

ASA celebrates Asian American experience

In first assembly, club recognizes diversity, culture

by SKYE FREEMAN

Audience Engagement Manager

With the theme of “Exploring the Diversity of the Asian American Experience Through a Contemporary Lens,” the Asian Students’ Association held its first-ever assembly on Feb. 8 to celebrate the cultural diversity of Asia and highlight the Asian American experience in current times.

ASA president Katie Sasamoto-Kurusu and vice president Jacob Liu welcomed students with an overview of the assembly’s events, starting with a piece of historical context. Katie is an editor-in-chief of the Midway but was not involved with the reporting of this story.

The screen showed an image of a crude caricature from 1899, titled “The White Man’s Burden.” It depicted the United States and Britain carrying people of color up a mountain, toward a statue labeled Civilization. The drawings of the foreign ethnic groups feature racist and exaggerated features.

Following the analysis and explanation of the illustration, they jumped the timeline to ahead a century, to discuss a current social media trend, RCTA. RCTA, which stands for Race Change to Asian, is an internet phenomenon



Midway photo by Leila Rezanian

DYNAMIC DANCING. Dance group Ishti Collective perform at the first-ever Asain Students’ Association assembly. The assembly celebrated the diversity of the Asian-American experience.

that centers around people without Asian heritage attempting to identify as Asian. They stressed the importance of recognizing the difference between appreciating someone’s culture vs. appropriating it and being insensitive to their lived experiences. To further highlight the significance of appreciation, they discussed the complexity of Asia. Composed of 48 coun-

tries, each with its own customs and ethnic groups, the continent’s diversity is underappreciated. To connect the movement for change to America, Katie gave the audience a request about the term AAP, which stands for Asian American Pacific Islander.

“In recent years, many social groups and Asian-oriented organizations have scrutinized this

term for its lack of inclusion, and are trying to seek ways for improvement,” Katie said. “In ASA, we’ve adopted the new term these groups created, APIDA which stands for Asia Pacific Islander Desi American, in an effort to be more representative and comprehensive of Asian identities.”

They then invited three performers from the local dance

group Ishti Collective onto the stage. The group works to portray South Asian performance art through a variety of mediums, such as dance, music and storytelling. They first performed a rhythmic dance and then walked the audience through an interactive chant as the performers danced. Guest speaker Josina Morita, Cook County Commissioner of the 13th District and the first Asian American woman to serve on the Cook County Board, shared her experience with discrimination based on her identity despite growing up in a family that has been in America for over 100 years.

“There’s a saying that you are either at the table or you’re on the menu. For a very long time, Asian Americans have been on the menu. People have made decisions about Asian Americans without Asian Americans at the table,” Ms. Morita said.

In a video, ninth graders who identify as Asian American discussed their experiences inside and outside of Lab. The assembly ended with a final request from Katie.

“On behalf of all of the affinity groups, we want to ask one thing of you: Please be kind to one another, because you never know what somebody else is going through,” she said. “Lab’s mission statement highlights exhibiting kindness and honoring diversity, and we all need to work together to uphold that.”

Changes in AT Chemistry empower students



Midway photo by Danny Baeza

FLAMING FIRE. Junior Hope Durrell participates in an experiment in her AT Chemistry class. The class aims to foster belonging and confidence in students to tackle a challenging science class.

by MIA LIPSON

News Editor

When Zachary Hund began teaching at Lab in 2016, he taught one course of AT Chemistry. Within that group, he noticed only two students were female, and every student was white. The next year, he saw the gender disparity decrease, noticing the distribution was more even. Still, he noticed only one or two students of color in the class.

“It really made me sit and think because while I was initially happy to see that there were more female students interested in taking AT Chemistry, I was obviously lacking in other areas of diversity,” Dr. Hund, now the science department chair, said.

Over the past few years, Dr. Hund has seen a large increase in the number of students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds enrolling in AT Chemistry. By implementing measures such as a gradeless system and conferencing, Dr. Hund has worked to ensure students of color feel heard, welcomed and empowered in AT Chemistry and feel comfortable taking on a challenging science course. Seven years later, the numbers have changed.

Over one-quarter of all students enrolled in AT Chemistry are students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds.

Dr. Hund described a “push and pull” in terms of why students want to take the course with one part coming from students and the other from teachers.

“The pull comes from making sure you run a course that students have heard good things about, that they know they can be themselves in, that they know they can be successful in, and that they know the material might be exciting,” Dr. Hund said.

Dr. Hund said the other part, the “push,” comes from encouraging students to have confidence in their own abilities.

“I’ve been saying ‘I see you, I hear you, I believe in you, and I want to encourage you to take this harder science class.’ I think it’s telling students ‘I know that you are capable of taking this course and doing well. I see you being successful, and I want you to see that as well,’” Dr. Hund said.

Junior Hana Javed chose to take AT Chemistry because she wanted to continue to explore her love of chemistry. She has felt very comfortable in the class and appreci-

ates the ways the class is run.

“I do really feel like it’s a safe and welcoming environment. I definitely feel like the class gives students more opportunities to show their strength and find out where their strengths lie,” Hana said. “I like how the grading isn’t solely based on how you do on exams because if a student has a bad day or they are just not as good at testing, they can still find ways to succeed. The class makes room for all kids with different ways of learning.”

Dr. Hund noticed students have responded well to practices such as grade conferences, where students can review their work and have input to their final evaluation.

Dr. Hund said, “I think students like to know they have a voice. I think students like to be seen and get to kind of fight for themselves to say, ‘You know, this is everything I’m doing inside and outside of class. This is the amount of work I’m putting in, and this is what I think I should be getting out of it.’”

Hana thinks students appreciate having a voice.

Hana said, “The class gives you a chance to express yourself and communicate how hard you’ve been working.”

Administrator accepts UChicago position

by TAARIQ AHMED

Digital Editor

Betsy Noel, who serves as Lab’s equal opportunity services director and Title IX coordinator, has accepted the position of director of the Office of College Community Standards and assistant dean of students at the University of Chicago.



Betsy Noel

She will be leaving later this year. Ms. Noel has worked at Lab since 2017.

Ms. Noel said the transition to her new role will feel bittersweet, due to the fact that she thoroughly enjoyed her time working with the Lab com-

munity, especially high school students.

“I came to do this here because I believe in the importance of preventing harassment and discrimination,” Ms. Noel said, “and it has been a privilege to work with students who trusted me to help them.”

In an email to the Midway, Laboratory Schools Director Tori Jueds said that the search to find a replacement for Ms. Noel is under way.

The position is open to applicants.

