

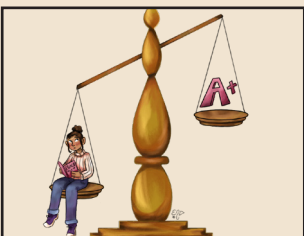
PAGE 6 • FEATURES

For years, the percentage of teenagers who do not read for pleasure has risen. While many students chose not to read due to stress or boredom, others still enjoy the hobby.



PAGES 8-9 • IN-DEPTH

Challenging ethical questions emerge every day and students face them regularly. Read about the wide range of ethical standards and how high school students view what is right and wrong.



PAGE 13 • ARTS

From the choir stands to the basketball courts, junior Kayin Bradford finds harmony between his two passions. Reaching success in choir competitions and games, his talent sings.



After walkout, BSA shifts focus to community

Club to celebrate Blackness beyond one day, assembly

by CLARE McROBERTS
Features Editor

Last January, Black Students' Association leaders abruptly ended the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. assembly by walking out of the auditorium, sending a message to the Lab community about discriminatory behavior at U-High. One year later, there was no MLK assembly at all. BSA leaders said the decision not to hold an assembly honoring Dr. King this year was carefully thought out and reflected their wish that the Lab community recognize the broader scope of students' experiences. Rather than focusing on the MLK assembly, as the club had in the past, BSA has turned its attention to other ways to celebrate Blackness. "The goal was we need you to really be able to see us and see what our experience is and stand with us," said Heavenly Hicks, a BSA faculty adviser. "Not just for a one-day celebration, but be present with us each and every day that we're in the building." Ms. Hicks emphasized that the decision to not hold the assembly this year was purposeful. "This was very calculated," Ms. Hicks said. "There was a lot of planning and discussion about 'OK, if we want to indefinitely pause the MLK assembly, why are we doing this? What are we trying

“Our board really started to get to a point where they felt that the Black experience had been distilled into one day, and that much like the theme Black is not a monolith, that we were so much more than that.”
Heavenly Hicks, a BSA faculty advisor

to communicate?” Members of the club, she said, felt that honoring the Black community at Lab had been reduced to one assembly. “Our board really started to get to a point where they felt that the Black experience had been distilled into one day, and that much like the theme Black is not a monolith, that we were so much more than that. We were starting to — for lack of better words — lump everything Black into that one day,” Ms. Hicks said. “So instead, what are the other things within the Black community, and in particular the Black Lab community, that we really want to showcase, that we want to celebrate?” This year, BSA is focusing on uplifting activities like a film series that discusses and celebrates Black characters and directors. Earlier in the school year, too, BSA was able to expand its Blackgiving celebration. BSA President Myles Cobb said that the goal of this is to go beyond the narrative that is often told about the Black experience. “We really wanted to kind of



National Archives, photo no. 542069

LASTING LEGACY. Current leaders from the Black Students' Association did not host the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. assembly after leaders held a walkout last year to highlight discrimination at Lab. BSA hopes the Lab community will reflect on different student experiences and celebrate Blackness beyond a one-day celebration.

think of 'What's another way that we can celebrate Blackness,' besides just having the assembly and focusing all of our energy in that,” Myles said. “Oftentimes, the Black story is the story of struggle and sacrifice. We understand that and we embrace that, but we also want to embrace our culture as well.” The film series will include viewings during the lab periods on Wednesday, hosted by BSA, along with discussions on Thursdays

during lunch. The series is open to everyone. Myles said he wishes that the event will generate a dialogue surrounding film relating to the Black community. “I hope that kind of sparks conversation — it doesn't necessarily need to be a bad conversation. The conversation could be as simple as, 'Dude, I didn't know 'Get Out' was that good or that Miles Morales is a much deeper character than I thought,’” Myles said. “It could be as simple as that.”

BSA's decision not to host an MLK assembly ought not suggest anything but admiration for Dr. King's legacy, Ms. Hicks said. “Just because there isn't an assembly doesn't mean that there's an absence of ways for the Lab community to dial into the ethos of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s mission, which was a social justice mission, it was a socioeconomic-equity mission,” Ms. Hicks said. “You don't need a one-off assembly to do that work.”

Testing space opens for students with accommodations

by CHLOË ALEXANDER
Arts Editor

New testing rooms for students with accommodations — extra time, dictation or other special circumstances — opened on Jan. 17 and will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The testing rooms are currently in room S101, which is connected to the registrar's offices. The rooms, one for high schoolers and one for middle schoolers, each have a capacity for six students. The room will be monitored by Kelly Shepard, who previously worked in the middle school learning and counseling office. She will make the schedules and provide proctoring for students using the rooms. Nicole Neal, director of student services, said the spaces were negotiated in recent faculty collective bargaining agreements to provide testing services for students with extended time accommodations and students who need to make up tests during the school day. To reserve these spaces, a teacher will have to register a student



Midway photo by Elspeth LaCroix-Birdthistle

NEW TESTING SPACES. On Jan. 18, new testing rooms were opened for students with accommodations during school hours. The rooms are in S101. for the date and time. Teachers will designate the time and number of carrels they need to reserve. Then they will input information about the student: the amount of time for the text and then how much extended time, and what materials they need. It will then be sent to Ms. Shepard who will create a schedule for the coming week. Unlike the previous testing spaces, like the after-school testing room on the third floor and

facts at a glance

New testing rooms for students with accommodations — extra time, dictation or other special circumstances — opened on Jan. 17.

Location: The space is located in room S101, which is on the first floor and is connected to the registrar's office.

Availability: The testing room has one space for high school students and another for middle school students. The rooms will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., so students will be able to utilize this space during class time.

Capacity: The space can hold six students at a time.

Scheduling: To reserve a space, a teacher must register their student.

testing with a learning coordinator, this space will be open during class time allowing for students to work testing into their schedule rather than working around it. This new testing space had a big push from history teacher Chris-

ty Gerst. Ms. Gerst said she has been an advocate for these testing spaces since she started teaching at U-High. “Since I arrived at Lab nearly a decade ago,” Ms. Gerst said, “I have been advocating for a separate dedicated proctoring space originally as a common practice with CPS and suburban public schools to support students with learning differences. I then broadened that advocacy to all students, as I discovered the real challenges of juggling the after-school proctor makeup testing with other responsibilities, including extracurricular and commuting schedules.” After long negotiations, Ms. Gerst's goal was implemented. She believes it will help both students and teachers. “I anticipate that our student body will experience less stress with the additional supports built into the actual school day,” she said. “I also anticipate that teachers will experience more support, as they often proctored during their preparatory periods, often foregoing meal and bathroom breaks.”

Encouraging cultural awareness

U-High affinity groups collaborate on DEI assembly

by **VICTORIA WASHINGTON**
Opinion Editor

Young Men of Color and Young Women of Color hosted a school-wide assembly to discuss cultural awareness, cultural appropriation and representation in the media, with the Lab community on Jan. 11.

To build off the work of Latinos Unidos, the “Being Culturally Aware: A Form of Activism” assembly began with a land acknowledgement, and featured two guest speakers and a student panel.

This year was the first year YMOC and YWOC combined for a January assembly. While YWOC usually holds an assembly in March for Women’s history month, YWOC co-president Kaavya Peddinti said the reason for combining was to broaden the range of topics and to have the assembly midway through the year.

“Our collaboration represents the larger unison we want to continue between different affinities in our community,” Kaavya said. “We present this in solidarity. To set the framework for this assembly, we would like for you all to keep in mind the question: ‘What does cultural awareness mean to you?’”

2020 alumna Léa Runesha, who served as the Black Students’ Association president during her time at U-High, continued the theme of cultural awareness and identity with a personal story about



Midway photo by Kaden Moubayed

STANDING UP. Guest speaker Michelle Hoereth, assistant provost and a leader in DEI initiatives at the University of Chicago, spoke about different forms of activism at the school-wide assembly on Jan. 11.

her experience as a first-generation American and her Rwandan ethnicity. Through her experience, Ms. Runesha encouraged the U-High community to learn more about others’ experiences and to not let ignorance prevent anyone from exploration.

“These experiences reinforce the idea that continuous learning is a lifelong pursuit, rather than a temporary action. My message to you all today is that you continue to ask those seemingly stupid questions and learn, than to remain ignorant by never asking at all,” Ms. Runesha said. “I hope we can all strive for a future where

cultural awareness is not just a personal journey, but a collective effort — a place where our differences are celebrated.”

Kaavya and Christian Martinez, YMOC co-president, moderated a student panel of Audrey Park, Santana Romero, Mahi Shah, Myles Cobb and Taariq Ahmed. All of the panelists stressed the importance of finding an issue you’re passionate about and committing to it: high school students can have much more impact on the greater community. Guest speaker Michelle Hoereth, assistant provost and a leader in DEI initiatives at the University of Chicago, spoke

“
I hope we can all strive for a future where cultural awareness is not just a personal journey, but a collective effort.
Léa Runesha, guest speaker
”

about different forms of activism. Ms. Hoereth believes leadership can exist in many different forms other than protest. Music and art are equally effective ways to stand up for what you believe in.

Community experiences two days of weather closure

by **AUDREY PARK**
Editor-in-Chief

The Lab community experienced two school closure days in the last week: for expected snow on Jan. 12 and for extreme cold on Jan. 16.

Emails informing the community about the closures were sent from Laboratory Schools Director Tori Jueds the evenings before. According to the emails, school was canceled on Jan. 12 to avoid “dangerous commutes” and on Jan. 16, the day after a nonschool day for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, “due to the extreme cold temperatures.”

Lab’s most recent weather-related school closure was Feb. 2, 2022.

With a total of five days away from campus, some students found the school closures as a time to catch up with work and relax. Other students and teachers were frustrated by the disruption to sports events, extracurricular activities and synchronous class time.

The second email from Ms. Jueds addressed the unexpected

loss of class time and said teachers could assign asynchronous work or ideas to keep busy at home, depending on the age of students. For art teacher Jason Pallas, the closures hit at an unideal time in the semester. He said they had forced him to modify the end-of-semester timeline for his classes.

“These snow days hit during the crunch time of the semester as we are all working to wrap things up,” he said.

Physics teacher Matthew Bonges had to push back a test. Mr. Bonges said he assigned asynchronous work, and as a result, the snow days did not have a big impact on his teaching schedule otherwise. Senior Daisy Coleman said she was able to relax.

“There was not that much homework assigned,” she said, “so even though I had some homework to do, I was able to get it done and not worry about work for a change.”

