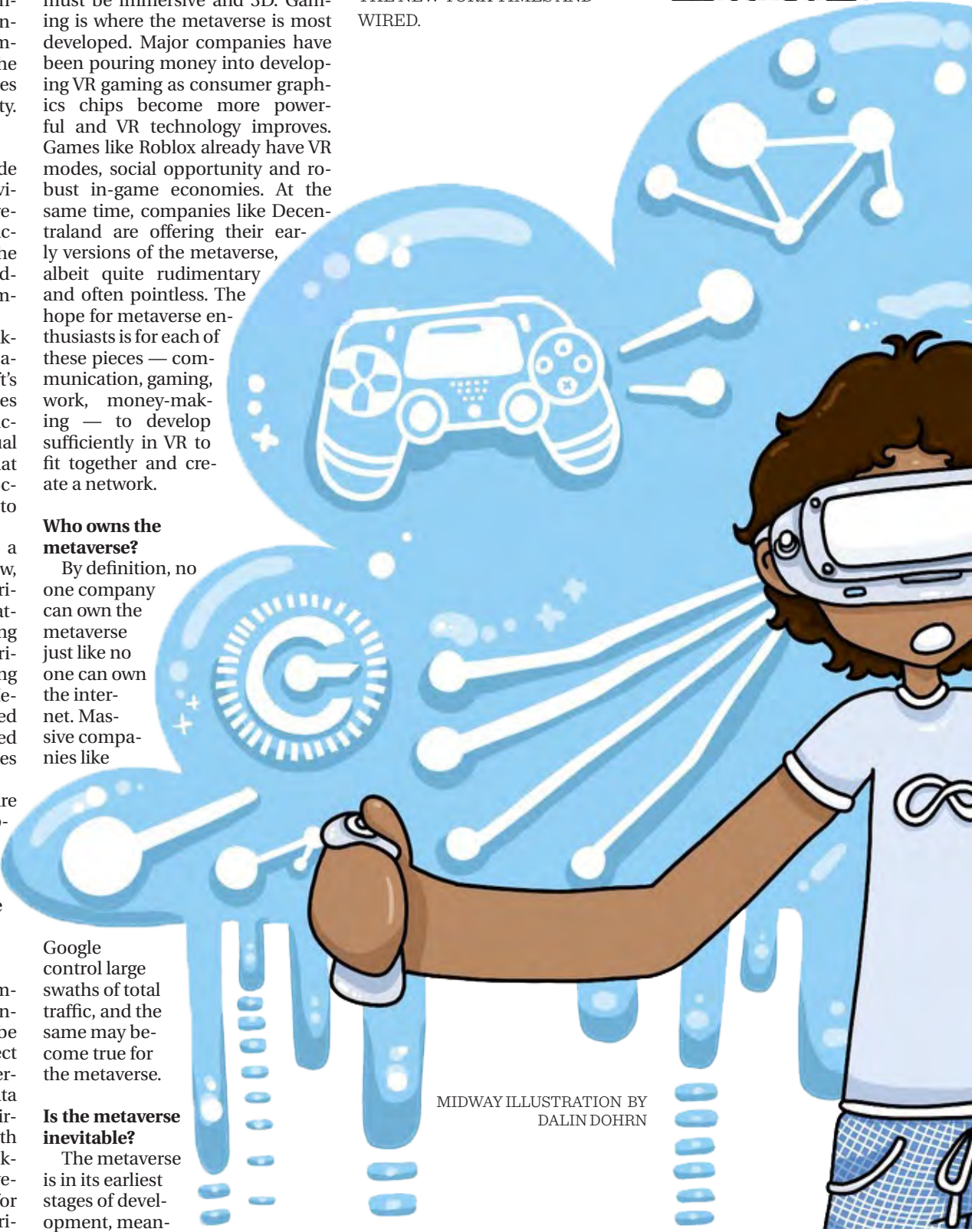
Google that there’s still a lot of uncertainty. Questions over privacy, security, feasibility, climate change and consumer demand means that widespread use of the metaverse is far from reality. Still, technology companies are pouring billions of dollars into overcoming these challenges, making it a serious possibility.

SOURCES: BINANCE ACADEMY, THE NEW YORK TIMES AND WIRED.

How did the metaverse begin?
Scan the QR code to see a timeline of the metaverse in augmented reality.



AUGMENTED
REALITY
CREATION BY
AMON GRAY



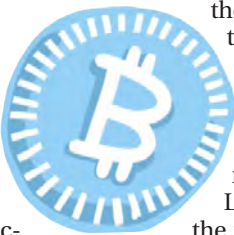
MIDWAY ILLUSTRATION BY
DALIN DOHRN

Metaverse investments offer big wins, bigger losses

by PETER COX
ASSISTANT EDITOR

The world of internet money-making is a bizarre place full of lives ruined and fortunes made overnight. The chance, however small, for massive reward often entices people, particularly those without financial education, to invest large amounts of their money into the next big thing. Currently that opportunity is the metaverse. However enticing, it is currently too early, too risky and dubiously legal for high schoolers to be investing in the metaverse.

Investment opportunities on



the cutting edge of internet technology are often characterized by a lack of understanding from investors about exactly what the product is, and the metaverse is no different. Lack of information about the technology has driven investment but also apprehension about potential returns.

Some tangible ways exist to invest in the metaverse. Companies making processors, like AMD and Qualcomm, have products that would be necessary for the functioning of the metaverse. Therefore, these companies have the potential to see stock share price increases if

the development of the metaverse continues.

Microsoft, Meta and even Roblox have made commitments, both verbal and monetary, to create a footprint in the metaverse. Meta has already invested \$10 billion in metaverse-related development, and Microsoft purchased Blizzard for \$68.7 billion, which they believe will “provide building blocks for the metaverse.” These companies’ involvement in the metaverse space could improve their performance if it does well in the next few years.

A variety of less established projects have also cropped up in the space, such as Decentraland and The Sandbox. Both of these projects

allow users to buy virtual plots of land, which are secured as NFTs on blockchain. These investments are much less known than more conventional investment methods, so it’s hard to know how they’ll do.

While the majority of digital investments remain in this state, financial educator Rebecca Maxcy, the director of the UChicago Financial Education Initiative, cautions people to think before they invest.

Ms. Maxcy recommends that the average person be a passive investor with a diverse portfolio. She cautions against purchasing single stocks and believes the same holds true for digital investments.

There are also concerns about

“I feel like there’s this gamification of investing right now, and it’s doing more harm than good.”

—REBECCA MAXCY,
FINANCIAL EDUCATION
INITIATIVE DIRECTOR

the involvement of young people in many of these digital investments.

Ms. Maxcy said, “I don’t think kids should be investing like this. If they want to do it, it should be coupled with financial education. I feel like there’s this gamification of investing right now, and it’s doing more harm than good.”

Early metaverses bring varying uses, concepts to expanding space

by CAROLINE HOHNER
FEATURES EDITOR

The term metaverse keeps popping up in headlines, tweets and conversations, but what do specific instances of it actually look like today?

In order to talk about the metaverse as a whole, it is important to look at some of the preliminary “metaverses.”

Here are overviews of four different virtual worlds with varying purposes and uses. Each bring users together in rapidly expanding virtual spaces.

Although each of these worlds are in their early stages, ambitious future plans and large investments make it worth keeping an eye on these metaverses. It is even possible that these metaverses will one day be household names like Minecraft and Zillow.



Roblox, a virtual world popular among younger teens, allows budding game developers to create, publish and profit from their games. The site launched in 2006, and has gained over 43.2 million daily users since, making it easily the oldest and most successful world on this list.



SOURCE: ROBLOX

Most users spend their time hopping from game to game, interacting with other users and spending a virtual currency called Robux, which can be bought with real money.

Roblox is free to download and use, but users need Robux to buy special items, private servers and avatars. Popular Roblox games include the pet-raising simulator “Adopt Me!”, the modern-day cops and robbers game “Jailbreak” and the supernatural high school simulator “Royale High.” While the site might raise concerns among parents over internet safety, Roblox offers various optional security features like chat filters and parental controls. Roblox is accessible for both VR and non-VR users.

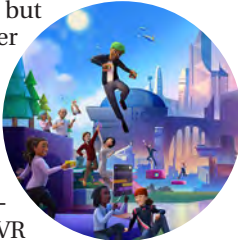
My Neighbor Alice, while also based on the blockchain, looks more like your typical farming simulator. For those familiar with the genre, think of it as if “Stardew Valley” and “Animal Crossing” had a baby, and that game was meant to finally explain to everyone what NFTs are. For those who haven’t, imagine a game in which the player pretends to own a farm and the land around it, but has to fund all that land with real money.