Ms. Jueds said the greater Lab community was top of mind in the process.

“As we gather résumés and indications of interest,” Ms. Jueds said, “our process will be inclusive of many voices so that our

search will be informed by the wisdom of Lab students, educators and families.”

Ms. Jueds said that Ms. Noel has contributed greatly to equity practices and education at Lab.

This includes training for harassment and discrimination prevention, along with other efforts, some unrecognized.

“Where community members have experienced harm such as bullying or harassment,” Ms. Jueds said, “the ensuing follow-up and investigation has generally been managed by Ms. Noel. Because such investigations are confidential, her impact may not be apparent to all members of the community, but I can attest that she has done this work with extraordinary attention to detail, empathy and patience.”

news in brief

Math Team places third in NSML competition at Lab

The Math Team hosted the fourth competition for the North Suburban Math League (NSML) at Lab on Feb. 1, and the team placed third at the event. Schools from across Chicago participated in the contest.

Five contestants from each grade level competed in the event. Sophie Li and Mulan Wu competed in the orals competition. Team co-captain Sonakshi Mutreja was pleased by the team’s performance, and hopes to keep up the momentum.

She said, “We always aim to improve, but are hoping to keep up the good work at the final NSML in March so we can bring home another trophy.”

— Victoria Washington

At recent contests, senior debate duo finds success

Two senior captains of the debate team placed third in the Pace Round Robin event in Atlanta Jan. 24-25.

They proceeded to compete in the Barkley Forum at Emory University from Jan. 26-28, where the pair reached the quarterfinals.

Seniors Mahi Shah and Cyrus Esmailzadeh were the only duo chosen for the events.

“Emory tournament has a big waitlist. Some of our other teams haven’t been competing as much, so they were waitlisted and unfortunately, they did not get off the waitlist,” Mahi said.

While she is happy with the results, Mahi hopes for bigger goals.

— Edward Park

Students: Don't ignore the election

The confusing statistics. The varying news commentary from analysts. It can be a lot.

All it takes is another depressing headline to remind students of the inescapable and unavoidable 2024 presidential election. It's easy and completely understandable for young people to feel both disconnected and disinterested in the upcoming election when the faces of the event are the same as they were four years ago.

Within U-High, an unscientific poll conducted by the Midway demonstrated this. Seniors were asked to rate on a scale of 1-4 how excited they were about their candidate or party going into the election.

The most common response was a measly 1.

Nevertheless, this year, the election could mean even more than ever.

Despite how painstakingly familiar the candidates may be, U-High students must understand the significant political gravity of this event and how it sets the stage for the future of the country.

Students should pay attention to how it plays out, stay engaged with the specific issues that matter to them, and monitor how the candidates plan to address them.

**as the
midway
sees it.**

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

For students who are eligible to vote in the Nov. 5 election, especially those voting for the first time, it may be hard to look at the primary choices on the ballot: the same old names, largely unrelatable to individuals in this generation.

However, while Joe Biden and Donald Trump may not be the most engaging candidates for young people and students, and we should hope for better representation in the future, this feeling of entrapment between a rock and a hard place must be navigated somehow.

In an election where so much is on the table, the power of voting is even more evident and essential to young people who wish to use their voice.

Students have the ability to express themselves in this election and should aim to do so throughout the process.

Placing more of an emphasis on the pertinent social issues which do matter to young people, even if they feel a lack of connection to the candidates themselves, could help fight this lack of engagement.

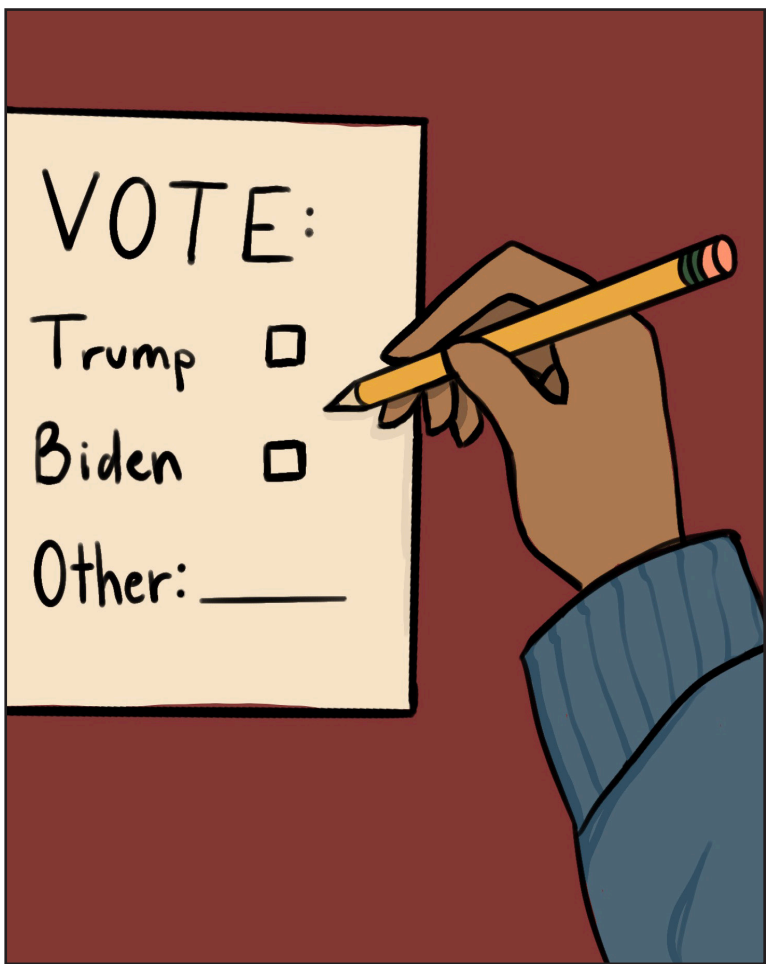
Reproductive health care, immigration rights, climate change and U.S. foreign policy are all at the forefront of this election, and voters have the choice of deciding which candidate will make the calls on them.

For students not yet eligible to vote, who may feel even less inclined to pay attention to the election, there are so many ways for them to participate and be a part of the process, too.

Anyone can encourage others to vote, support a candidate, voice their opinion on social topics which may strike a chord with them — in-person or on social media.

Despite the generational alienation, remaining informed on current events has never been more important for students.

This election is simply too pressing to ignore, as it will shape students' future in one way or another, and pretending like it is not coming will not make its landing any softer when November rolls around.