Ninth grader Hannah Gao said she was excited when she heard about the snow days because she



Midway photo by Ellis Calleri

SNOW DAY. The Lab community experienced two school closure days in the last week: for expected snow on Jan. 12 and for extreme cold on Jan. 16.

could sleep in and postpone doing homework and studying.

“I was happy because I got to skip my quizzes for another day,” Hannah said.

However, for ninth grader Carter Elligan, a member of the varsity boys basketball team, the snow days negatively impacted him. Be-

cause of them, a game against Francis W. Parker School and a practice were canceled. Carter said he and his team have to adapt as a result.

“Our time as a team is really important, and without practice, it really hurts us,” Carter said. “Not having practice impacted our team in a really poor way.”

news in brief

Artist to emphasize social justice in Gallery exhibit

A new Corvus Gallery exhibit, “Communal Resurrection: The Art of Steve Prince,” honors the work of nationally recognized master printmaker and teacher Steve Prince, whose portfolio emphasizes Black culture and highlights issues of civil rights and social justice.

A public reception for Mr. Prince and his exhibit will take place Jan. 25 from 4-7 p.m. in the Corvus Gallery in Gordon Parks Arts Hall.

Mr. Prince will be active in middle school art classes and will lead a workshop for the entire middle school. Additionally, he will visit Black affinity spaces throughout the Lab community.

The main subject of the exhibit is a 4-foot-by-40-foot woodcut by the name of “Communal Resur-

rection: Song for Aya,” containing intricate symbolism and storytelling elements.

Art teacher and Corvus Gallery director Gina Alicea, who is curating the exhibit, chose to display the original woodcut rather than a print copy.

Ms. Alicea said it makes the experience more authentic.

“It gives a different, visceral feeling when you actually see the wood rather than a piece of paper that’s just been printed out,” Ms. Alicea said. “When you walk into the gallery, you’re really impacted by that woodblock print because you can feel the energy and movement, supported by the music and history.”

Strongly impacted by the work of popular African American artists such as Elizabeth Catlett and Charlie W. White, Mr. Prince is well known for depicting Black

figures and communities.

Ms. Alicea said she believes introducing the work of Mr. Prince to the community will not only spark interest in his portfolio but in his inspirations too.

“Especially with Black History Month arriving in February,” Ms. Alicea said, “I think it’s really important to have this work on display for students, faculty and beyond to gain a broader knowledge of African American art history. I think it’s important for everyone to know that artists don’t just create and develop in a vacuum — they are influenced by other artists.”

— Taariq Ahmed

U-High sports competitor Elgin Academy to close

Elgin Academy, a longtime competitor of U-High’s sports teams, is closing after 185 years, but the

change may open up opportunities for competition closer to U-High.

According to the Chicago Tribune, Elgin Academy will be closing permanently at the end of this academic year.

This is due to the rates of enrollment and school funding which have dropped.

Laura Gill, Lab’s deputy director of athletics, said that U-High sports teams have been competing with Elgin Academy for as long as U-High has been in the Independent School League.

Ms. Gill says the school’s closing will most likely not affect U-High sports in the short term.

Ms. Gill says 10-15 years ago, Elgin Academy was more competitive in the ISL.

Recently, U-High has typically been victorious in games.

She said that although U-High is losing a competitor, it could be

New system implemented for transcript management

by **TAARIQ AHMED**
Digital Editor

Students and families can access school transcript documents more safely and securely with U-High’s implementation of Parchment, a newly introduced processing and storage website for academic documents.

Students can now digitally obtain both their official and unofficial transcripts. They will no longer need to complete a form and submit it to the Learning & Counseling Office as before. Students can set up their Parchment account by gaining access to their individual keycode after sending a request to registrar@ucls.uchicago.edu.

According to a Dec. 8 community email from Sarah Arehart, Laboratory Schools registrar, and U-High principal Martin Woods, “By facilitating the storage and delivery of official credentials between students and recipients, Parchment ensures the privacy and security of student records by eliminating the need to email official documents.”

Ms. Arehart said in her opinion, the use of Parchment will minimize the risk of another security breach such as the one this past summer, in which the high school transcripts of members of the Class of 2023 were sent to some students due to a human error. At the time, Parchment was not in use. Its introduction was not a direct result of this breach, and staff in the registrar’s office were already looking into new mechanisms.

“The issue in summer is an example of why the move to Parchment is a good choice for Lab, but the move was already in the works prior to it,” Ms. Arehart said.

Ms. Arehart also said specific privacy measures which Parchment offers enhance the security aspects of the system. For example, Parchment blocks parental access to school transcripts once a student turns 18, abiding by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Ms. Arehart echoed previous optimism about Parchment and its future at Lab.

“The use of Parchment brings many benefits including secure log-in, request tracking, and faster turn-around time for transcript requests,” Ms. Arehart said. “It’s a well-known record system used by schools, colleges, and universities around the U.S., and I’m pleased that we have been able to implement it here at Lab.”

a positive thing for U-High sports.

“In some ways I think it is a positive thing for us in the sense that, that was a really long trip on weeknights, but it obviously is a negative thing for the school and we appreciated being able to compete with them over the years, but the ISL will remain intact,” Ms. Gill said.

Ms. Gill believes this loss of competition may open up new opportunities for U-High that are more feasible in terms of location.

She said, “It’s an opportunity for us to pick up competition closer to us that might be better suited for us as well.”

— Sohana Schneider



Laura Gill

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ENROLL FOR 2024-25
BEGINNING JOURNALISM

Celebrate MLK; address inequality

For many years, the U-High community has honored the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in what feels like a familiar scene: students packed into the assembly hall listening to a presentation led by the Black Students' Association. After the final lyric of "We Shall Overcome," students leave the assembly and move on from discussions about racial inequality and social justice, ready to enjoy a Monday off from school.

A different tone was set last year when BSA members led a walkout to protest racial discrimination and bias at Lab. BSA has no intention of resuming subsequent assemblies until progress is made toward equality for Black students.

While the MLK assembly is a marker of tradition, it doesn't represent the only way Dr. King's legacy can be celebrated at Lab. BSA shouldn't bear the burden of ensuring the school community comes together in January. At U-High, general DEI topics have been conflated with the MLK assembly, creating an environment where the core element of Dr. King's work is lost.

Dr. King was about more than civil rights. Many don't know that Dr. King commented on a variety of issues, drawing on the work of Mahatma Gandhi. He believed in the interconnectedness of society;

**as the
midway
sees it.**

This represents the opinion of the U-High Midway editorial board.

one cause cannot be attributed to a single group. The complexity of all he represented cannot only be the ionic Washington Mall scene where he delivered his "I have a Dream" speech.

"All of this is simply to say that all life is interrelated. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality; tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly," Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said at an address entitled "The American Dream" at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1961.

That being said, Dr. King is commonly regarded as the figurehead of civil rights across the United States. His nonviolent approach to social justice marked a wave of change. Because of his popularity, it's not uncommon for students to conflate his legacy with the experiences and beliefs of all Black people. Dr. King doesn't repre-

sent an entire population's views or opinions.

Furthermore, conversations relating to diversity topics often don't start themselves. Hosting an annual MLK assembly prompts the student body to reflect and discuss ways to improve our communities. This day of celebration serves as a meaningful reminder of the work that remains in the fight for social justice.

One day of service a year is not enough to truly improve our communities. Nor does learning about Black identity through a lens of suffering improve our culture. Black pride encompasses so much more than one Monday in January. An MLK assembly only serves as the jumping off point for meaningful discussion and reflection, but it all begins with understanding what Dr. King is truly about.

If we don't take the time to understand Dr. King and his philosophy, how can the school community claim to hold a genuine assembly that reflects his legacy? The MLK assembly should challenge U-High to take the lessons of Dr. King and apply them to the challenges we face in the modern day. Regardless, with or without an assembly, the Lab community should work together to address discrimination, as pointed out by BSA last year.



Midway illustration by Noah Babai

Hearings center ideology rather than antisemitism

by **LIGHT DOHRN**
Assistant Editor

On Dec. 5, the presidents of three elite American universities testified in a congressional hearing about antisemitism on their campuses after accusa-



Light Dohrn

tions were made that calls for the "genocide of Jews" were made on university grounds. Subsequently, the testimony delivered by all three women resulted in immense pressure for all three to either resign or be terminated — and two of the three resigned shortly afterward.

Despite the fact that the three presidents who testified in the hearing could have been more

forceful in condemning antisemitism on their campuses, the controversies that erupted in the hearing's aftermath were co-opted by bad-faith ideological figures who were less interested in combating antisemitism than they were in turning the women into pawns for their own political causes.

All three presidents — Claudine Gay, Harvard; M. Elizabeth Magill, University of Pennsylvania; and Sally Kornbluth, Massachusetts Institute of Technology — were widely criticized for failing to condemn antisemitism forcefully during the hearing. Dr. Magill stepped down from her position only four days after the hearing and, Dr. Gay stepped down on Jan. 2, less than a month later. While President Kornbluth still holds her position at MIT, she continues to face fierce opposition.

This might seem at first glance

“Those women aren't politicians or activists but academics and administrators — their job is to educate, not to participate in dishonest spectacles.”

like a case of powerful people facing just consequences for ethical and academic misconduct. University presidents should, of course, be expected to condemn hate speech and to uphold academic integrity to the most rigorous level — and their statements during the hearing were far from impressive, often sounding clumsy and equivocal. That being said, it cannot be ignored that the three presidents fell victim to a plot by right-wing activists and politicians who were

already eager to turn them into scapegoats in their own campaigns against "wokeness" on college campuses. Many of the original allegations of hate speech toward Jewish students stemmed from a slogan chanted during pro-Palestinian protests on Harvard's campus. The politician who led the questioning at the hearing, Rep. Elise Stefanik, herself a Harvard graduate, dishonestly equated this protest against Israel with calls for violence against Jews — and then pounced when the witnesses appeared to equivocate on the question.

Stefanik's right-wing allies then dug into the backgrounds of the three women and ultimately made allegations of academic dishonesty in Dr. Gay's past. Christopher Rufo, a conservative activist, led the charge, driven not by concerns about antisemitism or academic integrity but by naked partisan-

ship. He admitted recently: "This is a universal strategy that can be applied by the right to most issues."

When American universities become pawns in culture wars, it undermines the values that make our most elite educational facilities what they are. Ms. Stefanik and Mr. Rufo led a coordinated campaign with the goal of taking down leaders they deemed threatening to their cause — showing the dangers of turning higher education into a new battleground for culture wars that already exist. Those three women are not politicians or activists but academics and administrators — their job is to educate, not to participate in dishonest public spectacles or advocate for causes. We all should pause when our country's most elite educational institutions are turned into punching bags by politicians with axes to grind.