SOURCE: MY NEIGHBOR ALICE

The concept is similar to Decentraland’s virtual marketplace but in a package that allows players to enjoy the game without knowing too much about the financial side. Users own land, or islands, which they decorate using items bought using in-game currency known as ALICE token. Interestingly, in-game items can be purchased on external NFT marketplaces. The game’s FAQ promises in-game community events and a reputation system that rewards frequent users. The game isn’t VR and is set to be released this year. It aims to act as a gateway to start making money through cryptocurrency.

Meta’s Horizon Worlds is perhaps the best-known corner of the metaverse, but that corner has a high entry fee. Users need to get their hands on Meta’s Oculus Quest 2 VR headset before entering Horizon Worlds, which can cost them anywhere from \$300 to \$400. Despite this large barrier, Horizon Worlds recently gained its 300,000th user.



SOURCE: META

The virtual world differs in that its main purpose is to facilitate social interactions, and as of now there is no way for users to profit from it. Users sign up with their Facebook accounts and appear in a virtual space as a (rather unsettling) legless avatar. There, users can attend various social events and even code items into the game using a custom visual coding language. Relatively low usership has allowed Meta to station real, human employees in entry spaces to Horizon Worlds to orient new users. Horizon Worlds is focused on communal creation over financial gain. While this allows for more users who aren’t interested in digital assets, it still requires them to pay for a VR headset.

Decentraland, which launched in 2020, is a VR marketplace for online assets based on the Ethereum blockchain. It’s similar to a large-scale public multiplayer game server, where everything, down to the land and avatars, is an NFT.



SOURCE: DECENTRALAND

Unlike other virtual worlds, Decentraland fully decentralized and democratic: prices, content and policy are all driven by user votes. Users can purchase materials to build on plots of land using an in-world currency called MANA. The virtual real estate itself is represented by a currency named LAND. The whole world is laid out in a chunky, low-polygon (or low-poly) style, which players can explore freely using similarly styled avatars.

Creations range from digital art galleries to interactive theme parks. Players can build and explore however they like, but that freedom comes at a cost. Like other virtual worlds, Decentraland is more of an interactive opportunity to make money than a game. Still, the possibilities for virtual sales and creation led by the wants of players make it worth keeping an eye on.

Metaverses ought to stay decentralized

by ERICH RAUMANN
CONTENT MANAGER

Imagine a world where you can chat together with friends on a tropical beach, party in the Palace of Versailles, fly or fight dragons. Envision companies holding board meetings on the moon with people from across the world, or the ability for engineers, artists and architects to conjure up hundreds of different prototypes from nothing. This is just a small sampling of what the metaverse might be.

Such an environment can only be achieved if the revolution is pioneered by a wide array of contributors, not just a small group of tech giants, to allow for a wide range of competition and customer choice, and, just as importantly, alleviate some of the health and privacy concerns the metaverse comes with.



Erich Raumann

Compared to many technological revolutions of the past, the metaverse is a unique technological development: its primary component is social interaction. Social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter routinely increase engagement at the expense of mental health. The only reason

“If the entire metaverse is one company, people won’t be able to get the tailor-made experience they can access today through the standard internet.”

these companies are still around despite scandal after scandal is that they have a complete monopoly over online social interaction, with over 70% of social media usership dedicated to the largest five companies. This leaves disgruntled users with little other choice than to continue using these platforms.

If this anti-competitive trend continues into the metaverse, tech companies would have no reason not to use manipulative algorithms in the digital world — cashing in people’s happiness for money, promoting distrust and disinterest in the platform that would lead to a decrease in consumers, which in turn would lead to dwindling advancements in the platform. One of the key factors in the early internet’s success was that its diversity and breakthrough competition led to widespread innovation — without a similar trend being nurtured in the metaverse, it’s likely to be nothing more than a passing trend.

Large tech companies have been

trying for years to consolidate the gaming industry, something which is now positioned to be a fundamental part of the metaverse. The vast majority of non-gaming companies, with Microsoft’s Xbox being a notable exception, have failed to branch out into the gaming scene. With Microsoft purchasing game companies left and right, and Meta’s version of the metaverse being extremely lacking in any entertainment aspect, the metaverse currently has a grim, impersonal future.

Without any of the high-octane attractions which science fiction often fantasizes about, like the hyper-realistic video games of “Ready Player One” or the worldwide simulation puzzles in “The Three Body Problem,” the metaverse is nothing but a glorified version of VRchat. If the entire metaverse is one company, people won’t be able to get the tailor-made experience they can access today through the standard internet. Even if VR isn’t for everyone, it’s naïve to think that people will experience the metaverse in one homogeneous, standardized way.

The solution to the problems of manipulation, mismanagement and monotony in the metaverse is simple — similar to the internet. If the metaverse remains decentralized, an array of companies will be able to compete or collaborate for the best user experience.

Dance enriches and transforms lives

by AMY REN
REPORTER

With a raised hand, glittering costume and bells around her feet, junior Zara Baig enchanted her audience through her gestures, expressions and movements. For hours, she and two others danced for their graduation, switching between solo and ensemble performances.

2022 is designated as the “Year of Chicago Dance.” The citywide, yearlong focus on dance is the first initiative of its kind and will include dance performances and aims to encourage Chicago’s dance industry to address critical issues facing dancers and their field.

U-High is home to several dancers, but they don’t need a special citywide program to learn more about dance. They’ve been dancing for years, and continue to invest time and effort into their communities.

Sophomore Celine Deroitte has danced since she was 6 and has been at the Hyde Park School of Dance for seven years. She considers herself a classical dancer and her main style of dance is ballet, though she also does modern regularly.

Ballet is her favorite style of dance due to its emphasis on order and correctness.

“I like it because it has a sense of right and wrong,” Celine said, “and because I’ve been in it for the longest, comparative to the other styles of dance, I’ve been able to see improvement the most.”

Ballet is foundational to many dancers, since it teaches precision, posture and rhythm effectively.

“It builds a very clear foundation, and it can always be applied in every scenario,” Celine said. Unlike other types of dance, ballet’s “not the same, where you can apply your own style, just by changing your head a little bit or [moving] a hand. It really is what it is.”

The rigidity of ballet contrasts with many other styles, and junior Sarina Zhao likes how it’s different from modern. She is also part of the Hyde Park School of Dance and has danced since she was 4.

“[Modern’s] such a different movement style and different movement quality compared to ballet, and it works different parts of your body and mind. The fluidity and athleticism of both styles is very different,” Sarina said. “I think that having both of them gives me a much more well-rounded dance education.”

The precision and detail of ballet creates a different visual effect than modern’s body movements, such as contractions.

“Modern is a lot more grounded, which I like because it challenges me to use a different perspective to view dancing,” Sarina said, “whereas in ballet, there’s a lot of floaty things. The whole point of pointe shoes is to make it look like you’re not even walking, like you’re just floating through the air, and so everything is up. In modern, everything’s more grounded. The juxtaposition of those



IMAGE PROVIDED BY JEREMY SCHULTZ, MIDWESTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHY

DANCING STORIES. Junior Zara Baig dances Kathak, a form of Indian classical dance which she has been practicing for over 11 years. Zara uses dance to engage in storytelling which is accomplished through hand gestures and facial expressions.

two has been very, very good for my dance education.”

Many dancers are trained in more than one discipline, but junior Nora Underwood dances four styles for the Village of Orland Park Dance Company. They appeal to her for different reasons.

“Ballet, it’s kind of the formation. It’s the basis for everything else, and it’s very much about the lyricism, the musicality, and it’s more precise. Jazz is more showmanship and performance,” Nora said. “Tap is more rhythmic, and then modern is really about flowing your movements from one to the next and more expressive.”

Although she enjoys all four types of dance, Nora’s favorite is modern.

“I like modern the most because it’s more personalized,” she said. “You kind of adapt it to how you interpret a specific move or piece of music.”

Nora started dancing when she was 3. As her academic workload increased, she made the choice to drop modern this year. Still, she dances around seven hours a week. She finds motivation to continue dancing through her community.

“It’s something that I really love to do, and I have a really fun time with it. I really like the other people who are on my company,” Nora said. “If I’m tired or having a bad day, I always come out in a better mood after spending two and a half hours laughing.”

Junior Zara Baig has danced Kathak, a form of Indian classical dance, for more than 11 years. She credits Kathak with shaping who she is.

“It’s been part of my personal identity for a really long time,” Zara said. “I think without it, I wouldn’t be who I am today, because it’s really taught me discipline, work ethic, things like understanding, empathy, putting my own effort into things.”

While all forms of dance teach strength and control, Zara also learned how to identify with others through Kathak. The root word, “Katha,” actually means “storytelling,” and Kathak focuses on exactly that.

“The main purpose is to tell a story, whether that is about love, sadness, gods, things like that,” she said. “Facial and hand expressions, as well as gestures, are really important to help portray the story.”

Zara emphasized how critical understanding the story behind a dance is.