Midway illustration by Noah Babai

The customer isn't always right; support employees

by **CLARE McROBERTS**
Features Editor

As you enter a coffee shop, you're greeted with the friendly face of a cashier. A kind word. A smile. Maybe they even compliment your shirt. Their chipper attitude uplifts you. When the time comes to pay, the screen displays an option to add a tip. You ponder for a moment, select a little more than you usually would, and think, "They deserved that."

The convention of tipping is a relic of the past that perpetuates an imbalance in power between serv-



Clare McRoberts

ers and customers. Like all employees, those in the service industry deserve to earn comfortable and reliable compensation.

On the surface, tipping more when a server does an excellent job is meritocratic. It rewards hard work.

The issue lies in who makes those decisions. Based on a 30-second interaction at a counter, a customer has the power to determine how much a worker takes home that day. Livelihoods shouldn't depend on brief, passing judgments by consumers.

Tipping removes professionalism from a job and reduces it to a quest to charm passersby who have little or no real knowledge of the profession. Sometimes, it turns out, the customer does not actually know best.

Not only is tipping arbitrary, but it's also condescending. The convention began in the Middle Ages, where servants were given extra money from their masters if they performed well.

In the United States, historians say tipping has racist roots: after slavery was abolished, white business owners replaced wages with tips to steal Black labor. Time has passed, but the demeaning and unscrupulous essence of tipping has not.

In a perfect world, tipping would simply be paid sufficient wages. Part of what perpetuates low base wages for service workers is the presumption by employers that customers will provide generous tips.

In some areas, efforts are un-

derway. In Chicago, subminimum wage will be completely phased out by 2028. Still, even workers who are paid minimum wage or above struggle to make ends meet without tips.

For now, tips are critically important to the livelihoods of service workers, and tipping is here to stay, along with wages that are not nearly livable.

Until service workers are paid reasonable wages not reliant on the whim of a tip, we should provide them with generous — and consistent — tips to the best of our own financial ability. We should tip all of them as much as we can, knowing that we are not the best judges of their work.

Whether the cashier offers a smile or a glare, they deserve a tip that they can depend on.

by the numbers

\$9.48
is the **subminimum wage** for tipped employees in Chicago.

7 in 10
adults believe they **tip in more situations** than five years ago.

15%
is the **average tip** amount at a sit-down restaurant

— Pew Research Center

Provide trained voice actors with roles; not celebrities

by **HALEY MAHARRY**
Reporter

"Leo" and "Trolls Band Together" are two recent animated box office releases and hits. In the past movies like these would have characters voiced by actors trained in voice acting, not stage or film actors trying out voice work. But both of these movies are filled with A-list actors: "Leo" with Adam Sandler and Cecily Strong, "Trolls" with Justin Timberlake, Anna Kendrick and Kenan Thompson.



Haley Maharry

Already established actors being cast in voice acting roles is called "celebrity casting."

The voice acting field has been long used well-known film and TV actors in their casts. These people weren't cast because of their voice acting talent, they were hired because we already know them.

Roles filled by celebrities should instead be given to up and coming talents, not names people will recognize.

Professional voice actors who have put the time and effort into learning voice acting aren't the problem. A production suffers when people who have never done voice acting before are solely cast for major roles just because of their other fame from be-

“
These people weren't cast because of their voice acting talent, they were hired because we already know them.
”

can't afford to cast celebrities. And studios like Disney, Pixar and Netflix that feature countless movies and shows with characters voiced by celebrities, don't need this extra publicity. People will watch those productions anyway.

When a movie becomes more focused on who's in it rather than the actual story and animation, what's the point in watching the movie?

Voice acting is a skill that needs to be honed and worked on. Acting for film and voice acting require separate metaphorical toolboxes, and some of these celebrities just don't have that.

The problem for me stems from a voice actor being easily recognized because it's just some ce-

lebrity speaking normally into the mic. No voices, no personality, it's just their voice. When I listen to Mario's voice in the "The Super Mario Bros. Movie" I should be able to hear Mario, not voice actor Chris Pratt's regular voice "Epic: The Musical" is a concept musical based on "The Odyssey" that has a truly unique way of casting its members.

The creator, Jorge Rivera-Harans, posts TikToks and YouTube shorts inviting people to audition by duetting the videos with a clip of them singing a portion of one of Rivera-Haran's songs. From the audition pool, Rivera-Harans can pick who he wants purely based on talent, not fame or follower count.

u-high midway

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1362 East 59th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637
Phone 773-702-0591
Email midway@ucls.uchicago.edu

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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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Hydration or expression?

Water bottles help students hydrate — and stay stylish

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

Carried throughout the halls of U-High, held in the hands of students, some big, some small, in all sorts of shapes and sizes, they're hard to miss: water bottles. These objects are simply vessels to help keep users hydrated, yet in recent years they have evolved into something bigger in culture — a product encouraging healthy habits and a means for self-expression. Stocking up on water bottles has become a sort of lifestyle, even a hobby, for many. Their variety — color choice, size, special features — has helped boost their popularity.

"There are things like fidget spinners, where when one person gets it, a lot of people want to get it. I feel like it's that simple," Maurice Neuman, a senior who uses his blue 40-ounce Stanley water bottle often, said. "There are people who post online when they get a new color and then they have, like, 20 different colors of the same water bottle, which is so pointless, but it makes people want it because that's what social media does."

Some people believe the recent popularity of certain reusable water bottles, like the Stanley cup, Hydro Flask and Owala bottle crazes, is underscored by a cultural shift toward health-conscious consumption.

Senior Stella Sturgill believes this shift has both health-oriented and cultural implications.

"I think especially as sort of a health fad has sort of taken over mainstream culture, there's more cultural and brand significance and whatever behind the kind of water bottle that you have, which I think is kind of ridiculous," she said, "but honestly at the same time, I think it is helping more people drink water by aestheticizing it."

Water bottles are also a means for self-expression. Many students, like junior Millie Norton,



Midway photo by Ellis Calleri

SIP IN STYLE. For many teenagers, water bottles and tumblers double as ways to stay hydrated throughout the day and trendy accessories to carry.

use the physical surfaces of their bottles to showcase their values and connect with others.

"I think that your water bottle is a way to express yourself, and that is almost like an accessory as well," Millie, who has several Hydro Flasks, said. "So you can carry it around, and it's something that adds to your look and adds to your vibe or persona."

Stella covers her dark green Hydro Flask with stickers from places she's visited and things she loves as a kind of personal encouragement.

"These are just nice reminders and mementos to have with me throughout the day in terms of just messages to just keep me grounded," Stella said. "It literally is my emotional support water bottle. It keeps me grounded because I've had it for so long — the dents remind me of its use and all its trials,

tribulations, whatever."