Socializing digitally isn't enough for healthy connection

by **ZARA SIDDIQUE**
Sports & Leisure Editor

Desks are covered with Post-its, loose sheets of paper and flash cards. It's a typical week dominated by homework and studying. Any U-High student knows and has experienced these sorts of days: every waking moment consists of some sort of work. School days are filled with asking questions about upcoming exams, and



Zara Siddique

then returning to your studying during breaks. It's easy for students to dismiss the importance of spending time socializing, especially when they are so easily deceived by social media, instant messaging and instant video applications.

When I was younger I depended on face to face interaction with friends and family as a means to relieve stress and to separate myself from my own internal anxieties from school or extracurricular activities. As I've now almost completed high school I have noticed how I and others get caught up in the allure of an alleged social interaction through electronics.

“Personal relationships with friends and family are unique and multifaceted. It is impossible for one to create and maintain relationships only online.”

While social media platforms and instant video services can be seen as a way to stay connected across countries, time differences and continents, they also pose a threat to maintaining healthy amounts of social activity

in teenager's lives.

Texting, FaceTime and watching social media videos aren't substitutes for social interaction. The reality is that no matter how engaging and de-stressing they may seem, one is still isolated when using them.

In 2019, the National Institutes of Health published an article on the importance of face-to-face interaction, explicitly highlighting the connection between interpersonal relationships and physiological health. The study also noted that despite one's ability to communicate with friends and family online, there are still distinct ties between heightened screen time

and poor mental well-being.

It's so easy to count online interactions such as messaging a friend before bed, or a quick FaceTime call on the weekend, as real contact. This contact doesn't make up for face to face interaction.

High schoolers are still isolating themselves, believing that a social interaction can take place through a screen.

Personal relationships with friends and family are unique and multifaceted. It is impossible for one to create and maintain relationships only online. It is crucial that teens recognize this and set aside time to spend face to face with their loved ones.

u-high midway

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mission and editorial policy.

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

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

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

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ENROLL FOR 2024-25
MEDIA LITERACY & ANALYSIS

Pleasure reading plummets

As attention spans decrease, so does reading popularity

by **CHLOË ALEXANDER**
Arts Editor

Chapters of a history textbook, scientific articles, chapters of a novel and scripts in different languages, these reading forms and their variations are things U-High students read daily. Teenagers are reading nowadays, they're just not reading for pleasure.

This isn't a new phenomenon, the percentage of teenagers who don't read for pleasure has risen from 9% in 1984 to 27% in 2014. Another study shows in the late 1970s, 60% of 12th graders read a book or magazine almost every day, and by 2016 only 16% did, while daily social media usage averages about six hours.

The main question running through the minds of these researchers is why aren't teenagers reading at the same rates they used to?

High school librarian Susan Augustine said in her years here, she has seen a definite decrease in students reading for pleasure, but she has also seen this trend among adults who have come back to reading.

"The thought was not to worry too much if people at this age group are not excited about reading for pleasure because it's a temporary pause," Ms. Augustine said. "But I'm not so sure about that now because I know a lot of adults who tell me that they're no longer able to read fiction because they don't have the concentration, they don't have the ability to focus for that long — and they blame it all on the Internet."

Shorter attention spans, which some say are due to social media, have caused a decrease in reading for teenagers.

Sophomore Louis Letinsky says he doesn't read because it isn't as interesting as watching things and because it takes more work.

"I like watching things instead," Louis said. "It's easier to pay attention to. I don't have to give that much attention to watching things because it's kinda just there. I don't have to do any work."



Midway photo by Ryan Burke-Stevenson

DWINDLING ATTENTION SPANS. In the Pritzker Traubert Family Library, sophomore Xander Feigenbaum reads on a beanbag. Pleasure reading has become increasingly unpopular, especially among younger generations. Simultaneously, the daily social media usage average is six hours a day.

Similarly, junior Alex Giles says she doesn't read for pleasure because it's not as enjoyable as other media forms are.

Alex said, "But nowadays I just watch things on Netflix or YouTube, or I'm just on social media. I just find that watching videos is more entertaining than reading."

Once a nonreader like Alex and Louis, sophomore Adnan Werdyani decided that 2024 is his year of change.

"My New Year resolution is to read," Adnan said. "Because I feel that if I read books, like the 'Autobiography of Malcolm X,' I become a better person and think about the world differently. So I'm starting to read inspirational books like that. I think you should get back to read-

ing. It helps your brain, it works your brain and helps you. When I read I feel like my inner emotions, it's a calming activity to do."

Like Adnan, junior Zarak Siddiqi finds that reading truly enriches him and helps him focus on the small joys in life.

"I like to improve my process of thinking often," Zarak said. "I like to go on these little imagination trips. There's things that a book can give you that other people can't, you know. I do think that reading has helped my mental health to some extent."

Zarak also feels books can be a distraction from depressing thoughts that run through his mind when it's empty.

Senior Sasha Watson has always

“
If you're used to bouncing around from thing to thing and not getting too deep into anything, it's uncomfortable to sit still.
”

Susan Augustine, U-High librarian

loved to read and thinks books can help with stress and lack of sleep.

"If I'm on my phone super late, I'm up late because I can't fall asleep, but reading is super calming," Sasha said. "And I also think it's a good technique so if you're feeling a lot of anxiety or stress about your own life. It's a very ex-

ternal thing and it's about other people and other emotions, and I think that it's very helpful to ground yourself."

Ms. Augustine finds the research on this topic is still new, and only when long-term studies are released people will know the effects of the internet on attention spans and the lack of reading on the brains of current teenagers.

"I think it's going to affect what people want to do, like what feels good to people," Ms. Augustine said. "And if you're used to bouncing around from thing to thing and not getting too deep into anything, it's uncomfortable to sit still and to go a little deeper, and that's not going to be what people are going to turn to."

Not just a knock-off: Once stigmatized, 'dupes' have risen in popularity among teens due to retained quality and low price

by **NAOMI BENTON**
Reporter

Estelle Levinson sits at her polished white desk and reaches to grab a shiny tube. As she untwists the cap, an iridescent Barbie-pink liquid drips from the applicator. Estelle brushes the gloss over her lips. She walks out of her house to head to school with a sense of readiness for the day.

This essential product is the Elf Glow Reviver lip oil that Estelle bought as a "dupe" for the Dior lip oil. Along with feeling refreshed and ready for the day, she finds satisfaction in knowing that she saved money.

U-High students are buying cheaper duplications of high-end products to spend less money for a similar look, a trend that deemphasizes brand names while simultaneously promoting smart money management. What once were "knock-offs" are now "dupes."

While buying knock-offs has been stigmatized by many, Junior Shelby Hackett said that because buying cheaper items is so trendy, it has become normalized.

"If a lot of people are doing it you are not going to be put on the

“
Honestly I think the Elf is better quality, because the Elf one is so much cheaper it makes it feel worth it.
”

Estelle Levinson, sophomore

spot," said Shelby, "because it has become a common thing."

Estelle, a sophomore at U-High, has the \$40 Dior lip oil and the dupe, the Elf Glow Reviver lip oil, which only costs \$6.50, 83.75% less expensive than the Dior lip oil.

"Honestly, I think that the Elf is better quality," Estelle said, "because the Elf one is so much cheaper, it makes it feel so worth it."

This new popularity in dupes comes from TikTok, where beauty influencers share and recommend their favorite dupes, sometimes even showing a side-by-side comparison with the original product.

TikTok introduced sophomore Mihika Prakash, who has two dupes of the Dior lip oil: NYX Fat Lip Drip lip gloss and Elf Glow Re-



Midway photo by Aubrey Felsen

BOUJEE BARGAINS. Dupes provide great value and quality for much cheaper, attracting shoppers with their easy accessibility and variety.

viver lip oil. Mihika said she finds pride and satisfaction in spending less money to keep up with the trends that come and go.

Dupes are not exclusive to beauty products. They extend across many products, including clothes and accessories.

Sophomore Sam Oyler has multiple pairs of off-brand shoes, a notable pair being the fake Yeezy Slides. Sam says he is not embarrassed that his shoes are not brand names and feels proud wearing them through the halls.

"It's a lot cheaper, so it's a lot

easier to get more shoes," Sam said.

Senior Cassia Collins believes that this shift has had a net positive impact on our culture.

While the trend of buying dupes does "reflect a consumeristic culture," said Cassia, "It makes luxury more accessible to everyone."

Quality is another major factor when considering dupes, according to students. Brands like Champion have the ability to raise their prices because of their familiar and desirable brand logo, Cassia said. When people detach from these notable brands, they can begin to search for a sharper quality-to-price ratio, in clothes and makeup.

"People value quality over just brand names," Cassia said.

Sam puts his Yeezy slide dupes on before walking out of his house on his way to school. Sam walks with a pep in his step, feeling good because he saved money on his shoe purchase, and still feels stylish and comfortable.

From makeup to shoes, students feel confident in their less expensive and off-brand versions of products.

Troves of trinkets and treasure

Student collectors develop variety of sources for passion

by EDWARD PARK
Assistant Editor

Every morning, senior Siddharth Misra prepares for his day. His routine includes a moment where he pauses to check in with his Funko Pop collection. The oversized heads and the big round eyes curiously gaze back at him. It's a subtle yet an indispensable part of his daily life.

Students pursue collections for varied reasons, each reflecting the joys they derive from them. Every collection holds different meanings and roles in life — from casual hobbies to profound love.

The hunting process led Siddharth to compile his Funko Pop collection.

"Collection isn't really the point of what I do," he said. "At some point, probably relatively soon, I'm going to get rid of most of it, and I'm not going to be very upset, because for me it's more about the process and search of finding ones I like than looking at the ones on a shelf."

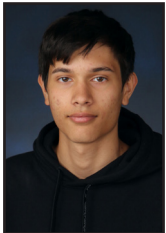
His collection originates from his middle school passion in Marvel movies.

"I just started collecting them for Marvel and I had 10 or 15, which is no more than like someone else might have," Siddharth said.

As he grew interested in anime, his collection expanded, making his interests in Funko Pops grow.

"In terms of anime, there's a lot of really expensive figures, but again, I didn't really want to buy them. I just started expanding my Funko Pop collection," he said. "At some point, I started looking more into how the Funko Pop system works and how they're made and how easy it is to get and more rare ones," he said. "Since then, I just sort of fallen into the Funko Pop rabbit hole."

Now, the collection has become a part of his life, affecting his relationships with peers.