“You have to really understand the story from within if you really want to be a good storyteller. You have to try and empathize if you want to be a good storyteller,” Zara said. “Otherwise, it seems not genuine. The audience is not moved. It’s a useless performance. You’re just moving on stage — there’s no meaning to it.”

Dance has enriched and transformed the lives of these four students, and although much of the city won’t see the months of preparation leading up to a performance, “Year of Chicago Dance” is an excellent opportunity to learn more about these artists.

‘Euphoria’ Season 2 promotes unrealistic standards

by NOA APPELBAUM
HEALTH & WELLNESS EDITOR

Her eyes gleam with foiled eyeshadow, metallic in its texture and purple in hue. Sparkles embedded in her eye’s inner corner cast an iridescent glow when the hazy blue light hits it at just the right angle. Glitter glistens on her cheekbones, lifting her look to an otherworldly dimension. She is mystical, galactic perhaps. In fact, with her glazed eyes and far-off smile, you might even call her euphoric.

Season 2 of HBO’s hit show “Euphoria” has social media in a frenzy. Hundreds of fans are back to recreating the sparkly, editorial-style makeup looks derived from the show’s trademarked aesthetic.

Those who are less fond of the series, however, slam the show’s outfits (which are arguably not fit for high schoolers), the vulgar language and the over-the-top plotlines. Regardless of one’s personal opinions, the impressive cast, led by Zendaya, has cemented the show as a whimsical representation of high school, relationships and — rather counterintuitively — drugs.

Season 2 of “Euphoria” continues to utilize its unique style, shadowing a lack of plot with breathtaking cinematography. While the

show is undoubtedly ornamental, its substance trails as it promotes an unrealistic and overdramatized portrayal of drugs and high school.

The first four episodes of season 2, in contrast to season 1, bring an absence of storyline and more emphasis on characterization and film. While still maintaining its glittery style, the show has shifted gears toward a more classic aesthetic, replicating the rather grainy and overstated effect that old Hollywood generated.

The season splits its attention between two separate love triangles, and contrary to being boring or predictable as love triangles can often be, this actually works well — each character is distinct enough to keep the plot moving. The relationships and depth of character manages to keep viewers entertained: however, most show little-to-no positive growth, including Zendaya’s Rue, whose addiction to drugs has only mounted since the last season.

While the damaging effects of Rue’s drug use are not glamorized, her means of maintaining it is. The show continuously depicts the violent methods that teenagers go through to obtain and sell drugs, and while this might be somewhat informative, it is rather an unrealistic portrayal. In particular, the

life of Rue’s drug dealer and friend, Fez, seems to be more in line with an action movie than an accurate representation of teenage drug dealers.

While some might argue that “Euphoria” does not have to be realistic in order to get its point across, its primary message is often lost in the swirls of glitter and high-speed car scenes. While season 2 tackles dense issues not usually addressed in other shows, it often strays too far from its original theme addressing the perils of addiction, instead presenting story elements such as cop chases, enthralling drug exchanges, and unnecessary romance to keep viewers entertained.

The excessive violence laden throughout season 2 can distract from its original intent, which is an important one that influences today’s teenagers.

While slow-starting and perhaps too reliant on relationships and adventure, “Euphoria” continues to captivate viewers with its otherworldly cinematography, attractive and well-rounded cast along with the depth and storylines of its characters. Although the show’s second season has arguably dwindled slightly in quality from the first, it nevertheless has lived up to many viewers’ expectations.



SOURCE: HBO

EUPHORIC SEASON. “Euphoria” Season 2 builds on its successful first season and continues to bring breathtaking cinematography and excellent cast. While the second season somewhat deviates from the themes of the show, most fans were left satisfied.

Setting up SET: Senior schedules and sews behind the scenes

by **MEENA LEE**
SPORTS EDITOR

Enter stage left, dressed in black. Face the audience and bow. Pause. Exit stage right.

The audience at the final production of Student Experimental Theater Feb. 26 saw senior Inga Domenick onstage for barely a minute.

What they didn't see were all the hours she spent creating schedules, designing and sewing in the costumes room, overseeing script read-throughs and blocking, and communicating with directors, actors and crew members.

Student Experimental Theater is a completely student-run production of six student-written plays. As a creative costumes master, dedicated head of the SET board and theater manager, Inga has played an essential role in making SET an annual success.

Inga began working with SET in ninth grade, when she planned to join the costume crew with a friend.

Her friend didn't show up, but Inga did, and she realized how much she enjoyed being a part of SET.

"Freshman year, when I first joined, I'm like, 'I really like this crew,'" Inga said. "But then I didn't know how to sew then. And so I felt kind of useless in the crew."

That feeling dissipated by the next year when she learned to sew. During her junior year, she became costumes master.

"I think after that, I'm like, 'Wow, this is really fun. I can make a lot of cool things,'" Inga said. "Really, what keeps me going is, like, I just want to make better and better things. Because you know, I'll see the mistakes. And I would like to fix those things."

Inga had always been interested in fashion, but participating in costumes allowed Inga to expand her knowledge about design.

"I think costume design lets you explore more historical stuff, rather than, you know, going more contemporary and more modern," Inga said. "And I also really liked that they get to be put on stage and part of a performance, something bigger than just a fashion show."

Junior Esme Oliver works with Inga as a costumes apprentice and admires Inga's creativity.

"Being in theater keeps me motivated to work on it, because I know that everything has to come together. It's just something that I really love, and that's why I keep doing it."

— INGA DOMENICK,
SENIOR

"She has a lot of really cool costume designs that I think she was able to showcase well in SET," Esme said. "She puts a lot of care into the design of the costumes and kind of like making sure that each one fits each actor and, like, fits the role they're going to play."

This year, as head of the SET board and theater manager, Inga was responsible for the timing of rehearsals and production and oversaw almost everything.

"As head, I have to make sure that everything goes to schedule," Inga said. "I also have to create that schedule as well."

Liucija Ambrosini, the faculty adviser who works with SET, has worked with Inga since she was in ninth grade. According to Mrs. Ambrosini, Inga developed her time management skills well.

"You have to have a calendar view of something, and you have to be able to organize not only for the entire time period, but you have to organize weekly," Mrs. Ambrosini said. "And then, you have to organize what happens that day, and see from day to day that you are able to get to your goals. That's a very important aspect she's learned."

Additionally, Mrs. Ambrosini noted Inga's strong communication skills.

"In order to become a strong leader, you have to be able to communicate things that are needed, whether it's something that's needed in the moment or overall picture, or something that's needed next week," Mrs. Ambrosini said.

According to Mrs. Ambrosini, Inga took charge when SET needed to be performed over Zoom last year.

"She really, absolutely, took her duties very seriously, and fulfilled everything," Mrs. Ambrosini said.



MIDWAY PHOTO BY CHLOE MA

KEY PLAYER. Senior Inga Domenick sews costumes for this year's Student Experimental Theater performance. In addition to designing costumes, Inga played a pivotal role overseeing the production's development and coordinating directors, actors and crew members.

"She is just extremely dedicated."

Esme believes Inga demonstrates her commitment to SET by balancing all her roles.

"She divided the design process and construction process between the costume crew. She was doing the designing for costumes, while she was also directing," Esme said, and noted her hardworking nature.

The friends Inga has made through SET have made it a particularly special experience.

Inga said she will definitely miss the people she's met.

"The costumes room is like separated from the rest of the theater. Sometimes actors will go there if they're kind of tired, being surrounded by people," Inga said. "We can just have really like truthful, honest conversations with each other. So people on the crew, you know, you get to know them pretty well."

Inga's passion for theater inspires her to stay committed and work hard for SET. She's going to work for the spring production and plans to continue theater after high school.

"Being in theater keeps me motivated to work on it, because I know that everything has to come together," Inga said.

"It's just something that I really love, and that's why I keep doing it."

'Butter' portrays mental health struggles of high school

New film aims to positively impact teenagers and address social issues

by **AUDREY PARK**
ASSISTANT EDITOR

California activist Julia Bram remembers a day six years ago when her brother, Paul Kaufman, said he wanted to visit and tell her about his latest project. He came over with a well thought out, striking presentation, depicting what would be the family's next passion project.

Mr. Kaufman, winner of the Canadian Screen Award and an Emmy Award, adapted the book "Butter" for the screen, which he also produced and directed. Released in theaters on Feb. 25, "Butter's Final Meal" or "Butter," portrays the life of an obese teenager who deals with one of the most universal struggles of being a teenager: mental health.

The movie was filmed in 20 days in 2018 and cost about \$1.75 million for production. Ms. Bram served as executive producer and said the film was made like a true

indie movie.

"'Butter' was created on a shoestring," she said. "The movie's production was completely independent, and we are really proud of being on budget and on time."

"Butter's Final Meal" is based on a young adult novel by Eric Jade Lange.

After reading the book, Mr. Kaufman said he could personally identify with the topics of mental health discussed as he had two teenagers at the time.