Maurice likes his water bottle because of its functional elements. These features make drinking water simple and efficient, keeping it easy to stay hydrated.

"I like it because it's so big. I don't have to get up during class to refill it. It also just encourages me to drink more water since it has a straw," Maurice said. "Also my favorite feature of Stanleys is that the bottom is smaller than the top so you can fit it in water bottle holders."

While many individuals are very particular about the specific kind of bottle they have, people like P.E. teacher Pete Miller don't mind so long as it serves their core purpose in helping keep them hydrated.

"I just feel like it's an efficient way to make sure if anybody has water with them, it almost guar-

#watertok

In recent months, the hashtag #WaterTok on TikTok has accumulated extreme popularity with over 1 billion views.

WaterTok is just one niche that is part of the larger TikTok trend surrounding hydration culture.

This subset involves enhancing one's water with various flavoring powders or syrups.

Content creators fill large water bottles with their flavored

concoctions of Kool-Aid gel, Skittles powder and flavorings.

While many people believe that drinking plain water is a healthier option, these creators claim that flavoring their water with these additives keeps them from consuming high-sugar, high-calorie sodas and motivates them to drink more water throughout the day.

— Zara Siddique

antees that they're going to be getting, at the very least, minimally adequate hydration, probably much more so," he said.

But these trends spark more than just ways to stay hydrated or greater exposure to various kinds of water bottles. Their popularity has been boosted by their environmentally-friendly nature, a more

sustainable option than single-use plastic bottles.

"Whatever I spent for this thing," Mr. Miller said, referencing the price of his Hydro Flask, "let's say it was \$40, it's a small price to save hundreds or thousands of plastic bottles from floating around the Atlantic Ocean on a barge somewhere."

Students use illegal, discreet nicotine pouches

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

Convenient. Discrete. Potentially healthier. It was these three characteristics on Quora, an online question-and-answer platform, that caused Student A to give Zyn pouches a try. Student A now uses the product regularly.

Zyn pouches are oral nicotine products that users put under their upper lip, visually concealing them. They come in flavors ranging from citrus to coffee.

In Illinois, a person must be 21 to purchase any tobacco or nicotine products. All flavored liquid nicotine products are illegal in Cook County. However, Zyn patches are not liquid until moistened in the user's mouth.

Invented in Sweden, the pouches were first introduced to the U.S. market in 2014 but have become more popular since, garnering millions of views on social media with the help of "Zynfluencers."

"I heard some of my friends were doing them, and it's also a big thing online," Student A said. "There is a stereotype that frat guys are doing these Zyns. This kind of thing got introduced in my friend group and people I know."

Zyn pouches are filled with tobacco-free and synthetic nicotine



Midway photo by Ryan Burke-Stevenson

THIS POUCH PACKS A PUNCH. Zyn pouches are age-restricted oral nicotine products that users put under their upper lip, concealing them.

in the form of white powder, unlike their oral pouch counterpart, snus, which contains shredded tobacco. It is because of this that Zyn pouches are marketed as being a "healthier" alternative to traditional tobacco products.

Elizabeth Crespi, a researcher at the Institute for Global Tobacco Control at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, said such marketing claims are questionable.

"To come up with a more concrete answer requires time to conduct studies and understand long-term effects," Dr. Crespi said in an interview with the Midway. "It becomes really hard for us to say too much because if you do not have people who have been using them for 20 or 30 years, you don't know what's going to happen in the future."

However, she said there might be some legitimacy to the claims

because Zyn pouches are not combustible, which may eliminate harmful toxicants that traditional tobacco products contain.

"In general, nicotine is not known to create cancer," she said. "So you don't have the same level of harm as with a tobacco product with other additives and such."

Student A said the pouches are convenient because they are not visible to those around them.

"It is like doing drugs in class, but you can get away with it," Student A said. "It's a lot more casual."

Like Student A, Student B, who has tried Zyn pouches two times, said they first heard of them on social media at the beginning of this school year.

"I didn't really enjoy it," Student B said. "It felt like you had a really bad headache, almost like a migraine."

Student B said they use Zyn pouches because it does not require inhalation.

"There is this stigma that a cigarette is much worse than putting a little pouch in your mouth, so people see them as less harmless than the alternatives like vaping," he said.

Both students said Zyn pouch use has spread in their social cir-

cle.

Dr. Crespi said Zyn pouches and others like them should not be marketed and made accessible to youth and people who are not already using tobacco and nicotine products because, no matter what, people shouldn't use them.

Pete Miller, a Lab P.E. teacher who teaches health class to ninth and 10th graders, said he tries to incorporate newer products and their consequences in the curriculum. Mr. Miller said he has not addressed Zyn pouches yet, but he hopes to in the future.

"Every time there is a new drug or variation of the kind," he said, "I always like to address that added risk because we don't know the effects of the product down the line."

While Student A is happy to have found a way to discreetly consume nicotine with Zyn pouches, he recognizes their highly addictive nature and said he does not encourage others to try them.

"As researchers, it's important to stay open-minded and see if they are better comparably to other products," Dr. Crespi said. "But at the same time, we must caution our younger populations about the dangers of products like Zyn pouches."

Discovering Devon: Chicago’s unique Devon Avenue connects many diverse cultures

by **SAHANA UNNI**
Editor-in-Chief

When walking onto Devon Avenue in the West Ridge neighborhood on Chicago’s Far North Side, visitors and locals alike are met with a rich blend of various cultures. On one side of the street, a synagogue proudly displays a giant paper menorah taped to the gate, while a few doors down music can be heard pouring from a Nepalese restaurant, and across the street women browse through intricately designed lehengas and saris at one of the many Indian clothing stores.

Although the area is incredibly diverse, it has become known as a center of South Asian culture in particular.

Despite the pandemic causing financial damage, with stores and restaurants left mostly barren, life has finally returned to Devon Avenue as it continues its legacy of bringing people together with cultural diversity.

Among the vast array of Devon restaurants is Sukhadia’s, a sweet shop whose bright red doors have been open on Devon since 1997, when a surge of desi immigrants began settling into the area. Sneha Sukhadia, the sixth-generation owner of Sukhadia’s, described Devon as “just up and coming” when his family first moved to Chicago from New Jersey.

“When we started, it was us, Patel Brothers, there was another grocery store called Kamdar Plaza, across the street was Mysore Woodlands,” Mr. Sukhadia said. “All these really awesome, amazing Indian, desi stores.”