Siddharth Misra



Midway photo by Eli Raikhel

COLLECTING MEMORIES. Siddharth's vast collection of Funko Pops line an LED-lit shelf in his bedroom. Collections can hold a variety of different significances to students. For Siddharth, the search for the items is his favorite part.

"They have started to overshadow parts of my life," he said. "I have friends that are mostly because of anime, or I have a friend that I'm mostly just talking about Marvel movies with. So not the collection directly, but that subjects of them sort of does."

For sophomore Summer Pinc, the collection is a way to stay connected with her peers.

Summer steps into her room, weary from the day's challenges. She heads to her desk and on it, a radiant crystal glistens. Gazing at it, a smile slowly appears on her face, a silent appreciation for her friends.

While she began her crystal collection due to the beauty she saw in crystals, it has evolved in-

to a set that symbolizes the strong bonds of friendship and the support she finds in these symbols of love.

Her collection began with a crystal gift from a close friend.

"She was like, 'Oh yeah, one more thing. Do you want this?' I was like, 'Oh, yeah, that's pretty. I can put it on my bookshelf,'" she said.

This gift sparked a curiosity that soon turned into a growing collection.

"I saw one in the store a couple of days later. And then I was like, 'Oh, that's pretty. I have something that kind of looks like that. I'm gonna get it,'" she said. "And I also put it on my bookshelf."

Crystals in her collection became symbols of support and care from her friends.

"I came home after a hard day. I see one crystal that's like on my desk and my friend gave it to me when I was kind of going through

a rough patch," she said. "It's just a nice reminder that my friends are there for me and that they care about me."

Collections can also let people stay connected to family.

Sitting next to her grandfather, young Sierra Stacy looks through his coin collection with him. In this, she finds joy, thinking about the distinct stories each coin holds.

Her interests in coins began as a simple hobby. Soon, however, it owned more depth than just a pastime. While her interest for this collection has faded throughout time, it worked as a bridge to her grandparents.

It was her father's words that sparked her in-

terest in collecting, making her look through her grandparents' collections.

"My dad told me that a silver coin from 1964 or older could be more valuable because it's made of real silver. I don't know how true that is. But that got me really interested," Sierra, now a junior, said. "So when I visited my grandparents, I looked through their collections, and it was really fun."

Soon, she started forming bonds with them.

"It especially helped me bond with my granddad on my dad's side. He was like the first person whose coins I looked through," she said. "He was also the one who kinda started that thing where he'd buy me a silver dollar every year because I got interested in coins."

From personal memories to special relationships with others, collections own their own distinct power, providing warmth and comfort for students.



Summer Pinc



Sierra Stacy

'Get ready with me' videos tap into honesty

by CAROLINE SKELLY
Reporter

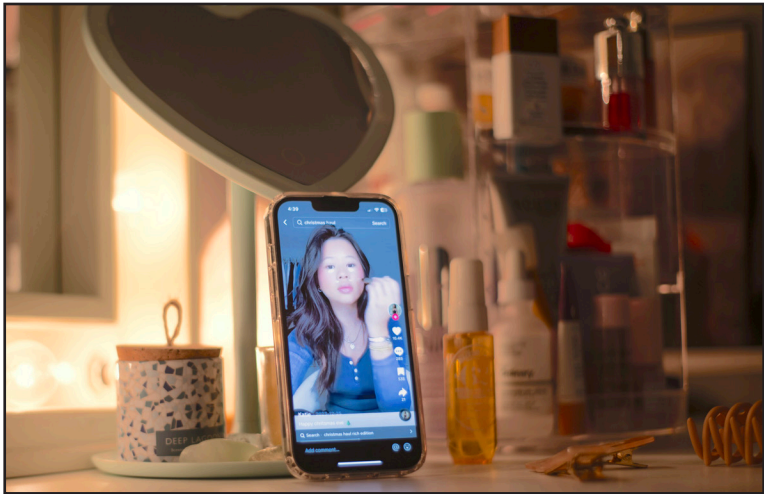
Ninth grader Sofia Schwartz scrolls through Tik Tok in between classes. Instead of being greeted by polished, perfect content, she is greeted by a video of an influencer talking about her struggle with breakouts while applying her makeup and getting ready.

While Sofia usually just aimlessly scrolls through videos, this one catches her eye: she rarely sees influencers being up close and vulnerable with their viewers.

"Get ready with me" confession videos are engaging millions of viewers, many of whom are beginning to feel genuinely represented in the content they see online.

In these sorts of videos, influencers talk candidly about a range of unvarnished topics, all while meticulously applying strokes of contour and foundation in preparation for the day. Videos with the #GRWM hashtag have been viewed more than 72 billion times since last May.

Sofia enjoys this more authentic content that has taken over TikTok, and she finds it reassuring to see others dealing with similar struggles as her.



Midway photo by Delaney Connell

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL. On a vanity, amid cosmetic products, a TikTok "get ready with me" confessional video plays.

"I think it's really interesting to be able to see people with such high positions on social media have such common day-to-day problems that their viewers have," Sofia said.

Like content from prior years before the trend emerged, the videos have an unrealistic and unattainable quality. Influencers are still using expensive products, wearing lavish clothing and going

somewhere fancy. But now they are confessing personal and often blunt details about their lives to viewers and appearing more relatable, which was rarely the case a few years ago.

Sophomore Xia Nesbitt thinks it's valuable that influencers are finally opening up and being honest with their audiences, as opposed to sharing idealistic and over-touched versions of their lives.

Xia said, "At the end of the day people just want to see people like them instead of clearly fake content."

Sofia finds it refreshing to now relate to content being shared when it was far more difficult to do so before. Influencers now talk about realistic topics such as anxiety, depression, struggles with acne and body image.

In the videos, influencers talk to their viewers as if they are friends on a FaceTime call. They share stories about relationships or friendships with their viewers and often ask for advice on how to deal with a situation.

Viewers are able to discuss in the comments and many find they have shared experiences and feel like they are not alone.

Sophomore Angela Fitzgerald said, "I think it's nice to see someone who is like you and relates to you and it makes their content more enjoyable and it makes you feel good about yourself."

Angela believes the parasocial relationship between an influencer and their viewers is personal because of how the influencer is opening up, but she also believes that there is a level of detachment.

"I think it's nice to see someone who is like you and relates to you, and it makes their content more enjoyable."
Angela Fitzgerald, sophomore

Angela said, "There is definitely a level of distance with an influencer just talking to a screen."

One of the most popular get-ready-with-me influencers is Alix Earle, who rose to fame last year after posting chatty videos where she often discussed her struggle with acne and anxiety in high school. Since going viral, she now has over 6 million followers on Tik Tok.

Sofia frequently watches Ms. Earle's content. She finds that Ms. Earle's videos often stick with her throughout the day. The Tik Toks she usually glances at are always quickly forgotten, but the specific video she watched before class stuck with her because she felt like there was finally content that she could relate to.

it's all about the GRAY areas

Within a school environment, students regularly face challenging ethical questions. Without much formal guidance on how to orient their moral compass in and out of academics, students hold different definitions of right and wrong.

Teens learn ethics from many places

by MIA LIPSON
News Editor

Throughout the halls of Lab, students are surrounded by symbols of values — from the social justice posters created by students in seventh grade art throughout Gordon Parks Arts Hall, to affinity group and club advertisements, to the books displayed in the library, to even the messages in the daily bulletin. Though each student makes unique ethical decisions based on their life's experiences, family or personal values, and social connections, Matthew Landa, a middle school counselor noted that Lab provides a space where proof of the community's emphasis on these topics is everywhere.

“Any time we find ourselves engaging in an activity where norms or guidelines are set, that's a formative experience where we learn how do we not harm one another. How do we make sure the activity is done in a conducive setting for the benefit of all or as many people as possible?”

Aria Choi,
U-High counselor

dents develop their ethics and learn how they influence decision-making.

According to Mr. Landa, early adolescence is a very important time for growth and brain development, which deeply influence decision making. “High school and middle school especially is a time where we test boundaries, so if someone tells us ‘You have to do ABC,’ this is a time where we're supposed to say, ‘Well, I want to do BCA, or I want to do XYZ,’” Mr. Landa said. “So I think all of us who work with adolescents and students in general have to understand and make space for that exploration and evolution of people's values and ethical foundation.”

U-High counselor Aria Choi said she and the other high school counselors use the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning framework, known as CASEL, which helps students develop skills in five areas, which connect to ethics: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. Ms. Choi said she has seen a variety of experiences influence students' values and ethics — from examining community norms to being a member of an athletic team.

“Any time we find ourselves engaging in an activity where norms or guidelines are set, that's a formative experience

where we learn how do we not harm one another,” Ms. Choi said. “How do we make sure the activity is done in a conducive setting for the benefit of all or as many people as possible?”

Junior Lucie Bhatoe-Bertrand participates in Ethics Bowl, a club dedicated to debating real life ethical scenarios. She found that the club taught her the key reasoning behind why certain actions are deemed right and wrong, such as plagiarism or cheating, something she found was missing in her education at Lab.

Lucie said challenging the ethics of those scenarios helped her develop a better understanding of the rules Lab has created and the rules people create for themselves.

“Ethics Bowl forces you to think about ethical dilemmas in real life and be able to work through why something is right or wrong, knowing that the answers of-

ten aren't as clear as we think they are,” Lucie said. “Through my experience at Ethics Bowl, I am able to recognize these dilemmas in my day-to-day life.”

When dealing with situations about discipline, both Ms. Choi and Mr. Landa talked about the importance of emphasizing restorative justice in those educational experiences, as students learn about ethics.

“Those conversations are framed as such where it's never ‘You are not a bad person,’ it's saying there was a decision that was made or a behavior that might have been inappropriate and addressing it in the context of how do we restore and how do we learn,” Ms. Choi said. “We talk about decision making, intent vs. impact, and those conversations are framed around what can we learn, how can we restore relationships, what could have been the more appropriate action.”



Midway illustration by Eliza Dearing

Survey results show wide ranging ethical standards

by SAHANA UNNI
Editor-in-Chief

While nearly 9 in 10 students would not tell on a friend who was cheating, according to a recent U-High Midway poll, that number decreased to 8 in 10 if telling would get the student a good grade on their own test. This unscientific poll was conducted by the Midway on Jan. 11-18 with responses from 172 students from all grades, who expressed a number of wide ranging opinions, demonstrating how different the school's core values can be for each student.

In response to this question, many students expressed that maintaining loyalty with their friend would come above all else in this situation.

“They have a trust in me and I respect that,” one ninth grader answered, “and also I wouldn't want them to throw me under the bus for their own benefit.”