"I wanted my next film to have a positive social impact, and I wanted it to be that film specifically by helping teens while being entertained by a funny movie," he said.

After securing the rights of the book, Mr. Kaufman initiated the process of fundraising. Ms. Bram said the process attracted like-minded people, including cast and crew members, as well as financial support outlets.

"These were people who wanted



SOURCE: IMDB

FINAL MEAL. Released on Feb. 26, 'Butter' is based on a young adult novel by Eric Jade Lange.

to make a difference in the world, who wanted to promote kindness and who wished to advocate for mental health," she said.

The process also entailed ensuring the movie was not romanticizing mental health.

"If you see someone different from you, realize they are a person, a human being like you who has feelings, a brother, sister, parent, is a parent, likes many of the same things you do."

—PAUL KAUFMAN,
DIRECTOR

"My brother did not take the whole process regarding mental health lightly," Ms. Bram said. "He reached out to the Jed Foundation, a suicide prevention center for teens and young adults. They actually edited the script and the movie."

Mr. Kaufman hopes after watching the movie, people will be less judgmental and that it will empower others to identify if a friend needs help, an idea discussed on "Butter's" R U OK campaign.

"If you see someone different from you," he said, "realize they are a person, a human being like

you who has feelings, a brother, sister, parent, is a parent, likes many of the same things you do."

Ms. Bram mentioned the story of Kevin Hill, who survived an attempted suicide when he jumped off of the Golden Gate Bridge.

"He said the second he jumped, he knew he had made a terrible mistake. He reached out to the others who survived the jump, and they all said the same thing," she said. "His story is incredibly inspirational and a reminder that change is possible."

This heartfelt comedy-drama not only addresses the challenges posed by teenage life and mental health, but also encourages viewers to enact change in their daily lives such as simply asking a friend if they're OK.

"It is extremely important that we open up about mental health," Ms. Bram said.

"Just two years ago, the topic was kind of a taboo and something shamed upon. But now, let's normalize talking about mental health because it truly is a normal thing."

THE DIRECTOR:
Kara Tao

She sits in the shadows, capturing the actors' every detail. Lights flash above, bouncing off the lines of nerve and stamina etched onto her forehead. Stagehands test each orb's luminosity, draping the theater in a glow that only those present could ever truly appreciate.

Kara Tao was directing now, but this newfound power didn't make her any less intimidated. Having played many different characters in her lifetime, most would think creating her own roles and world would be an easy feat. But Kara was concerned, not with the contents of her play that she had been assigned and certainly not with the lack of talented actors that encircled her director's stand. She was anxious about the quality of her directing, the choices she would have to make and the people she couldn't let down.

She knew from a young age that her path was not laid out clearly for her. Choose this career. Apply to this school. Utilize this instrument.

She insisted on performing, despite the wishes of those around her. But even then, while embodying the roles of fairies or gibberish-speaking aliens, she had become a little too adept at taking others' footsteps.

It was time to direct her own play.

Soon, Kara would pace around the room on her own, movement and entries and exits still fresh in her mind. Soon, she would have to decide. She would have to build a cast list, selecting the direction she wanted to go, the people she would take with her and those who would be left behind.

Soon, she'd have the courage to make broad motions, to tell it as it is, to create distinct settings, and shout from behind the director's chair.

Those around her line up to perform. They are nervous and smiling, giddy even. They look at her expectantly.

"Whenever you're ready," she said.

— NOA APPELBAUM

SOMETHING NEW:
Catherine Cheng

She stands over the countertop, kneading the dough for another batch.

First assembling, then measuring, she finishes by carefully sprinkling in a new type of flour.

Peering through her thick-rimmed glasses, she crosses the orange-infused bread off her list.

And day by day, she wakes up to drop her kids off at school. Then she drives to the clinic she works at. She has nearly perfected this routine for years.

She talks with her patients in primary care, prescribes medicine and finishes the shift by reviewing test results.

Catherine Cheng works each day with a purpose: to improve.

She believes that to do so, tweaks and adjustments are needed.

And when talking with her patients she always throws in new questions before observing their responses.

Many are dropped. But a lucky few etch themselves into her permanent list of questions.

"Always try something new," she says.

Putting her orange-infused bread into the fridge, she takes out another batch, this time infused with vanilla lager. Its warm smell has grown to be one of comfort as it dances in the kitchen air.

The previous batch of vanilla lager bread had been too dry. And the first time it was burnt altogether. But this batch has none of those problems.

She knows that this bread was turning out better than her previous attempts. More importantly, she knows there is always room for improvement, a statement she carries.

She jots down a few notes, ingredients, measurements, and what she would do differently.

She had only picked up baking last Halloween, but it has found a core place in her routine.

"Life is short," she would insist. She understands the need to add a new ingredient to life.

To refine a routine, in work and leisure.

To reach for better results than before.

To grow.

— ETHAN SWINGER



MIDWAY ILLUSTRATION BY ALINA SUSANI

The Advanced Journalism students each wrote a story around 300 words long, each focused on a universal theme and a unique individual. "Lives in 300 words" is a compilation of six of these pieces, showcasing the reporters' writing and the messages in the narratives.

SOMETHING HE CAN NEVER LOSE:
Ethan Van Ha

He lost soccer first.

Lost baseball, piano and a majority of middle school due to absences.

Life passed him by while the throbbing pain to the left of his navel got worse.

It took a bathroom floor, a sleepless night and 10 days in the hospital to realize the pain would persist.

Ethan Van Ha was diagnosed with chronic abdominal pain in sixth grade.

Life continued in full color as he pursued art. It was an easy way for him to "express his emotions," he says.

He took his necessary medication and held onto his wallet, chapstick, phone and art supplies.

He soon lost the optimism that once existed within him. The blue, yellow and pink hues his life once comprised transformed into gray and black tubes of paint.

Lost his wallet, chapstick and moments from high school. Through doodles during class to larger projects over the summer, he continued to show aspects of his life when

words wouldn't let him.

He took more medication.

Lost his memory and experienced numbness.

As the pain he once felt began to depart, so did the pleasures and joys of life.

What remained through it all was art. It was a means of distraction that was consistently there for him when nothing and no one else was.

During his senior year of high school, he walks into the English classroom and takes a seat. Accompanying him is the sharp pain to the left of his navel and his notebook.

With a black pen in hand, he adds elaborate details to the simple outlines on the corner of his page.

And then he leaves the room. Deep in his mind, he knows he will never pursue soccer, baseball or piano. Or regain days of school he missed from the pain.

Yet he will always have art, something he can never lose.

— ADRIANNA NEHME

DRESSING THE PART:
Linsbert Reynolds

Like every other morning, senior Linsbert Reynolds springs out of bed to stand in front of his mirror for about 30 minutes and decides what to wear.

His gaze darts back and forth. First at his reflection, then his three closets full of clothing.

He picks out a pair of ripped designer jeans in his favorite color: black. Now, he needs to pick a shirt, accessories and a pair of shoes that contrasts pleasantly with his pants.

He holds a simple white shirt against his body in the mirror: it's too simple, he decides. A swing and a miss.

By the time Linsbert gets to school, he's wearing a different set of black pants, the third shirt he convinced himself looked good, a new pair of sneakers and a sling pack across his chest.

He's on the board.

Linsbert didn't always care about the way

he dressed. When other kids made fun of his haphazard outfits, he remembers feeling shame and sadness.

Now, he walks the halls with his head held high, saying "What's up?" to everyone he likes, dislikes or barely even knows.

He no longer cares what others think — his outfit is an extension of his personality.

When he dresses boldly, he's confident about himself. The world is his court, and he feels like the king.

He knows this feeling won't go unchallenged throughout the day: a bad test grade, a heartbreak, an unpleasant encounter with a friend.

Even still, at the end of the day he can look back at his reflection to see that he's the same person he always was, and nothing can take that away from him.

Every day he ends with that feeling is a day he's won.

— BERK OTO

A GRISLY SCENE:
Jennifer Huo

The smell of rancid flesh and rotting blood wafts across the room. A knife scrapes through muscle, fat and connective tissue. A wet squelch slithers from the severed head. Stained tan butcher paper crinkles as the skull thuds against the table.

Three to five days a week, this grisly scene is pulled from a horror movie and plunked into a biology room. The skins of two squirrels, a vole and nine birds of varying sizes are packed with salt and dry on the same desk.

"It's interesting and fun; I learn from every specimen," senior Jennifer Huo says, grinning. "I enjoy the process, since it's calming, going through the actions."

Twirling her scalpel and tilting her head, she eyes her current project, squinting through the smell. Her hands, covered in splattered blue latex gloves, turn the once-frozen goat's head from side to side.

While one hand pulls the skin and fat away from the jaw, the other slices deftly at the off-white spiderwebbing holding the goat's face together. For this project, she wants the skull but not the skin, so she can make harsher cuts.