While the location quickly became popular, attracting new visitors and establishments of various ethnic backgrounds, the coronavirus pandemic shut down the area completely, to the detriment of many businesses including the popular Mysore Woodlands.

“A lot of Devon got hit really hard with COVID,” Mr. Sukhadia said. “This area is very dependent on foot traffic, so once the foot

- shops to visit
- **Sukhadia’s**, 2559 W. Devon Ave.
 - **Studio Elite**, 2556 W. Devon Ave.
 - **Kol Tuv Kosher Foods**, 2938 W. Devon Ave.
 - **Iqra Book Center**, 2749 W. Devon Ave
 - **Joyalukkas**, 2642 W. Devon Ave.

traffic started to die down because people wouldn’t go outside, it really just destroyed a lot of these desi businesses that weren’t able to survive during the pandemic.”

Tahira Hasan, who founded the desi clothing store Studio Elite on Devon after moving from Karachi, Pakistan, about 13 years ago, also spoke with a somber expression when describing the emptiness of Devon at the time. However, she feels the avenue has now returned to normalcy.

“During the pandemic, there was no business here, but then there was the vaccination and everything was done so people were confident,” Ms. Hasan said, “and then they began to start to come here. But business was very lost and COVID was not good for business.”

Azmath Ali works as a sales executive at the jewelry store Joyalukkas and also felt that the liveliness of Devon has gone back to what it once was.

“Before the pandemic it was super crowded, especially people coming all the way from the suburbs,” Ms. Ali said. “Nothing much really changed after the pandemic. People do come here. They get everything like grocery, restaurants, gold stores, clothing stores, etc. Devon is still the heart of the Indian community.”

Unlike Ms. Ali, Mr. Sukhadia believes certain aspects of the area



Midway photo by Hayla Shah

CONNECTING CULTURES. Devon Avenue in the West Ridge neighborhood of Chicago offers a multicultural experience for all to enjoy. Numerous shops line the street, their signs and window displays inviting customers inside.

have changed since the pandemic, especially because more South Asian communities have developed in the Chicagoland area.

“They’ll go to Naperville and all those other places where they started to open up more Indian communities, so that’s been tough,” Mr. Sukhadia said. “I don’t think foot traffic has really returned since the pandemic to what it used to be, but that way you have to figure out different ways to survive essentially.”

Even throughout the pandem

ic, U-High senior Mariama Jalloh continued to regularly visit Devon, as she appreciates the active Muslim community, and her aunt owns a convenience store on the avenue. She said the area’s diversity is apparent around holidays.

“It’s really interesting to see a lot of different blends of culture, especially during specific holidays like Eid, when I see a lot of desi women or even African women go to get henna,” Mariama said, referring to a ceremonial skin decoration important in many cultures.

Despite the struggles Devon has faced in recent years, the people living and working within the Avenue continue to cherish the diverse community.

“It’s just like a blend of all these cultures, and that’s what makes America so great, right? You have a melting pot of all these different cultures,” Mr. Sukhadia said. “I think it’s just amazing to see all of that all into one. You can just walk down the street and basically walk through different parts of the world.”

Delayed migrant shelter evictions settle many concerns

by **JAYA ALENGHAT**
City Life Editor

Thousands of migrants who have arrived in Chicago via buses and planes from other states may be forced out of city shelters in a few weeks, leaving their fate uncertain.

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson announced that the new eviction date will be in mid-March, the second extension made to the evictions. The extension was put in place to allow the migrants more time to find housing and to avoid eviction during the harsh winter weather.

“Our plan for emergency temporary shelter was never meant as a long-term housing solution,” Mayor Johnson announced at a Jan. 29 news conference. “But we want to give every person and every single family that has come to our city enough time to process their work authorization, find housing, start a new life in our great city.”

The city has provided 28 shelters to more than 13,000 migrants over the past eight months. Michael Rodriguez, Ward 22 Alderperson and member of the Chicago Committee of Immigrant and Refugee Rights, understands why the Mayor made this difficult choice and is glad.

“Eviction is absolutely not ideal,” Ald. Rodriguez said in an interview with the Midway. “Eviction could lead to destabilization of families. It could increase the population of individuals living on the streets in the city of Chicago.”



Migrant evictions delayed



Midway photo by Kaden Moubayed

CITY CHOICES. Migrants in Chicago will be housed in the 28 shelters around the city until mid-March, the second extension made by the mayor. These shelters are closed to the public to protect the migrants’ privacy.

Jessie Fuentes, Ward 26 Alderperson and another committee member, feels the same.

“I think it’s the most humane thing that we could have done as a city,” Ald. Fuentes said in an inter-

view with the Midway.

Ald. Rodriguez views migrants coming to the city as an opportunity rather than a crisis.

“It’s a migrant opportunity,” Ald. Rodriguez said. “Our coun-

“

I think it’s the most humane thing that we could have done as a city.

Michael Rodriguez,
Ward 22 Alderperson

”

try needs migrants, and young migrants, to come to this country to do jobs, some of which many others would not do — and to help uplift us all.”

However, it is difficult to take advantage of this opportunity when it is being executed in the wrong way.

“Migrants are coming to our city, and that’s being done through no coordination with the governors in Texas or Florida,” Ald. Rodriguez said. “They’re putting them on buses with no home to live in. That’s cruel.”

Ald. Fuentes acknowledges how the city of Chicago is trying their best to accommodate these unfortunate conditions.

“What we want to do is to be able to provide the best conditions in what is not the most ideal circumstance,” Ald. Fuentes said.

The Committee of Immigrant and Refugee Rights has been working on the best way to handle the situation.

“There have been subject matter hearings on the current conditions and what the city is planning to improve those conditions

as well as taking feedback from the alderpeople,” Ald. Fuentes said. “I believe that it is that collaborative process that’s going to get us in the best place possible.”

The most ideal and simple solution lies in helping the migrants settle.

“We’ve got to do a better job of out-migration and getting people into regular functioning within our society,” Ald. Rodriguez said.

However, this becomes difficult when many of the migrants cannot work legally.

“It’s up to landlords in Chicago to accept these vouchers, knowing that there won’t be a deposit, knowing that it’s difficult for our migrants to find jobs legally,” Arcelia Guerrero Wolfe, a Lab parent and admissions office associate, said. “That’s a big push. It’s a difficult situation.”