Students were especially split on the ethicality of pretending to be sick to miss a test. A little more than half of students, 54.1%, said they wouldn't feign sickness in this situation. “That would, at best, de-

lay the test by something like one day,” a sophomore wrote in the poll response. “Not worth skipping school.”

However, 45.9% of students said they would use this technique to avoid tests.

“There are sometimes life circumstances which cannot be accounted for — ones that might not be recognized by a teacher or you might be unable to convey,” one senior wrote. “Whatever the case may be, sometimes we truly need a break.”

When asked about using artificial intelligence, students' opinions varied depending on the situation. While only 22.1% of students said they'd use ChatGPT to start a paper, 37.8% said they'd use artificial intelligence for research.

“Sometimes I get stuck and need a little extra assistance to get it going,” one ninth grader wrote about using ChatGPT to start a paper. “I don't think there's anything wrong with getting a little boost.”

Outside a purely academic setting, students also had differing opinions. Nearly 2 in 3 students, 65.7%, would report a friend for bullying a classmate, while 34.3% said they wouldn't.

However, many students wrote that their response would depend on the severity of the bullying.

“It honestly depends on the situation, but it's often hard to recognize the consequences of an action until it's too late, so either confronting the friend or letting someone know would work,” a sophomore wrote. “I'd like to think I'd at least do or say something.”

Ethics exchange: Students discuss core values

by AUDREY PARK
Editor-in-Chief

The Midway selected four students from each grade to take part in a roundtable discussion on ethics facilitated by Audrey Park, editor-in-chief. Participants were given hypothetical ethical situations, and they answered accordingly. It was conducted via Zoom on Jan. 16. The discussion has been lightly edited for length, clarity and style.



Gio Nicolai,
ninth grader

want to ruin a friendship over cheating. But I think I should; I just personally would not do it.

Do you think it's unethical for one person to carry a group project?

Gio: I do think

Would you tell on a friend who was cheating?

Gio Nicolai: I think I would even if they were my friend because even if I have a personal relationship with them, it's still not right to condone that, because if I condone that it shows that I condone that for everyone. If I condone it for one person, it creates an unfair double standard for others, so I wouldn't not tell on anyone because they're getting an unfair advantage.

Maggie Yagan: I completely disagree.

I would not tell. It would have to depend on who the friend is and how egregious the aggression was, but if it were a close friend of mine, I would definitely not tell on them. I think it's a breach of trust. If they get in trouble for it, they get in trouble for it, but I think your loyalty should be to your friend first and foremost.

Amelia Tan: I think it depends on the circumstance and what they're cheating on. If it was a small homework assignment, probably not.

Rathin Shah: I stand between both of you. I think it depends how close I am to that person. Cheating is terrible, and it really frustrates me when I learn that someone is cheating because they have an unfair advantage, but friendship is a really important bond. I wouldn't



Maggie Yagan,
sophomore

ing the person who has to do all the work, and you're pulling the weight of a big assignment that is supposed to be distributed equally among multiple people. However, I think there are valid reasons that

would explain someone having less involvement in a group project according to circumstances and ability. But communication is huge. The worst crime you cannot commit during a group project is not communicating.

Is it ethical for two teachers of the same class to grade things very differently?

Gio: I'm a new student to Lab, so I wouldn't say I have experienced this, but I can draw from my experience at my previous school. I think that there should be standardization for classes with mostly right and wrong answers, especially in determining partial credit, and that writing pieces should be more ability-based instead of standards-based.

Maggie: It depends a lot on what kind of class it is. For humanities classes, I think there is more room for teacher discretion than, for example, math or science. For the latter two, there is a right and a wrong answer, so in that case, grading should be incredibly standardized. I think in history or English classes because it is a lot easier for discrepancies to appear because it is writing-based, I think teachers should do their best to standardize it, but it is slightly understandable if there are inconsistencies.

Amelia: I think that because it is the same course, the teacher should definitely communicate with the class on how they're grading. If they're different assignments, then it's OK. But if it's the same assignment or test, I think they have to be on the same grad-



Amelia Tan,
junior

ing scale. I know for math, a lot of the time, they're pretty consistent with how many points they take away for certain types of errors. We all have friends in different classes, so we do talk, so if it's the same

assignment and different teacher, they should definitely be graded similarly.

Rathin: I took a class and got an A for doing very little. The system in which some teachers are harder and others are stricter kind of sucks for students because then it's a lottery for students. It's either you're in a really challenging class or in a really easy class, but it's the same class. That system sucks. However, this system is never going to be objective. Even in math where there is a “right or wrong” answer, teachers have different perspectives, like if you have the right answer and all the wrong steps or vice versa, teachers may interpret how to grade that differently. Within departments, there should be some standardization because it's not fair, but it's also like, life isn't fair. It also prepares you for life and college because professors aren't always going to be fair. Professors are people. Teachers are people. You could build a strong rapport with a teacher and probably get a better grade. In that way, it does prepare you for the real world. I do think, though, there should be guidelines for each department to maximize fairness.

for more



Scan this QR code to read an extended version of the discussion.



Rathin Shah,
senior

easy.” I think pointing out specific times like this or parts that make a test a certain way is immoral. But I think making a general statement is not immoral. I don't think sharing anything about the test in general is good, but it's not necessarily immoral.

Maggie: I agree. I think there is no problem with giving the difficulty of the test. Or even, “Question 7 was hard.” I think the issue starts to arise when you tell them what exactly the questions were or even worse, what the answers were.

Amelia: I agree. I think it's fine if you say it was hard. As long as you're not giving away what exactly the test was about, I think the level of

difficulty is OK, though.

Rathin: There are two parts. There is a pretty large difference between saying “it wasn't that hard” and “be prepared for the test.” Generalizations about tests are fine, but if you start to say, “the end of the test was hard” or “this question was hard,” that's considered cheating because it will influence the test taker's performance on the test. This information will affect your time management for the test, and you get a leg up. If I know the last page is the most difficult part of the test, I'd be sure to breeze through the first page and put more time in the last page.

poll results

If you knew you wouldn't get caught, would you plagiarize?

85.8%

said they would not

Would you report a friend if they were bullying a classmate?

65.7%

said they would

Would you pretend to be sick to miss a test?

54.1%

said they would not

Is it fair for two teachers who teach the same class to grade very differently?

71.5%

said it is not

Would you use ChatGPT to start a paper for you?

77.9%

said they would not

Would you tell on a friend who was cheating?

87.8%

said they would not

Results from an unscientific Midway survey conducted on Jan. 11-18 with 172 responses

Resolutions that stick

Experts say New Year's plans must be gradual

by **HALEY MAHARRY**
Reporter

January sees one of the biggest rises in gym membership each year. The reason is clear: gym, workout and fitness-related plans are a go-to New Year's resolution for many, each year. And yet, after a few days, weeks or months, people find themselves less motivated to continue their yearly goals.

The key to building and maintaining resolutions is designing a doable, rewarding goal that is personalized to you that you can build upon as the year progresses.

Liz Smith, a yoga teacher and studio owner, recommends working up to a more complicated resolution in order to build your confidence and prolong your resolution.

"Start small. Instead of setting a goal to work out every day, plan to do so once a week in January and February. Then up it to twice a week if it feels manageable in March," she said. "You can keep building toward a final goal incrementally while ensuring that you feel successful. This provides time to build confidence, establish sustainable habits, and sets one up for success."

Similarly to Ms. Smith, Kris LoBue thinks that working up to larger fitness goals is the key to maintaining a resolution. Ms. LoBue is a personal trainer who recommends making very achievable resolutions that can be easily accomplished in a day.

"Don't set the expectation too high," she said. "Make a list of things you want to work on. Make sure you do them three times a week, then work your way up to more."

Hannah McCarrell, U-High's personal trainer, thinks that what is most important when creating a resolution is to make it tailored to you and you alone. She urges people to avoid following health and fitness trends.

"Something that makes a good fitness resolution is when you're pertaining it to you," she said. "A lot of times kids see things on TikTok and social media of someone else's personal fitness, and that's



Midway illustration by Eliza Dearing

SLOW BUT STEADY. Health-related plans are some of most common New Year's resolutions. To maintain them, experts say that the key is to gradually integrate healthy habits into your routine.

great, but make sure it pertains to you, and the specific things that you need."

Ms. McCarrell doesn't recommend dieting, and she suggests focusing on what you can do instead of limiting yourself.

"Sometimes people restrict themselves when it comes to New Year's resolutions, like 'I can't do this. I can't do that,' and it's great sometimes, but only in a balanced case," she said.

She believes that it is more important to be healthy and balanced

than it is to simply cut things from a diet.

Along with physical health, mental health is equally as important to keep a long-term resolution.

Aria Choi, a U-High counselor, believes that allowing yourself to fail is the most important part of upholding a resolution.

"If you do slip back into older habits that you were trying to change, just have grace for yourself and know that habits are really difficult to change, but it's not impossible," she said.

Ms. Choi also recommends avoiding setting out on a resolution journey alone and suggests instead to find someone who can keep you on track, even just by checking in every so often.

"I think having an accountability system is really beneficial," she said. "Let someone know what changes you hope to make. If you can have an accountability partner to make those changes alongside you or to, once a week, check in with you to ask about your progress, that can be really helpful."

vox pop.

What is your new years resolution? Why did you chose that?

"My New Year's resolution is to **sleep more** because I've been working hard, and I deserve it."
— Adam Cheema, senior

"My New Year's Resolution was to **stop procrastinating my homework**, because this has been a pattern in my life and it causes me so much stress, so I'm really just trying to fix that bad habit."
— Brianna Chang, junior

"My New Year's was to **play more piano** so that I can get better, because right now I need to improve exponentially — because I'm trying to go to music school."
— Rumi Johnson, junior

"I wanted my **posture to be better** because I feel like I slouch all the time, and I'm worried it's hurting my back and my neck, and I'm working on trying to sit up straighter and look more confident."
— Lucy Shirrell, ninth grader

"My New Year's resolution is to **check my email more** and read more books. I feel like I miss a lot of assignments from teachers and emails, and it's good to check my email more."
— Sam Picciola, ninth grader

"My resolution was to get 1% better every day, so next year I can hopefully **improve myself**."
— Mikey Skolarus, ninth grader

— compiled by
Jaya Alenghat

Constant danger: 'Forever chemicals' pose grave harm

by **JAYA ALENGHAT**
City Life Editor

Pots, pans, clothing, tablecloths, packaging, wrappers, toiletries, makeup, cell phones, medicines — the list of chemically dangerous products goes on and on.