Gripping the black horns, she shakes the skull. Small chunks of ice crumble from the mouth cavity. She flips the skull so the base faces the ceiling and jabs the scalpel into the brainstem, over and over, softening the tissue until she can scoop it out. The scalpel gives a jarring whisper against the inside of the skull. The mushy pile of brain grows and grows.

After cutting most of the skin from the muscle, she rips it away from the skull.

Next, she'll let the flesh-eating beetles have their way for a week or so. Then she'll soak the skull, first in ammonia and then hydrogen peroxide and water.

As the beetles work, though, she'll start a new project, feed her curiosity with another animal.

— AMY REN

FAMILY:
Nico Ahmed

In the bad matches, there's no groaning, just a slow deflation, rubbing of foreheads, mentions of problems in the code.

In the good matches, there's no cheering, just a thick undercurrent of pure ecstasy, silent pumping of fists, a couple thumbs-ups to the drivers.

At the center of it all sits Nico Ahmed, smiling abundantly whenever possible, frowning only when absolutely necessary.

With a steady hand and soft voice, the unofficial, uncontested leader of the robotics team rides the waves of victory, defeat, desperation, frustration, last-minute build frenzies, and robot-broke-five-minutes-before-the-match disasters.

It started on a whim with a couple of friends, this family which Nico is the grandparent of.

It started years ago, founded on pizza and soda and confusion and ambition.

It started before the pandemic, before the insurrection, before broken relationships, before arguments, before everything, it seems.

It never stopped, never for a moment - through the years, through the chaos and strife, sits Nico, refastening bolts, redesigning chassis, retrofitting old components with just as much patience and accuracy as he resolves arguments and repairs relationships.

It's nothing special, this little team.

It doesn't get flashy awards, it's not the best in the state, let alone the nation, it's nothing more than a footnote in the all-important college application.

For Nico, for a few others, it's far more than that.

It's a rare chance to express yourself, a rare chance to collaborate completely with a crowd of people, to use your hands and actually create something, something that you all understand, that you all are proud of.

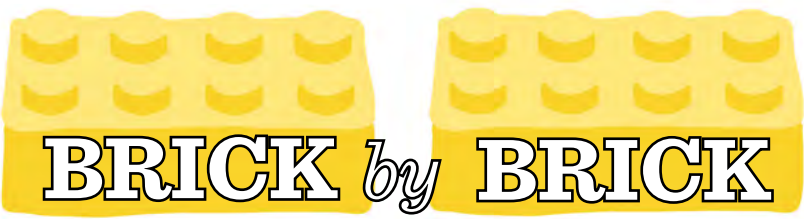
In the bad matches, there's no groaning, just a slow deflation, rubbing of foreheads, mentions of problems in the code.

But it doesn't matter.

Now we know what to do next, now we can improve.

Or, at least, that's what Nico says.

— ERICH RAUMANN



MSI exhibits the artistic potential of Lego blocks

Art of the Brick exhibit garners nostalgia, praise

by JOAQUIN FIGUEROA
REPORTER

When most people think about Legos, they think back to their days as children where they used these small, colorful bricks to build their own unique sculptures. Most would not imagine Legos could become a form of visual art. Yet, at the Museum of Science and Industry, crowds gather in the middle of a dark room, looking up at a yellow man standing with his chest ripped open, his yellow Lego insides pouring out.

Families, couples and groups of friends can view over 100 Lego sculptures, recreations of famous artwork and Lego brick-infused photography at The Art of the Brick exhibit at the MSI. The exhibit was an entertaining and nostalgic experience that allows the viewer to appreciate the creativity found among simple objects in art.

The exhibit, open until Sept. 5, emphasizes the expression of emotions through art, specifically Legos. Not only do the two galleries of the exhibit bring out these emotions, but at the end they allow viewers to express their emotions by making their own Lego builds the same way Nathan Sawaya, the artist, has.

The middle of the second gallery holds a small display of six emotions — joy, fear, sadness, surprise, disgust and anger — where viewers can interact with the artwork by adding to a stack of Legos that corresponds to the emotion they experience when looking at the art.

Guests are given the option to play a game at the end of the exhibit which allows them to either make a build that matches one of the images they selected and compare it with the other guests they are visiting with, or to make a build that resembles one of the six main emotions that the exhibit



MIDWAY PHOTO BY JOAQUIN FIGUEROA

BUILDING BLOCKS. Pictured is one of the displays presented at the Art of the Brick exhibit at the Museum of Science and Industry. Made entirely of Lego blocks, the exhibit aims to showcase emotion through Lego art, offering visitors an interactive experience where they can both observe the art showcased, and experiment with their own builds.

it focuses on.

MSI staff members provide a breakdown of the game's purpose and explain Mr. Sawaya's intentions behind the entirety of the exhibit: to show people how well they can express their emotions through art and something as simple as Legos.

For adults who are not members, museum admission is \$21.95, and admission into the exhibit is

\$14 more. The museum does offer free days only requiring paid admission into this exhibit.

My first sight of the Legos instantly brought back memories of me making the messiest constructions and made me truly appreciate the effort put into the exhibit because of the attention to detail in every piece of art. The exhibit brought out a feeling of joy more than any other emotion. I enjoyed

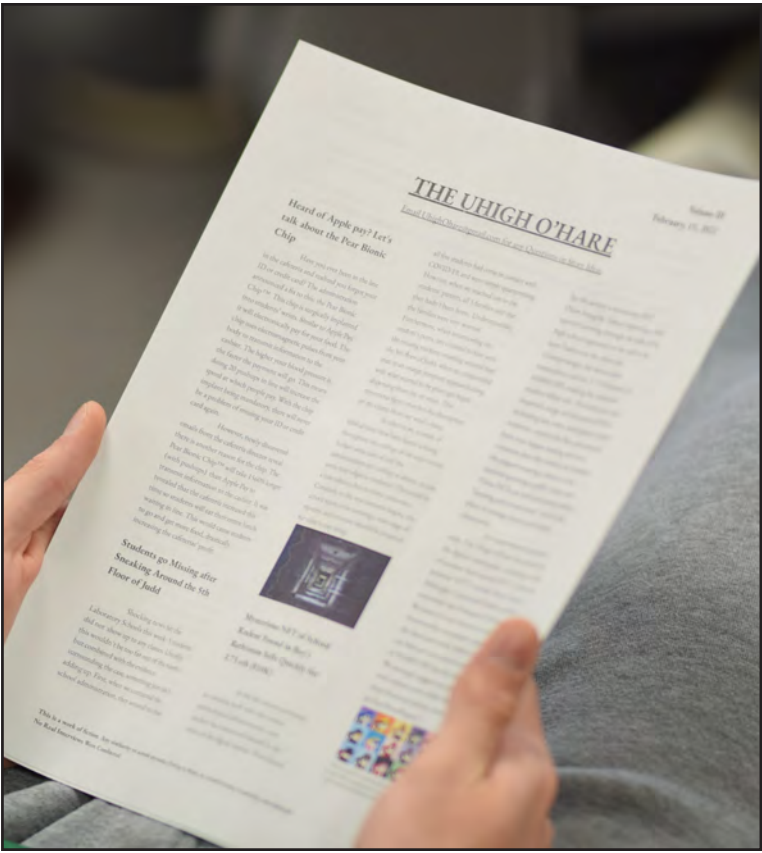
“My first sight of the Legos instantly brought back memories of me making the messiest constructions and made me truly appreciate the effort put into the exhibit because of the attention to detail in every piece of art.”

seeing how something so simple, a Lego, can be adapted to make an entire exhibit of art.

People who are looking to reconnect with their childhood and to get in touch with fine art in a

playful way should experience the exhibit. Even though it can get a little busy and a little expensive, it is worth it to see this unique, innovative and emotion-evoking artwork.

Move over Midway: Spoof paper circulates Lab halls



MIDWAY PHOTO BY MATTHEW MCGEEHEE

TAKING OFF. A student holds on to a printed copy of the U-High O'Hare, a student-run humor newspaper that has been circulating U-High since December.

by RYAN CLARK
OPINION EDITOR

Seeking out O'Hare instead of Midway this time around? You might get more than what you bargained for, perhaps even an airplane trip straight to cackles and comedy.

The U-High O'Hare, a new student-created humor newspaper for the high school, began in December with the modest aspiration of seizing control of the school news.

“We were like, ‘Oh, we should take over Student Council.’ Can't really do that, that's difficult,” said Henry Koyner, one of the group of friends in the Class of 2023 that created the O'Hare. “Next best option, take over the media! So we were like, ‘We got to overtake the Midway.’”

Fortunately, the O'Hare's founders fitted their arsenal with little more than jokes and generous access to the library printers. Since its inception, the publication's staff has distributed copies to students and teachers with articles like “Students go Missing after Sneaking Around the 5th Floor of Judd” and “The Harrowing Tale of Lower Sunny.”