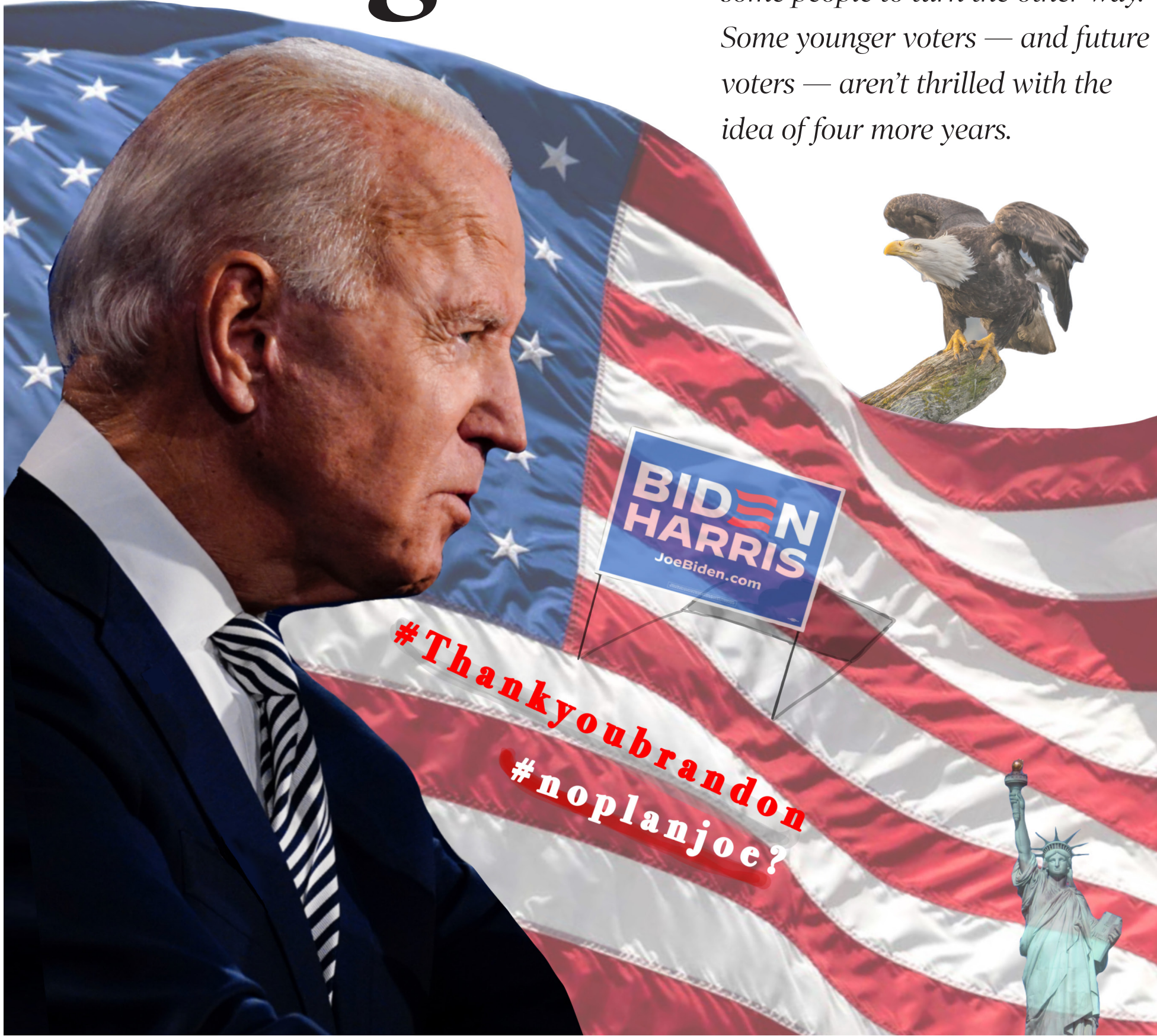
Along with doing other volunteer work to help the migrants, Ms. Guerrero collects donations for the migrants through the University of Chicago and Lab.

She is currently organizing a warehouse full of these donations until March 31.

“They need clothes. They’re in Chicago,” Ms. Guerrero said. “They’re from Venezuela, Colombia, wherever. It’s cold here. They’re not used to the cold and they need warm clothes.”

While many changes need to be made to adequately provide for the migrants in Chicago, donating is a small but necessary part of helping the situation.

SETTLING FOR BIDEN ...again?



Midway illustration by Chloë Alexander

In the last year, Joe Biden's Democratic rating fell to an all-time low of his presidency. Despite his efforts in trying to keep his initial following strong while garnering new support, his recent policies and actions have caused some people to turn the other way. Some younger voters — and future voters — aren't thrilled with the idea of four more years.

Young voters wary of Biden reelection

by CLARE McROBERTS
Features Editor

As the 2024 presidential election approaches, President Joe Biden has a variety of reasons to be optimistic, from the state of the economy to the successes of fellow Democrats in the midterm and special elections. Still, political strategists and national polling suggest that the public has its doubts about the prospect of four more years.

"Biden is not the ideal or first choice of significant portions of the Democratic Party," said William Howell, a University of Chicago political science professor. "That's true of people who are younger, for sure. It's also true for people who are more progressive."

Among the emerging concerns, voters regularly mention one over and over again: age. If elected, both of the leading candidates, President Biden or former President Donald Trump, would be the oldest president in the history of the United States by the end of his term.

Cathy Cohen, also a University of Chicago political science professor, has conducted research on the topic of young voters — young voters of color, in particular — and their feelings about the political domain. Dr. Cohen said Biden's age seems to be an issue of significance to young voters especially.

"Different groups of young people

are experiencing the political arena very differently," she explained. "But I think there are a number of issues about whether they will vote and whether they will vote for Biden. One of the issues is his age."

Another issue that could affect the feelings of voters leading up to November is President Biden's response to the Israel-Hamas war. Some critics say President Biden has taken too rigid a stance in support of the Israeli government, and Dr. Cohen said that polling suggests that he might struggle over the issue to maintain some segment of Democratic voters who were supportive in the past.

Yet, Dr. Howell asserts that the topic might not ultimately be a determining factor for Biden's fate.

"Generally speaking, for most of the American electorate, foreign policy — unless it's a major, major war — doesn't usually loom especially large in their imaginations," Dr. Howell said. "It doesn't play a kind of real forceful role in shaping how people vote historically."

One area that seems to be an advantage, Dr. Howell said, is the success of the economy. Among the positive signs are rising wages, a falling rate of inflation and the stock market being at record highs.

"That has historically been the most significant predictor of the electoral

fortunes of incumbent presidents," Dr. Howell said. "The economy is performing exceptionally well. It isn't felt by everybody, but the fundamentals are in place."

Still, Dr. Cohen notes, how the economy is experienced depends on a voter's circumstances.