From the nonstick pans we use to cook our food, to the stain-resistant clothing we wear every day, almost every human-made product contains "forever chemicals" — chemicals that will reside in our bodies forever. They are more scientifically known as per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS.

Despite the extreme abundance of PFAS in everyday products and resources, much of the public is highly unaware of the dangers and consequences that come with exposure to these chemicals.

PFAS are in all nonstick, waterproof and stain-resistant products, and they can contaminate other substances people consume — like drinking water. PFAS enter our bodies when we breathe, eat, drink or touch them.

Once created, and in our bodies, PFAS are extremely difficult to break down because they have a linked chain of carbon and fluorine atoms. These bonds are very strong and do not degrade, ultimately earning PFAS the nickname "forever chemicals."

Jiajun Luo, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Chicago, has done research on PFAS and the

“
It's very hard, since they're everywhere, for the individual to limit their exposure.
Dr. Linda Birnbaum, former director of the NIEHS
”

health effects that result from exposure.

"PFAS, they're manmade, they're not natural," Dr. Luo said in an interview with the Midway. "PFAS entered human society less than 100 years ago, so many things are not known — especially the health effects of PFAS."

Cancers, endocrine system disruptions, neurodevelopmental disorders (autism, ADHD), fertility issues, kidney and liver diseases, and immune and thyroid function disruptions are just a few of the many health effects that have been proven to occur after exposure to PFAS.

Linda Birnbaum, former director of the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences, recognizes how concerning PFAS are to society as a whole.

"You can't prove on an individual basis, it's a public health issue," Dr. Birnbaum said in an interview with the Midway. "You have to look at populations of people. And what you see is increased risk for

populations."

While the Environmental Protection Agency and Food and Drug Administration have some safety regulations on PFAS and are working to implement more, Dr. Birnbaum understands how difficult it is to limit chemicals as widespread as PFAS.

"We have the best policies, the best regulations, the best laws that money can buy," Dr. Birnbaum said. "I think it just takes a very long time for anything to go into place."

While government action is one step toward improvement, the public must also be aware of the issue.

"I see articles from The New York Times, Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal — all these newspapers have reported PFAS," Dr. Luo said. "That's a good sign. We see some efforts to inform the public about PFAS and PFAS exposure, but this may not be enough."

To help minimize their risk of exposure, individuals can stop using nonstick, waterproof and stain-resistant products; drink filtered water and spread awareness. However, this is only a small fraction of what is needed to completely restrict exposure.

"It's very hard, since they're everywhere, for the individual to limit their exposure," Dr. Birnbaum said. "We really need policy changes for that to happen."



Midway photo by Delaney Connell

CHEMICAL CHAOS. PFAS, cancer-prone chemicals, are in many of the products people use daily, and once consumed, they last "forever."

Unique market glows with culture

New Gangnam Market provides a flashy experience

by LIGHT DOHRN
Assistant Editor

As K-pop music flows through the aisles and illicit glowing lights illuminate the space, walking into Gangnam Market, a multicultural Asian grocery store and food court, presents you with the feeling of having stepped into a spaceship rather than a supermarket.

All the different sections of the market are labeled with neon signs. “Coldpress bar,” “produce,” “seafood,” “dairy —” the list goes on. The signs hang from the ceiling in every direction, some sporting bubble letters, some cartoonish icons and some entire pictures. Each one immediately competes for your moth-like desire with its tantalizing glow, and you can’t decide where to go first.

The market opened on Dec. 2, 2023, at 1001 W. Chicago Ave. While its name suggests a focus on Korean culture, the market offers food and products from all across Asia, and some beyond.

Kenny Yang, the owner of Gangnam Market, emphasized the high-tech feeling of the market as one of the key elements in an interview with NBC Chicago.

“When people shop I want to give them, like, a feeling of shopping in a futuristic mall,” Mr. Yang told NBC Chicago last month.

The market’s website describes it as “a place where you can embark on an incredible journey of discovery,” and while the phrasing may appear a bit theatrical, there’s most definitely a lot to discover within the walls of the store.

“Growing up in Chicago, I guess we suffer enough from different issues,” Mr. Yang said, “so when people come into my store and my restaurant, I would like people to feel the happy vibe.”

The happy vibe of the market can certainly be seen in its glimmering decor — but the allure extends to the products, each of which possesses its own kind of charm. From Hello Kitty ramen packages to coconut water bot-



Midway photos by Peyton Palmer

SPARKLING SUPERMARKET. The neon signs and lights illuminate the seating area of Chicago’s new Gangnam Market in West Town. Numerous aisles of different Asian snacks fill the market with brightly colored signs hanging above. From produce to snacks, the market appeals to all shoppers.

tles made of full, edible coconuts, there’s a delightful find for everyone at Gangnam Market.

Craig Vandergalien, a customer, said his favorite part of the market is the exciting variety of chips offered in the snack section.

“I’ve only been here a minute,” Craig said. “But the chip section! Oh, yeah, you gotta check out the chip section. I love the flavors. They have my favorite, the mala hotpot one — and also the ribeye steak one.”

Lena Willens, a first-time customer, said she appreciates both the wide variety of options offered in the food court area to the side of the market.

“I got the bibimbap and also the spicy siu mai,” Lena said, grinning. “They were both really delicious.”

The grocery store is connected to a small food court that offers an array of culinary delights catering to diverse tastes and preferences, with options available for take-out or dining in. Whether you’re in the mood for sushi, pastries or tacos, you can find it in one of the food stalls in the court along with a large and comfortable seating area.

Leslie Melendez, a recently hired cashier at one of the check-out counters, said she enjoys noticing all the different things people buy in the market while she scans their items. She believes it provides her with a glimpse into people’s lifestyles and preferences.

“I started working here just last Tuesday,” Leslie said. “It’s my first



time working at a grocery store, so it’s been interesting. We get different clients every time, and I love to see, like, what they take and what they would buy from an Asian store.”

Gangnam Market is not only a functional and practical grocery

store for stocking your pantry but also an enjoyable space and experience.

It welcomes you in with its colorful lights and exciting selection, and you’ll stay for a prolonged stroll through the aisles or a bowl of ramen from the food court.

Coat donation program supports new arrivals in winter

where to donate

- **Chicago Center for HIV Elimination:** 1525 E. 55th St., Ste. 20
- **Erica Ministries:** 4655 S. King Dr., Ste. 203
- **Ignite:** 56 E. 47th St., Suite 410-C

other programs

- The **Chicago Furniture Bank** provides furniture to unhoused arrivals.
- **Cradles to Crayons Chicago** is collecting shoes, clothes and other resources for migrants.
- Children under age 5 are provided for by **Share our Spare**, an organization that collects donations of gently used childhood items.
- **Instituto del Progreso Latino** has partnered with the city of Chicago to create an Amazon wishlist for migrants.

by HALEY MAHARRY
Reporter

Winter is a trying time for people all across the globe, especially for those without the resources to stay warm. Along with frost-covered ground comes frigid temperatures and often lots of snowfall. But the nonprofit organization One Warm Coat aims to make the winter months a little more bearable for those in need.

One Warm Coat works to help host coat drives across the country. Given the current influx of migrants in Chicago, organizations like One Warm Coat have an even larger role in helping those without homes to stay warm.

In the past two years alone, 19,000 people in need of shelter and safety have arrived in Chicago. One Warm Coat is conscious of these new Chicago residents, and is trying to give extra support to the city.

“One Warm Coat is working with the City of Chicago and several of our nonprofit partners in Chicago to increase awareness of the need for coats in Chicago for migrants and for individuals experiencing homelessness and poverty,” Patti Zappa, executive vice president of One Warm Coat, said.

While Chicago’s case is extreme, the organization has locations all



Midway illustration by Sygne Stole

over the country. One Warm Coat has collected 8 million coats to be distributed to thousands of nonprofit partners. Over the last 30 years and more, One Warm Coat has only grown bigger.

Abbey Carr, coat drive program manager, notes how much the program has expanded over the years.

“One Warm Coat started in 1992 as one coat drive in San Francisco,” Ms. Carr wrote in an email, “and has since grown to thousands of coat drives happening annually across the United States and Canada.”

With a message to share warmth and kindness, one coat at a time,

they encourage people across the country to support each other. To contribute to their cause, people and organizations can donate coats, hold coat drives and make financial donations.

Ms. Carr explained that anyone, including students, are able to help out and contribute to their cause.

“One Warm Coat makes it easy for volunteers of any age to make a significant difference in their community by sharing warmth,” Ms. Carr wrote.

One Warm Coat is also a sustainable alternative to throwing out used coats that helps keep these coats and other fabrics out of landfills.

“I love our mission of providing free coats to children and adults in need while promoting volunteerism and environmental sustainability,” Ms. Carr wrote. “Because One Warm Coat drives collect gently worn outerwear and outerwear accessories, we are able to keep more than 1 million pounds of textiles out of landfills each year.”

As freezing temperatures and blizzard conditions sweep across the United States, One Warm Coat supports communities with individuals with donations from coat drives to help everyone feel comfortable in the winter months.

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ENROLL FOR 2024-25

BEGINNING YEARBOOK JOURNALISM

Hidden Harmony

Kayin Bradford unlocks comfort in his two passions: basketball and singing

by **MILO PLATZ-WALKER**
Reporter

In the bustling halls of U-High, there exists a student whose quiet demeanor conceals his talents found on the basketball court and in the choir stands.

Although his quiet manner may suggest otherwise, junior Kayin Bradford is a hidden gem in Bel Canto, earning accolades for his remarkable solos. Beyond the harmonious melodies, he contributes to the basketball court, proving to be a strong team player. Juggling these diverse passions, Kayin appreciates the rewarding challenge of finding harmony in both his musical and athletic pursuits.

Kayin found his passion for choir in sixth grade, signing up for choir as a music requirement. As Kayin grew, his passion for singing also continued to grow into a strong presence as a tenor.

"I joined choir in sixth grade and never really looked back," Kayin said. "I decided to sign up for the high school choir as well and then I joined Bel Canto my sophomore year."

During distance learning for Kayin's seventh and eighth grade years, he found that being online made him miss the value and engagement that he found in the choir classroom during in-person school.

"I kind of messed around during choir remote learning," Kayin said. "But by the end, I actually really missed the class because my teachers were fun and I found the class engaging. It made me realize that I really loved singing."

Kaavya Peddinti, a junior and choirmate of Kayin's, said that although he may be quiet at times, Kayin has been able to find a voice for himself both on and off stage.

"Everyone within Bel Canto are friends, but Kayin is mostly considered the funny one," Kaavya

said. The tenor section, though small in size, emanates an intense and competitive atmosphere within Bel Canto. The scarcity of voices in this section heightens the demand for excellence among its members.