The paper's name itself is a joke,

a riff on the U-High Midway sharing its name with the Midway International Airport.

Henry describes the O'Hare as operating through a “pseudo-club” with six or seven members who meet during lunch on Tuesdays. Usually, writers for the O'Hare will brainstorm on Tuesdays and write over the weekend before printing.

While the O'Hare intends to be lighthearted rather than satirical, and the writers don't want to provoke controversy, subjects have included school coronavirus policy and cafeteria payment rules.

“We're not trying to maliciously poke fun at anyone, but if you want to be funny, you have to poke fun at something,” Henry said.

For the O'Hare staff, entertaining others with their writing is its own reward.

“I think it's nice to be able to collaborate with your friends and sort of put something out there with all of them that at least it seems like people are enjoying,” Henry said.

The jokes about life at Lab also help to create a sense of a shared perspective among students.

“It's nice to have a little inside joke with the school, it kind of makes it feels that there's a lot

more school unity that sometimes feels a little lacking at Lab,” Ana Cucalon, a junior, said.

For junior Liam De Jong, another writer for the O'Hare, seeing his English teacher, Sari Hernandez, enjoy their work was particularly gratifying.

“It's not just the students that are enjoying it, it's also the teachers that are also enjoying it, which makes us want to continue doing it more,” Liam said.

Ms. Hernandez, who enjoys satirical comedy on television, was happy to read some in a student publication.

“I just appreciated the different angle that it took and that I actually would laugh out loud,” Ms. Hernandez said, who was particularly delighted with one of the O'Hare's newer comedic targets. “I love the most recent one that mentioned the English Department and how we only teach sad, depressing books,” she said, “because I have had students ask me in the past, they're like, ‘When are we going to read a happy book?’”

The O'Hare hopes to become a weekly publication and continue their running gags. They encourage anyone interested to send ideas to UhighOhare@gmail.com.

Dedicated PromCom plans passionately

Committee forms bonds through organizing dance

by **TÉA TAMBURIO**
MANAGING EDITOR

Walking through the U-High lobby and Café Lab, senior Ariana Vazquez remembers being an underclassman and seeing members of the prom committee selling Dippin’ Dots and sweatshirts with “UH” in large white letters. A few years ago, she didn’t know much about prom, let alone that soon she would be one of the prom committee members fundraising for her own class’s big night.

With the first full-scale prom since the pandemic just three months away, the Class of 2022’s prom committee is dedicated to creating a memorable night through fundraising, generating ideas and team collaboration.

“There’s so many different aspects to Prom Com as a whole that go just beyond planning a school dance,” committee member Tarini Mutreja said. “You’re really planning an experience more so than a dance.”

It was hearing about this planning experience from her older sister, a Lab alumna, that motivated Ashley Hannah to join the Prom Committee.

“When she was doing it I was like, ‘When I’m a senior, junior or whenever, I wanna be a part of that, too,’” Ashley said. “I like to plan things a lot. I like to organize things, so that drew me to the position of being on the board, too.”

This first full prom since 2019 will take place June 4 at the Zhou B Art Center in the Bridgeport neighborhood. According to Ariana, being affected by the pandemic throughout high school makes her and the committee grateful to experience an in-person prom.

“Everyone’s goal is to make this one great,” Ariana said. “I think we all know that we deserve this after



MIDWAY PHOTO BY ANDREW BURKE-STEVENSON

CONSCIENTIOUS COMMITTEE. Senior Ashley Hannah asks Dean of Students Ana Campos a question about fundraising during a prom committee meeting at lunch on March 3. The committee meets every Thursday to plan this year’s prom, which will be the first one since 2019 to take place off campus.

coming from the pandemic and everything, and we’re just incredibly lucky to like actually have this.”

Ashley recognizes that prom is unlike other U-High dances, and this recognition drives her excitement and passion for planning.

“I think it makes it more special not having our homecoming dance as like this huge thing,” Ashley said. “We aren’t like a lot of other schools where you ask someone to be your date, you get dressed up and you have a corsage. That’s, like, not really a thing, except for prom.”

Seeing prom as a quintessential high school event, Ariana commits herself to planning with the ultimate goal of creating a fun and memorable night for herself and her peers.

“I want it to be like the movies,” she said. “If I know what’s happening and know what to expect, I can put my all into it to have everybody else have fun.”

With making memories and creating an enjoyable night as the committee’s central goal, members meet weekly to originate

ideas and plan fundraisers.

“It’s nice to know that people can come to us with ideas and questions and we can present them to the whole group,” Ashley said. “Everyone’s really open to new ideas and open to listening to each other. It’s nice to have all those ideas ricocheted off of each other and just working together.”

One of the fundraisers the prom committee facilitated was for the Class of 2022’s Scholarship Fund, where the goal was to receive donations from 50% of the class.

Prom facts:

Who: The Class of 2022

What: First off-campus prom in three years

When: June 4

Where: Zhou B Art Center

Why: To give seniors a memorable event at the end of their high school careers

How: Through extensive planning by the prom committee

Those who donated received a “Class of 2022” baseball hat.

“We had a couple of days of the week where we would all wear our hats together, and so that kind of solidarity among Prom Com is what really allowed us to get our fundraisers to where we’re at because just having everyone on the same page, everyone having the same spirit and enthusiasm, has been really great,” Tarini said.

Along with fundraising for the class scholarship fund, the committee also held a Dippin’ Dots fundraiser to help offset some prom expenses.

“We’re all so dedicated to fundraising, and we’re all kind of supporting each other throughout fundraisers,” Tarini said. “If one person makes an announcement, the other person jumps in.”

While she’s looking forward to prom night itself, for Ariana, this type of team collaboration is one of the most rewarding aspects of being on the prom committee.

“I enjoy planning it because I know that night’s gonna be great,” Ariana said. “But I know that once it happens and it’s over, the thing I’m going to miss most is the planning process and meeting with these people every week.”

It’s OK to moisturize: Guys seek to rethink skin care

by **KRISHITA DUTTA**
ARTS CO-EDITOR

Through face-mask selfies at sleepovers and Glossier pink billboards that feature girls dripping serum under their eyes, the skin care phenomenon is a part of people’s daily lives. Such skin care products are largely oriented toward girls and women, but increasingly, boys and men are targets for a skin care routine, too.

Male students at U-High engage in facial skin care, yet feel limited to keep their routines at a more hygienic rather than aesthetic level. According to students, this is fueled by a lack of talk about men’s skin care and the presence of feminine connotations of more extravagant facial routines.

Students say they engage with a variety of skin care products and brands to help them feel clean and provide them with a satisfying routine to end their day. According to senior Jasper Billingsley, having a skin care routine helps him to feel more confident.

“I would say confidence and hygiene go hand in hand for me,” Jasper said. “If I practice healthy habits, that makes me more confident.”

Similarly, junior Charlie Benton uses skin care as a way to feel cleaner and more confident.

“I do skin care because it makes me feel good, and when I feel good I feel a lot more confident. I think there is no difference between washing your face and putting on



MIDWAY PHOTO BY MATTHEWMCGEHEE

HABITUAL HYGIENE. Junior Blake Dunkley applies a cream to his face. Many male students utilize skin care routines, but they find that products are not marketed well toward a male audience.

moisturizer, and washing your hair and taking a shower,” Charlie said. “I feel cleaner and better, but mostly it’s just for hygienic purposes.”

However, skin care for men in the public discussion — especially in the media and skin care advertisements — isn’t treated the same as skin care for girls at all. According to Charlie, men’s skin care is not talked about enough — and when it is, it’s not done right.

“I think there is a problem with

these products that are advertised as so manly, like musky and charcoal and such terms, but in reality they destroy your skin,” Charlie said. “I feel like the industry making men’s skin care products so stereotypically masculine isn’t helping. It’s not helping the stereotypes surrounding skin care, and it’s not helping your skin either.”

Senior Will Trone has had a similar experience being disappointed with how men’s products are por-

“The products are geared toward women, which is really stupid because I also want to have nice skin, but in middle school, when I’d go to the store I would never go into an entire section of women’s beauty products, but that’s where all the skin care would be. So I just never knew about any of it.”

— JASPER BILLINGSLEY

trayed in the skin care industry.

“I would definitely say that the only skin care ads I do see on TikTok or Snapchat are women showing off their skin care, and it’s definitely geared and advertised towards women. I feel like I never see gender-neutral or men’s skin care advertised,” he said. “I obviously think that that’s dumb, because there’s no gender on skin care.”

According to students, this gender divide within the world of skin care has pushed men’s skin care to remain at being purely hygienic and avoid any aesthetic connotations. According to Jasper, it has also limited men’s knowledge of skin care.