"The economy plays differently based on people's age, how long they've been employed and the economic goals that they have for themselves," she said. "It's not clear that the economy will be the win for him."

For President Biden, reminding voters of the economy's successes may be key, Dr. Howell said.

"I think part of Biden's job between now and Election Day is to communicate how his investments and his policies have made material improvement," he said. "That's gonna be his strongest asset to my mind in making the case for why he ought to stay in office."

Especially for young voters, Dr. Cohen said, one risk for President Biden may not be an issue of whether or not younger voters will switch to select Mr. Trump. Instead, it is whether they will vote at all.

"I worry," she said, "that the Democrats are kind of depending on the threat of Trump than excitement around Biden to mobilize young voters to the polls this year."

U-High students also aren't too enthusiastic

In an unscientific Midway survey conducted Feb. 1, students were asked to indicate on a scale of 1-4 their enthusiasm for their candidate/party going into the upcoming election. 1 represents low enthusiasm and 4 represents high enthusiasm. There were 85 responses total.

The responses below are from seniors only, while comments to the right represent all grades.

30

answered 1,
the most common response

25

answered 2

25

answered 3

5

answered 4,
the least common response

76

are planning to vote
(and 9 are not planning to vote)

Ninth grader Josiah Sklarsky rated a 1: "I just feel like it's a vast, vast majority of the time it's just old white man versus old white man. And that's just very clearly not representative of the majority of the American population. This side does this, so I'm going to be contrary just to be contrary."

Sophomore Kate Ryan rated a 2:

"I don't really identify with a party, I'm more independent. So I don't go Republican or Democrat. I'd say in general, I'm just not really excited overall because from the candidates I see, there's a certain focus on things that don't really need to be focused on as much."

Senior Cassia Collins rated a 2.5:

"I don't feel good about it. I'm sad our two options are just people whose names are already in the hat. Nobody wants to get excited about new people and take a risk, and everyone has been deadlocked in that for so long."

Sophomore Catherine Groves rated a 2:

"The candidate I'm rooting for is Biden. I'd say I'm not super enthusiastic because I think that a lot of people are unhappy with him and there's a pretty high chance that he won't win. I'm not excited about it being a rematch between Trump and Biden."

Junior Theo Williams rated a 2:

"I feel like I'm more voting against the other person than voting for my person. I think it's just a product of the political system. I think it would be good to have more parties because then you get a wider variety and you wouldn't be voting against people as much as you'd be voting for people."

Senior Rathin Shah rated a 3:

"It's a situation where you have an obvious, not just the lesser of two evils, but you have someone who's shown to be sympathetic to fascist movements. I'm not voting for candidates, I'm not voting for a party, but I'd be voting for a set of values."

— compiled by Katie Sasamoto-Kurusu

DNC in Chicago

The Democratic National Convention, the event where the Democratic party officially nominates a candidate for president and vice president, will be held in Chicago this summer. Here are a few things to know:

Basic facts: The convention will be held at the United Center on Chicago's Near West Side from Aug. 19-22.

Volunteering: Thousands of volunteer opportunities are open for the convention, and those interested in getting involved can fill out an interest form on the Host Committee website, chicago2024.com.

Who will be attending: 50,000 visitors, 20,000 members of the media, 5,000 delegates, alternates and many other guests.

Transportation: The DNC will provide free shuttles to and from downtown hotels and the McCormick Place, which is the official DNC headquarters. The Marriott Marquis Chicago and Hyatt Regency at McCormick Place will be the official hotel headquarters for the convention.

Security: DNC officials are getting ready for the planned protests. They are reportedly working with the Chicago Police Department and Mayor Brandon Johnson's office to establish an official protest zone.

Economic impact: The DNC is expected to produce a \$150 million economic boon for the city from hotels, transportation, restaurants and more.

Union negotiations: The city has reached a "peace agreement" with union leaders throughout the city to ensure they would not organize a strike during the convention.

Protesting: The city must allow a group called Poor People's Army to protest at the convention, right up to the doors to the United Center. The Philadelphia-based group is allowed to protest from Humboldt Park to the sidewalk in front of the convention site. The group is known to peacefully protest at both Republican and Democratic conventions. In addition to the Poor People's Army, there are many other groups, including the Coalition to March on DNC, whose protest permit was denied. The group is hoping to march with approximately 1,000 people from groups such as Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, U.S. Palestinian Community Network, International League of People's Struggles and Black Lives Matter Chicago.

— compiled by Mia Lipson

getting involved

There are many ways to get involved in this year's election, even if you are not eligible to vote. One is becoming a High School Student Judge of Election. Responsibilities include:

- Setting up voting equipment on Election Day
- Conducting a fair and impartial election in the precinct polling place
- Tabulating vote totals for the precinct after polls close

Scan this QR code to apply:



— Source: Chicago Board of Election Commissioners

vox pop.

What issue will you be most interested in engaging with leading up to this year's election? What policies would you like to see the newly elected president adopt?

— compiled by Kabir Joshi



Elias Laurence,
ninth grader

"I would like the U.S. to stop supporting Israel. I would like it if the U.S. would start transitioning to a less-capitalist society. I would like more efforts to prevent the spread of misinformation particularly toward the election but also regarding things like vaccines."



Amara Mattison,
ninth grader

"I think better education on abortion rights and the LGBTQ+ community because I feel that right now there's not a lot of it, it's just something people kind of know of."



Bayaan
El-Bawab,
sophomore

"The president needs to stop sending so much of our money and our budget abroad. It is ridiculous that billions and billions of dollars are going to singular countries. I think that instead those billions of dollars need to be spent on the American public school system and our government."



Adam Tapper,
sophomore

"I would like to see the migrant crisis being dealt with in a way that provides housing for migrants and decreases homelessness. Though, I think that the infrastructure policies that the Biden administration has implemented have been beneficial to building American cities."



Zachary Wong,
sophomore

"I feel like the current president Joe Biden has handled the economy very well. I feel that there is a very high employment percentage for people working in the U.S. right now, and he is the reason for that."



Chani Patterson,
junior

"Something with the migration crisis going on right now such as better housing around the sanctuary cities."



Lyra Luu,
junior

"I would hope the Democratic Party finds a new candidate to run that is not Joe Biden because if they run Joe Biden they are going to lose."



Skyler Albert,
senior

"I would like to see more work about climate change. I think it might be neglected depending on who is president. Though, I feel that Biden has done well on reaching out to new voters and centralizing demographics, but obviously there is much more work to be done toward this issue."