"The tenor section is significantly smaller. They only have about four people," Kaavya said. "That means that each person has a bigger role to contribute to Bel Canto."

Despite the competitive nature of the tenor section, Kayin has been able to sing multiple solos for Bel Canto, even winning awards for them. During his time in competition choir last year, Kayin performed for the IHSA Music Solo Award, which ranks students from five divisions. Kayin's solo performance earned top marks in his division.

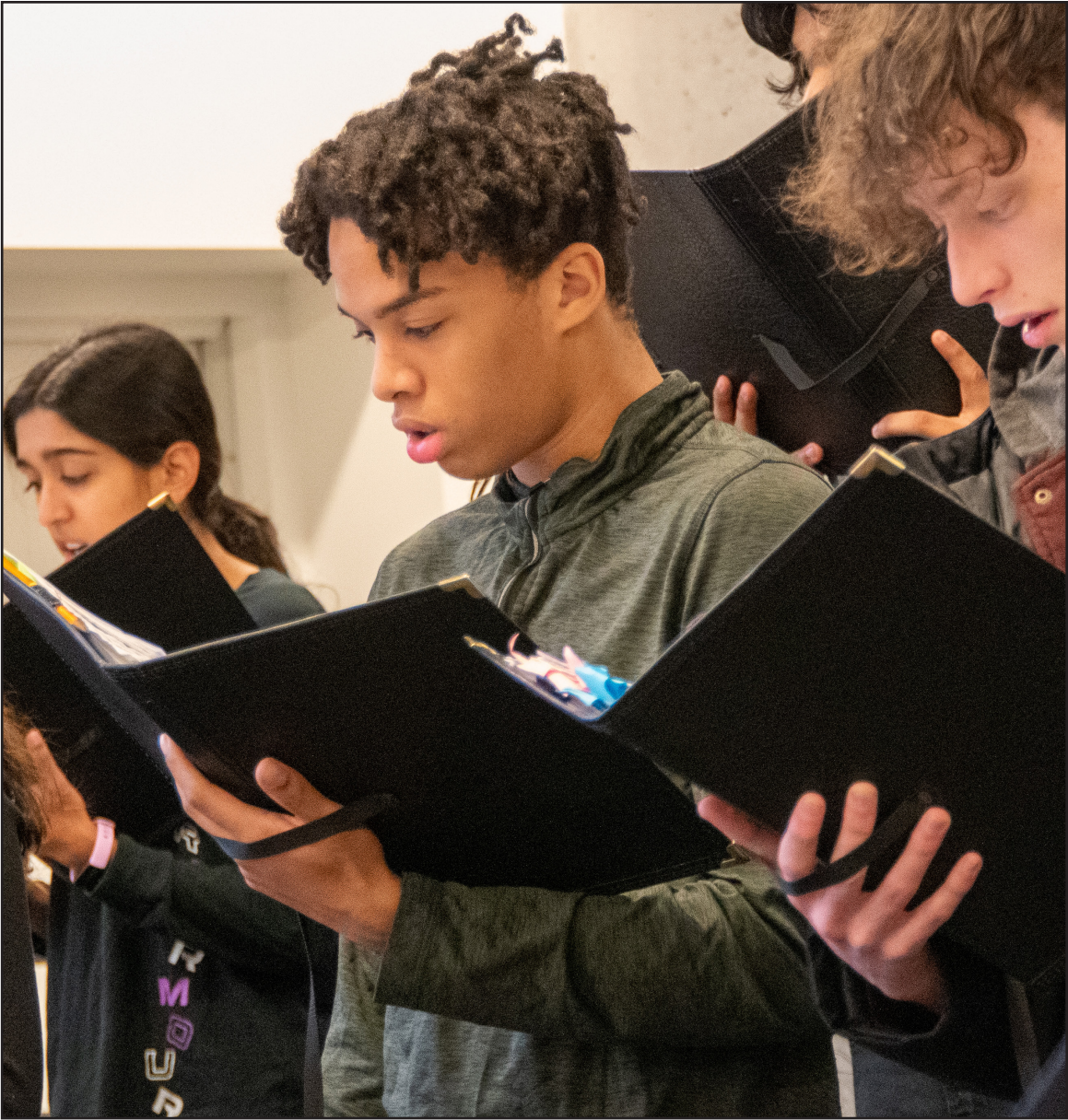
"I was really proud of myself when I found out I won. Freshman year I would have never imagined I could do something like this," Kayin said. "When I actually saw the award it shocked me and made me realize I could really do great things with music."

Kayin has watched music become a part of his everyday life, creating a secure and enjoyable space that he can depend on.

"Even if I'm just listening to music, it feels safe and comfortable for me," Kayin said. "It's relaxing and soothing being in that music environment."

In addition to his achievements in the realm of choir, Kayin demonstrates his talents on the basketball court as well. Kayin found his passion for basketball in the second grade, and is now a member of the varsity boys basketball team.

"In the second grade, my mom and dad signed me up for basketball," Kayin said. "I remember getting a mini hoop and that's when I



Midway photo by Ellis Calleri

PERFECT PITCH. Seeing Kayin Bradford in the halls, you wouldn't know that under the varsity basketball jersey, behind the headphones and on the bike, Kayin is a Bel Canto star who shines in the selective choir and on the court.

watch more

Scan this QR to watch Kayin Bradford in a Midway interview by Skye Freeman on the U-High Midway's website, uhighmidway.com

really fell in love with the game. By the third grade I played with the middle school basketball team."

Junior Noah Hoereth has been playing basketball with Kayin since middle school. Noah sees Kayin as a strong presence on the

team, always providing teammates with positivity and energy.

"I'd say Kayin definitely has a connection with everyone on the team," Noah said. "He's super easy to talk to on and off the court, always bringing good energy."

Despite his quiet demeanor, Kayin has proven himself a leader on both varsity and JV teams this year.

"Sometimes Kayin can be quiet," Noah said, "but when he does talk he always has something meaningful to say."

Despite having a passion for both singing and basketball, Kayin finds it challenging to commit to both sports. Between practices and competitions, Kayin has trouble navigating his demanding

schedule.

"Already this year I've had to miss a couple practices just because of choir performances," Kayin said. "It's definitely difficult trying to navigate both, but it's worth it in the end."

Although managing both Bel Canto and basketball can be difficult for Kayin, the two have made a harmony within his life that he appreciates.

"I had to learn how to manage both choir and basketball," Kayin said. "It was a challenge but it was also super helpful. They have both created a sort of balance in my life that I really like. I really love both groups, and I have learned a lot over the last couple years on how to find a good balance."

Exhibit 'Nothing Is' breaks traditional ideas of language

by **KATIE SASAMOTO-KURISU**
Editor-in-Chief

From a distance, a short line of connected black diamonds appears to be just a simple marking on a gray wall. But as visitors glance inside the gap in the wall, they peer into a small mirrored space, illuminated by colorful swatches of characters and shapes. This spatial illusion represents the essence of "Nothing Is," the Chicago Works exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago by artist Maryam Taghavi that uses the calligraphic characters as vessels of expression.

Ms. Taghavi was born in Tehran, Iran. She moved to Canada at 16, where she was forced to rely on a language somewhat foreign to her — English — while exploring new ways to express herself. This dynamic between language, perception and expression has been a central point in her work.

"Suddenly, I could not access my own feelings and emotions in the same language," Ms. Taghavi, now a Chicago resident, said in an interview with the Midway. "The main element of my practice has been my experience of being a bilingual and figuring out how to position myself across these languages."

Ms. Taghavi's exhibit seeks to

push the boundaries of what language is and how it is typically understood using various creative techniques.

"My experience of language has been really important in developing my practice. I have, in some ways, really tried to take text out of its conventional linguistic meaning," Ms. Taghavi said. "What if I add color to it? What if I make it out of concrete or limestone? What if it's reflected? I've been really trying to take language into different mediums and seeing what happens."

The exhibit challenges an individual's view of the imperceptible, pushing them to imagine new possibilities within the exhibit space.

"I was really interested for the eye to peek into something that is not really meant to be looked through, but also to create this moment of magic and this moment of that awe that comes with finding something where you don't expect to find it," Ms. Taghavi said.

Using physical and visual elements, the exhibit addresses themes of time and space simultaneously.

"The conceptual frame at some point became that I wanted to go from something that is seemingly transcendental and magical to something more earthly and every

day," she said.

Ms. Taghavi also often confronts the concept of perception throughout the exhibit. In various pieces of the work, Ms. Taghavi creates illusions that challenge the viewer's own senses.

"I have been working with language a lot, but also our optical experience and how our optical experience has this depth to how we receive the world," she said. "In my work, I have been making instances where you experience optical illusions so that makes you doubt your own eye."

The exhibit confronts many paradoxes related to time and space, such as wholeness versus emptiness, and what constitutes something versus nothing.

"Life is a paradox. I like to create these paradoxes so we can see what's in between," Ms. Taghavi said. "For me that nearness, that closeness, that intimacy and being further away, being distant from it is also one of the elements that I was very much aware of."


"Nothing Is" calls on viewers to dialogue with the physical world while using their imagination, and is definitely worth a visit. In her work, the audience is asked to face incompleteness, engage with what is unknown and reflect on the true meanings of language.



Midway photo by Katie Sasamoto-Kurisu

ARTISTIC VISION. Iranian artist Maryam Taghavi's latest installment in the ongoing Chicago Works exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Art titled "Nothing Is," pushes boundaries of language and communication.

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ENROLL FOR 2024-25
PHOTOJOURNALISM

Winter wonders

As the ground is filled with layers of snow, and the brisk wind leaves a chill in the air, many students are left locked inside unsure of what to do as they attempt to avoid the seemingly endless winter months Chicago provides. While perhaps not as many activities are at their finger tips as there are in the summer, there are still many opportunities to enjoy themselves despite the freezing temperatures. From outdoors to indoors, here are five activities that students will surely enjoy.

activities to do

McCormick Tribune Ice Rink

Through March 3, Millennium Park hosts the McCormick Tribune Ice Rink weather permitting. The rink is at 1 N. Michigan Ave. and features Park Grill, an American Bistro serving cuisine with Chicago-themed food and breathtaking views. The rink is free of charge (excluding skate rentals for all ages) as well as skating lessons on the weekends and select CPS winter break days. The rink is open 11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. daily.