“The products are geared toward women, which is really stupid because I also want to have nice skin,” Jasper said. “But in middle school, when I’d go to the store I would never go into an entire

section of women’s beauty products, but that’s where all the skin care would be. So I just never knew about any of it.”

According to a study conducted by ACUPOLL Precision Research and Tiége Hanley, only 59% of young men believe that men need to look after their skin. Further, this limited knowledge leads to men resorting to alternate options that aren’t as beneficial or effective. For example, 80% of men surveyed simply used women’s skin care, alongside 45% who simply used bar soap.

Because of this, Charlie believes that skin care should not be seen fit for only a certain gender.

“I really don’t think gender should be associated with skin care at all unless it’s specific things like beard oil or beard care,” Charlie said. “Overall, I don’t think it’s talked about enough, and when it is talked about, it’s not talked about the right way.”

Will believes that the way skin care is discussed among men steers it away from being about anything more than hygiene.

“I don’t know if I’d say it’s stigmatized, but it’s definitely not talked about as much with guys because it’s seen as feminine,” Will said. “I don’t think any of my guy friends ever talk about skin care, at least as much as I might hear girls talk about it as something to do for fun, so I’ve never seen it as anything other than just keeping myself clean.”

Gen Zzz: Finding ways to sleep

Melatonin usage is rising; experts push alternatives

by **LOUIS AUXENFANS**
ASSISTANT EDITOR

In the hour just before dawn, thoughts are still racing around in junior Anna Bohlen's brain. With her eyes still wide open, she is on the verge of pulling an all-nighter because the supply of melatonin gummies she takes every night has run out.

Melatonin supplement usage has doubled in America over the past decade, according to a study recently published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, and while some U-High students take melatonin to help sleep, others use methods like journaling, reading and staying off electronics before bed to initiate a more natural sleep response and practice healthy sleep habits.

Melatonin is a hormone that is primarily produced during low levels of light, like nighttime, to regulate sleep cycles. While melatonin supplements have clinical short-term uses for jet lag or shift workers, Dr. Esra Tasali, associate professor of medicine and director of the Sleep Research Center at the University of Chicago, cautioned taking melatonin supplements regularly for sleep.

"When the secreted hormone levels are low, when you add the supplement, then it can be helpful," Dr. Tasali said. "But when the levels are high in the evening hours, adding more melatonin, to help on a routine basis to help for your sleep initiation, is not the first recommended use of it."

Dr. Tasali said some side effects of taking melatonin on a chronic basis could be drowsiness, fatigue or headaches.

While melatonin is available over the counter, the long-term effects of melatonin supplements are still unknown. Additionally, because melatonin pill production



MIDWAY ILLUSTRATION BY DALIN DOHRN

MAKING MELATONIN. With the long-term effects of melatonin pills unknown, researchers recommend other sleep methods instead. Some U-High students have taken to journaling while other use meditation apps such as Murmur in order to rest more naturally.

is not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, the amount of melatonin content per pill can deviate as much as -83% to +478% from the advertised amount, according to one study.

Instead of taking melatonin pills, Dr. Tasali strongly recommends natural sleep methods, like staying away from electronic devices an hour before sleep because the blue light emitted from screens may suppress melatonin production.

Even though Anna takes melatonin supplements, she also tries to implement natural sleep methods like shutting off screens and reading an hour before bed.

Anokha Nathan, a junior, took melatonin occasionally last year, but now journals before going to sleep. She has a bullet journal to doodle and write her to-do list, and a regular journal to express herself and jot down her feelings on paper, which makes her feel relaxed before going to sleep.

"It's just something that helps me kind of de-stress and get my brain out of this, you know, mindset where I'm like, 'I gotta solve this problem, or I gotta turn this in on time,'" Anokha said.

Anokha likes journaling more than taking melatonin because it serves as a natural cue for her to recognize when to sleep.

"It's more low key, you know. It's not kind of like, 'OK, I have to take this,'" Anokha said. "I feel like it's kind of a nice transition from doing my homework to going to bed, and with taking melatonin I didn't get that transition."

Junior Joe Bremer tries to stay off screens half an hour before sleep and stop homework at 10 p.m. in order to rest. He said he developed poor habits over the pandemic.

"My sleep habits just sort of deteriorated to the point where I was going to bed at like, 2 or 3 a.m. every night," Joe said.

Before falling asleep every night, Joe also uses the app Murmur to record an audio journal as a med-

itative practice to get down any anxieties and thoughts still racing around his head. While high school has a lot of homework, Dr. Tasali reiterated the importance of sleep for cognitive function and academic achievement.

"The same homework that you would be able to do in 20 minutes, you're spending an hour on it, because you're sleep deprived," Dr. Tasali said. "But if you were to get more sleep, it's not a waste of time. It is actually making you more efficient to accomplish the same task in a shorter amount of time."

Joe's suggestion to students: "Don't just have a wake up alarm, also have a go-to-sleep alarm."

Cafeteria food may sacrifice health for convenience

by **SAHANA UNNI**
CONTENT MANAGER

Chicken tenders. Cheeseburgers. French fries. Sophomore Alex Cheng looks at the food offered in the cafeteria, trying to decide what he wants his lunch to consist of. Not wanting to waste his 40-minute lunch waiting in the long lines for custom sandwiches or stir-fry, Alex and many other students often gravitate towards less nutritious options.

With obesity rates among children growing, the Biden administration has partially reverted to the student nutrition policies created by the Obama administration. These standards, which are planned to be rolled out over the next two school years, require schools to limit sodium, provide more whole-grain options and offer low-fat milk.

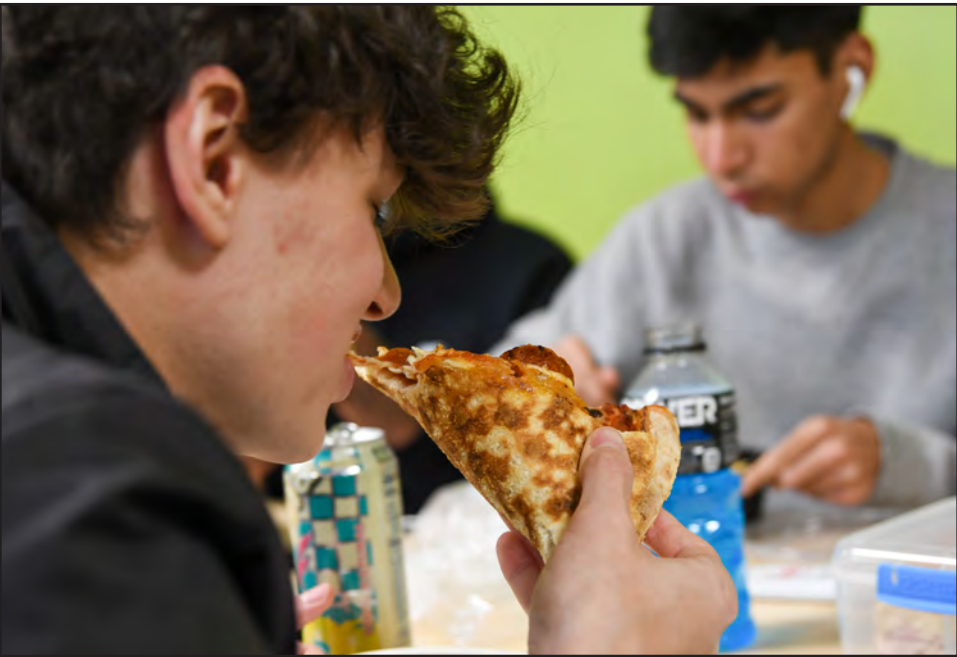
As a private school, these requirements don't apply to U-High, but many of the options served in the cafeteria abide by the policies campaigned for by Michelle Obama.

Some students have found that the more nutritious options offered are more expensive and less accessible due to the lines that accumulate outside certain areas, forcing many to grab something from the fried food section instead.

"I think we need more real food in the cafeteria," sophomore Adam Cheema said. "The way that it's set up to be more convenient to just get chicken and fries is messed up, because kids are just going to go for what's most convenient. I think we need more healthy convenient options."

Others students enjoy the multitude of options provided.

"I think the cafeteria has a lot of different options so you can really decide," se-



MIDWAY PHOTO BY MATT PETRES

NEEDING NUTRITION. The Biden administration has reinstated parts of the Obama administration's student nutrition policies for public schools. While U-High is private, students wonder if the school meets these nutritional standards.

nior Maya Mubayi said. "There's a lot of junk food you can eat, but there's also a lot of healthy food."

The popular salad bar featured in the cafeteria during the 2019-20 school year was closed due to COVID-19 restrictions. According to John Sherman, executive chef for Quest Food Management Services in Café Lab, the school is hoping to reopen the salad bar after spring break. The cafeteria is currently offering pre-packaged Caesar salads

as an alternative.

"Our first responsibility is to make sure that every meal is as nutritious as we can possibly make it," Mr. Sherman said. "With that being said, we are a school environment, and not every kid's going to want a green salad or carrot stick."

While the cafeteria is always stocked with fresh vegetables, the portions given with the hot lunch are often small.

"During the hot lunches here, when they

"There's a lot of junk food you can eat, but there's also a lot of healthy food."

— MAYA MUBAYI

serve the wings, they ask if you want carrots and they give you, like, three carrot sticks to balance out five wings," Alex said.

University of Chicago nutritionist Lori Welstead recommends that schools participate in programs like the Common Threads program, which was created with the goal of getting students more involved in their nutrition.

"I think the biggest challenge is likely lowering the sodium content of a lot of the cafeteria foods, so really trying to find that replacement," Ms. Welstead said. "For healthy whole grains, even having popcorn as an option instead of potato chips."

The cafeteria staff prepares much of the food served in the cafeteria, allowing them to limit the preservatives often seen in processed foods.

"A lot of it is made in-house, and by us doing that — yes, obviously in a cookie there's butter, a muffin there's butter, but there's no preservatives. It's just natural cooking," Mr. Sherman said.

Despite the variety of food options served in the cafeteria, students would like to see more nutritious food options outside of salads.

"Something I would like to change is add more healthy options that are readily available," Alex said, "so instead of having all the chicken lines or pizza lines maybe add some vegetables in there."

Torture survivors seek justice, healing

Chicago Torture Justice Center supports victims

by **AUDREY PARK**
ASSISTANT EDITOR

It was the summer of 1981. Mark Clements, Black and at the time 16 years old, was accused of setting an apartment building on fire, killing four people. There was no evidence, no witness. A resident who lived nearby had told the police they saw Mr. Clements shortly after the incident collecting empty bottles across from the building that had caught on fire. Desperate to blame someone, the police officers in charge arrested Mr. Clements. After being brought to the police station, Mr. Clements was beaten by a detective until he confessed.

An accusation, a coerced confession fabricated by the Chicago Police Department under Jon Burge’s command, and the color of his skin were enough for Mr. Clements to be convicted on four counts of manslaughter and sentenced to prison for the rest of his natural life. He would be the second Illinois juvenile to receive this sentence. His case was later reinvestigated, and Mr. Clements was freed after unjustly spending 28 years in prison.

Fast forward to today, and Mr. Clements works at the Chicago Torture Justice Center, a nonprofit organization advocating for victims like himself who have been subjected to police torture and other forms of police brutality.

The Chicago Torture Justice Center serves as a resource center for men and women who remain incarcerated and an outreach center once they are released. Although the organization offers a number of services, including psychological counseling for victims, career coaching and financial support, the majority of Mr. Clement’s job as an organizer entails assisting and advising victims throughout the legal process.

“I am not an attorney, but I can



MIDWAY PHOTO BY ANDREW BURKE-STEVENSON

HOMETOWN JUSTICE. Mark Clements stands in front of the Woodlawn Health Center, which the Chicago Torture Justice Center will be moving into in March. They have outgrown their old Englewood location where they have assisted over 1,000 victims of torture. Mr. Clements and other survivors of police torture have joined CTJC to pass on the legal and mental health support they received.

help them with advice regarding obtaining a fair judge and attorney, the physical documentation and family affairs and more,” he said. “I am basically helping them fight against a criminal justice system that has wronged them so greatly.”

Mr. Clements said most of the CTJC’s clients are Black and brown, and a lot of them are unable to understand legal technicalities.

“The numbers we see today reflect the bias of the CPD,” he said. “When they are called to Black and brown communities, they conduct themselves in a completely different way. In most instances, the residents cannot even communicate

with them. They take advantage of that.”

The CTJC has assisted over 1,000 victims and hopes to grow its impact. To accommodate the organization’s goals, specifically the increase in outreach and staff, the center will move to a bigger location in mid-March.

“We still want people to have easy access to our center, including those who are non wealthy, from non wealthy communities, and are also looking to expand our services,” Mr. Clements said.

Although the city of Chicago funds the CTJC, Mr. Clements said the most significant challenge the center has encountered is funding.

Chicago has authorized nearly \$70 million in reparations due to police misconduct, but Mr. Clements said this is not enough.

“The Chicago government knows the number of men and women unfairly put in prison, they recognize that torture survivors were released without any kind of aid, so you would think they would help more, but they don’t,” he said.

Mr. Clements emphasized the importance of coming together as a community and helping enact change.

“People can go to our website and consider donating to the survivor’s relief fund, a fund that actually provides revenue back into the

lives of these men and women that are struggling,” he said.

It is now the winter of 2022. The Chicago Torture Justice Center is helping hundreds of victims who have gone through the same experiences as Mr. Clements, slowly but surely spreading awareness of the CPD’s past and holding their wrongdoings accountable.

“We all have to learn in this life. It is a hellish experience, what some of us had to experience in this life,” Mr. Clements said. “My experience and the experiences that others have lived through must live on. We have to be able to identify what is causing the harm in this society together.”

Ukraine’s culture highlighted, preserved at National Museum

by **AMON GRAY**
ARTS EDITOR

Speakers blare “Slava Ukraini!” The crowd responds, “Heroiam Slava!” In Ukrainian this means “Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes!”

Hundreds of members of Chicago’s Ukrainian Village community came together with supporters on Sunday, Feb. 27, to show support for Ukraine against Russian invasion. Across the street, people from in and around the community visit the Ukrainian National Museum and learn about Ukraine’s history and culture.

Since it was established in 1952, the Ukrainian National Museum has been a cultural hub where members of the Ukrainian Village community teach about their culture and heritage. Since the Russian invasion, the museum has become a place for members of the community to come together and spread awareness about ways to help.

Most of the collection, as well as funds for the museum, were donated by members of the community rather than wealthy, private donors. In fact, the amount of cultural and historical objects donated to the museum is so large that

the museum keeps most of the collection in the basement and rotates what is on display.

Many of Chicago’s first-generation Ukrainian immigrants came to the United States from displaced persons’ camps after World War II. The community that was formed in the camps led to the formation of the communities in the United States as well as the formation of the museum.

“The displaced persons’ camps were a whole little mini-society, and they got sponsors and immigrated here, and that’s when they opened this museum to preserve the culture that was being completely demolished and squelched in the Soviet Union,” said Oryna Hrushetsky-Schiffman, museum executive board member. “And so they created this museum to preserve, and we have the biggest collection of Ukrainian immigrant archives in the world.”

The museum is home to a collection of Ukrainian historical artifacts including traditional beads, garments and pysanky. Pysanky are eggs painted with colored wax and intricately detailed in accordance with the region in which they are made. The museum also contains information about

“We’re trying to keep their morale up, and then there’s also videos we’re sharing of just incredible courage and bravery, and that is a morale booster amongst us.”

— ORYNA HRUSHETSKY-SCHIFFMAN

Ukrainian culture, including its traditions, music and dance.

“We have a dance ensemble called Hromovytsia,” Zoryana Byrne, a volunteer tour guide, said. “They do both modern and old types of Ukrainian dancing. My kids, they’ve been in it for 10-years-plus now.”

The museum also follows the journey of Ukrainian immigrants from the Holodomor famine to displaced persons’ camps in Germany. The Holodomor was the withholding of grain from Ukraine in 1932-1933 by Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union, which resulted in the deaths of 3 million people and many fleeing to German work camps.

The museum space is small with only five rooms, but the walls and display cases are filled with arti-



MIDWAY PHOTO BY MATT PETRES

SLAVA UKRAINI. People rally in support outside Sts. Volodymyr and Olha Church, which is across the Ukraine National Museum.

facts and informative posters. Its current temporary exhibit displays photos from a Ukrainian American artist of the Revolution of Dignity in 2014, when revolutionaries in Ukraine were violently suppressed by Russian military intervention. This part of the exhibit was set up this month as a reminder of the 2014 event during the current Russian invasion.

The museum has seen increased traffic because of the Russian invasion. Many in Ukrainian Village, as well as Ukrainians from other neighborhoods and outside the city, have reached out to the museum to find out how they can help the situation. Some ways that people have helped Ukraine have been by donating to organizations helping refugees in Poland or by directly supporting the Ukrainian

military.

“We are all staying in touch with somebody, all of us, and we are telling them constantly how much help they’re getting from the whole world,” Ms. Hrushetsky-Schiffman said. “We’re trying to keep their morale up, and then there’s also videos we’re sharing of just incredible courage and bravery, and that is a morale booster amongst us.”

On Feb. 27, members of the community gathered across the street on the steps of the Saints Volodymyr & Olha Ukrainian Catholic Church for a rally in support of Ukraine. Gov. J.B. Pritzker and Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot both attended and spoke at the rally along with other elected officials. Ukrainian music was played and the continuing chant of “Slava Ukraini!” was constant in the air.