Chicago Restaurant Week

Chicago Restaurant Week began Jan. 19, hosting over 397 restaurants from the Chicagoland area. The 17-day event through Feb. 4 features 41 cuisines from around the world, ranging from Brazilian to Pan-Asian. The week showcases restaurants from 51 neighborhoods, hoping to put some new restaurants into people's minds. Meals are \$25 for lunch/brunch, and \$42 or \$59 for dinner.

Sledding

Available whenever there is snow, Chicago has a few hills around the city featuring slopes that reach up to 200 feet, making it a must for those who seek a thrill. One mini-mountain in particular is the Soldier Field Sledding Hill just south of the stadium. The hill sports a panoramic view of the skyline and Lake Michigan as well as easy access with parking lots and bike trails leading to it.

Cold Weather Animals

While Lincoln Park Zoo is open daily, lots of the year is spent indoors for Talini and Siku, the pair of polar bears. During the frigid winter months, they venture outside rolling in the snow and going for swims feeling their natural habitat. But not everyone enjoys the frigid temperature Chicago offers, so take advantage of the many indoor facilities such as the bird house offered.

Polar Adventure Day

Have you ever wanted to watch huskies pull a sled through the barren arctic tundra but never got the time to visit? On Feb. 17, go to Big Marsh Park, 11559 S. Stony Island Ave., to watch many activities ranging from watching husky sled teams to guided bird hikes to listening to stories over a warm campfire. It's free to anyone from noon to 3 p.m.

— Story by Kabir Joshi, photo by Kaden Moubayed

Sledding brings fun in snowy weather

Joyful memories and stronger connections made in the cold

by SAHANA UNNI
Editor-in-Chief

For as long as she can remember, junior Maya Pytel has loved to sled. As a young child, her passion for the activity started by being bundled up on the same sled as her older brother while their parents dragged them to school through the snow. Years later, she spends as many opportunities as possible each winter racing down the hills along the Midway Plaisance with friends.

While the frigid weather means staying inside for some students, snowfall creates more opportunities for thrill, fun and friendship for those passionate about sledding.

Having enjoyed sledding for so long, the activity has become somewhat sentimental to Maya. Her favorite memory, she said, was when her and a friend accidentally slid under an unsecured fence while going down a steep hill.

"It was a lot of fun, and it's memorable moments like that, they're very heartwarming to look back on," Maya said.

Senior Tomasz Witkowski has also enjoyed sledding since he was in lower school, when he would



Midway photo by Kaden Moubayed

WINTER JOY. Some students stay inside hiding from the cold, while others head outside to enjoy the winter weather. Among these outdoor activities is sledding. Sledding is a timeless activity many students enjoy as it creates more opportunities for thrill, fun and friendship.

go to a hill in his neighborhood with his older sister and a couple of friends. Despite losing interest in the activity for a while, Tomasz has picked it back up after a friend suggested they sled down a hill in Soldier Field. He now looks forward to sledding each winter.

"We go whenever there's snow," Tomasz said. "So far this year we haven't been, but we hope to go as much as possible if there's snow."

One of the reasons Tomasz likes sledding in particular is that unlike many winter sports, it is easy to do whenever there is snow. He also enjoys the quality time he spends sledding with friends.

"I do it just to be around my friends and the snow," Tomasz said. "It's easier to go to a little hill than a skiing resort and go skiing. And my favorite part of it is just laughing with my friends when we fall. We push each other and do snowball fights. It's all fun."

When he and his friends tried to

“My favorite part of it is just laughing with my friends when we fall. We push each other and do snowball fights. It’s all fun.”
Tomasz Witkowski, senior

create a hill to sled over on Soldier Field, Tomasz found that sledding can also allow him to form connections with total strangers.

"It was cool because other people joined in on helping us make the little mound to go over, and then everyone went over the hill and got airborne," Tomasz said.

Like Tomasz, Maya appreciates the chaotic moments that often occur while sledding, especially while with friends.

"I think the best part of sledding is it forms a connection between you and the people you're doing it with," Maya said.

With years of experience sledding, Maya has come to enjoy many aspects of the activity, especially the bond formed between her and those she sleds with.

"I think that the most important part of my memories of sledding is the people," Maya said. "Sledding is a very joyful activity, and so I've always loved doing it."

High hooping hopes

Bomi Johnson elevates varsity team environment

By SKYE FREEMAN

Audience Engagement Manager

In only his first year of high school, Bomi Johnson is making his name known as one of the only ninth graders on the varsity boys basketball team. For some, it's just an extracurricular to list on applications, but for Bomi, it's a hope for the future.

Bomi grew up in a sport-loving family, with his dad playing soccer and his mom running track during their school careers.

He also derived much of his inspiration from his older brother when deciding to join basketball. His brother played on a travel basketball team from elementary school to high school.

Bomi remembers tagging along to his practice when he was only 3 and trying to copy their drills. He's been playing ever since.

"I think basketball is just something that can take you away from all the other things that are going on in the world, and, like, I think that it's something that you'll always be able to have fun with," Bomi said.

He played as a double-rostered player on both JV and varsity for the first month of this basketball season but was moved up to only varsity when he showed consistent improvement.

Senior Michael Sawaqed, varsity co-captain, has recognized Bomi's hard work and expects to see it pay off throughout high school.

"His composure for a ninth grader is something you don't see very often," Michael said. "For someone so young, to be able to have the composure of an older person, like a 12th or 11th grader at the varsity level, is wonderful."

Michael said the other team members have grown close to Bomi, and he feels he brings up

the team's energy. He thinks Bomi has the potential to do great things both on and off the court.

"I've been playing with Bomi for quite a long time now and his progression has been amazing. His ability to learn and take things in, from not only the coaches but the leaders on the team, has been great," Michael said. "Honestly, in that 9th-10th grade, there's no one else like Bomi who has that sense of leadership and has that ability to bring everyone together."

Head Coach Andre Battle, shares Michael's sentiment. He's worked at Lab for around seven years, has spent time coaching Bomi's older brother, and sees Bomi's distinct dedication.

"He wants to be as good as he can be. I've seen him over break running the Midway Plaisance, running sprints with his older brother," Coach Battle said. "I think he has great potential. I'd say, at this age, he has a lot to learn, but he's not afraid of the moment, and I think he'll turn into a fine player."

The boys varsity team meets almost every day after school, with practice running from 5-7 p.m.

Not only does he have to balance late practice times with school work, but he also plays for the Chicago-based travel team, Team Rose, which is only with youth basketball players of the same age group.

While Bomi enjoys his time on Team Rose, he is excited to continue playing with his peers at U-High, where the difference in grades has introduced him to new experiences.

His teammates feel the same, as he's known for his personality, specifically his humor.

"I think Bomi is one of the funniest guys on the team, if not the funniest," Michael said.

"He brings the team closer together, he's funny — just having him there just makes everyone else happier and their effort and energy goes up."

Despite his talent and dedication, he stays humble and appre-



Midway photo by Peyton Palmer

PERSONAL PASSION. Ninth grader Bomi Johnson started the season as a double-rostered player on both JV and varsity for the first month of this basketball season but was moved up to only varsity when he showed consistent improvement.

ciative of where he is now. He hopes to apply what he's learned through playing basketball to his future endeavors, especially his resilience.

"I mean, me doing well at a young age, I think that it gives me hope for the future and to what I know I'm able to do if I just keep myself dedicated and put the work

in," Bomi said.

For now, though, he said he has only one goal:

"This school year? I just want to win something."

Tate Nguyen brings passion to both club and school teams

by AUDREY PARK

Editor-in-Chief

Mondays and Wednesdays, it's U-High fencing. Every other day except for Sunday, it's club fencing. But even on Sunday, it's the weight room.

After school every day this year, junior Tate Nguyen can be seen going to Lab's gymnasium building for practice, to his house, and shortly after, downtown for more training, all while carrying an oversized, full bag. He's going to fencing practice, a hobby that takes up almost all of his free time.

"I'm always carrying this fencing bag," Tate said. "I think it's pretty indicative of my love for this sport."

Fencing has allowed Tate to form a community with other Lab students and the broader Chicago community, and this serves as an avenue for him to constantly challenge himself and improve his mental state.

He began fencing when he was 7 years old and has since received many accolades.

He has been on the High School All-American First Team two times and is 69th in the country for junior fencers. Most recently, Tate qualified for the USA Cadet Epée Team.

Tate fences épée, one of the three disciplines of modern fencing. He has participated in club fencing all his career but decided to join U-High's fencing team this year. He said he joined



Midway photo by Miles Wilczak

CONSTANT COMMITMENT. Tate Nguyen is a member of both the U-High fencing team, and a high-commitment outside club team.

Lab's team because he wanted to be a part of a community at school.

"I have been doing a lot of stuff outside of school," Tate said, "but

I think it's time I do stuff in the community where I live and get my education."

For Tate, fencing is more than

“
The most rewarding experience is losing because it makes you grow as a person.
Tate Nguyen, junior
”

just a physical activity. He said the sport involves a lot of mental perseverance, making it rewarding.

"The most rewarding experience is losing because it makes you grow as a person," he said. "Strangely, more than winning. It makes you reflect on your mistakes and areas of improvement. On top of that, it's 50% physical and 50% mental because you must also have mental capabilities to stay calm under pressure."

Although Tate has faced challenges balancing his fencing and academic careers, he said he's continuously drawn to the sport because he loves the nature of it.

You're in a team, but at the end of the day, it's an individual sport," he said. "There's that team aspect, but it's all up to you."

But more than anything, Tate values the community and relationships fencing has created. In particular, he said he has formed close bonds with the people at the club he fences at year-round, Windy City Fencing.

"My club coach, Tsanko, is literally my second dad," Tate said. "He's seen me grow up and

has seen and will see me at every stage of my life. He's given me a different outlook on life and is such a big inspiration. It's nice to see how other people, especially him, view the world."

Tsanko Hantov, a Windy City Fencing owner, said Tate is extremely dedicated to the sport.

Mr. Hantov said, "He has been showing consistency since he started."

Tate said fencing has become a large part of his identity, so bonding with others who also fence is inevitable.

Junior Ben O'Donnell, who fences at Windy City Fencing and is a member of U-High's team with Tate, said he feels similarly.

"We see each other a lot more because of fencing, and there are more chances to talk, and it's a huge topic we can connect about," Ben said.

Outside of fencing, Tate has found an interest in fashion.

"Clothes can be expensive, so I like to save money to buy pieces," he said. "I love seeing how different pieces can come together. I feel like clothes are like a canvas."

Tate said he plans to continue to fence in college, though he does not see himself pursuing it afterward.

And while Tate's fencing bag is heavy and the sport requires large amounts of dedication, it's all worth it for him because of the experiences and people the sport has generated.