Abe Bueno De
Mesquita,
senior

"Joe Biden has handled the economy very well. He is doing a good job reducing inflation as well as the bills that he has pushed through about the economy have been generally pretty solid."



Ella
Cohen-Richie,
senior

"For me I think as a person of color, specifically a Black woman, I think that gun violence in particular needs to be addressed. Particularly in Chicago, I think it's a really prevalent issue. I think it needs to be a really big emphasis, not only on a city scale but nationally."



Jack Hurst,
senior

"I would like to see more funding for high-speed rail and more federal funding for federal funding for transit projects. I know that Biden has passed infrastructure bills, so I would hope the next president continues with that."

Community puzzles offer chance to rewind

Students seek out comfort and fun in grid puzzles

by **JAYA ALENGHAT**
City Life Editor

It's quiet in the Pritzker Traubert Family Library. Students are working at tables, studying in cubicles, browsing through the shelves and relaxing in bean bag chairs. Across from the green conference room is a small white bookshelf, where scattered puzzle pieces lie on top, ready to be pieced together by anyone who stops by.

The puzzles in the high school library offer an opportunity for students and faculty to take a break from work and engage in a fun, hands-on activity.

Shirely Volk, high school librarian, decided with her colleagues to put out these puzzles just over a year ago, in January — national puzzle month.

"We thought it would be a fun way to keep people involved," Ms. Volk said, "and take their attention away from a screen."

Ms. Volk noticed the growing popularity of these puzzles when they were first introduced.

"When we first started putting them out, there were only just a few students that made the time or were interested enough."

Junior Lyra Luu was one of these students. She finds herself attracted to the puzzles for a variety of reasons.

Lyra especially enjoys the unique laser-cut puzzles that Brian Wildeman, art teacher, donated to the library.

"It is nice to have something tactile in your hand," Lyra said. "I think it's really good to get away from work for a bit, so it's nice that it's here in the library where a lot of people get work done."

Ms. Volk also notes how the puzzles serve as a healthy distraction for individuals, along with a social activity for groups.

"I think for some of the students it's nice for them to focus on it in terms of taking a break from their



Midway photo by Aubrey Felsen

PLACID PUZZLES. A student works on one of the many puzzles in the high school library, which offer an opportunity for students and faculty to take a break from work and engage in a fun, hands-on activity. This is a daily sight in the library, as the librarians pull out new puzzles each week.

schoolwork," Ms. Volk said. "Also, it can be really social, or something you do solitary."

Kerry Tulson, assistant director of admissions and financial aid, enjoys completing puzzles at home with her family, and she makes sure to bring families by the puzzles in the library when giving tours.

"It's a nice way to relax," Ms.

Tulson said. "If you have some free time during the school day, I think that it's a nice way to decompress."

Similarly, junior Asa Bordelon appreciates the relaxing aspect of puzzles.

"I feel like they're calming," Asa said. "I can just do it and not think about stuff too much."

While puzzles are a great way to take a break, they can also build

mental skills.

"I think puzzles also help you with a lot of other skills, too," Ms. Volk said, "like strategy, planning and problem solving."

In addition to building these skills, Ms. Volk notes how puzzles reflect greater ideas.

"It's also like a metaphor for life," Ms. Volk said. "Ultimately, all the pieces fall into place."

“It’s a nice way to relax. If you have some free time during the school day, I think that it’s a nice way to decompress.”

Kerry Tulson, assistant director of admissions and financial aid

Teens celebrate Valentine’s Day in untraditional ways

From candy to cards, gifts and love are bestowed

by **VICTORIA WASHINGTON**
Opinion Editor

Red white and pink. It's February 14, and the world is covered in hearts, chocolates and roses. What originally began as a way to commemorate Saint Valentine in third century Rome has been adapted to celebrate the important people in our lives.

While U-High students don't go as far as to bring Valentines to everyone in their classes, many students still find ways to celebrate with each other: as friends or as couples.

Some students, like junior Shelby Hackett, celebrated the holiday by posing for photos at the photo booth organized by the photojournalism class. Shelby and her friends enjoyed taking pictures with Valentine's Day-themed props. They also planned to end the night by going out to dinner.

"I think Valentine's Day is more fun when you hang out with friends," Shelby said. "You can be with people and show your love even if it isn't romantic."

Junior Sofia Picciola attended a Galentine's Day party, a day honoring women's friendship instead of romantic relationships, with a group of friends. The house



Midway photo by Grace LaBelle

GALENTINE'S TREAT. Students pass around candy, and other treats to celebrate Valentine's Day. Some classes even require their students to make Valentines to embrace the spirit and spread love during the day.

was well-decorated for the theme: from hearts all the way down Chick-fil-A Valentine's Day plates.

"The whole thing is to celebrate being friends with each other and playing games," Sofia said.

Galentine's Day is a relatively

new tradition among many friend groups. Sofia has noticed an influx of people on social media choosing to celebrate Valentine's Day in a nontraditional way. Galentine's is something Sofia could see herself continuing to celebrate in future years.

"Obviously there's traditional Valentine's Day, but I feel like Galentine's Day is emerging a lot on my social media feed," Sofia said. "I think it's a cool thing to celebrate friendship."

Others spent the day in a more conventional way. Sophomores Julian Rossi and Kate Ryan celebrated Valentine's day by recreating their first date, which was exactly one year ago.

"We're going to reenact what our first date was like: a similar Wednesday on Valentine's Day last year," Julian said before the day. "We're going to go to the university, get something to eat and chill."

The notion of Valentine's Day has changed for Julian now that he's in a relationship.

"I think it's more meaningful," Julian said. "I get to fulfill what the holiday actually is instead of just giving candy."

Senior Bella Waltzer celebrated Valentine's Day by having dinner and seeing a drive-in movie with her boyfriend. "I think it's really fun to wear pink and red and even though Valentine's Day is a romantic holiday, it can be fun for friends to show their love for each other and have an excuse to hang out," Bella said.

Above all, Valentine's Day represents an opportunity to celebrate many types of love, whether or not it's romantic.

Julian said, "I think that everyone, no matter what situation they're in, needs love to get through their lives. It's a really necessary part for having a happy life and, I think when you give that to other people it's really special."

Swimming to Success

Jeffrey Wang
guides team with
motivation, skills
by CHLOE ALEXANDER
Arts Editor

As swimming practice starts, the team members set up the lanes in Sunny Pool, dragging the dividers along its length.

Jeffrey Wang, a junior and co-captain, oversees all of the activity, getting himself prepared to help the rest of them. He instructs his teammates on what needs to be done, and then they start their warmups.

Jeffrey has been swimming for as long as he can remember. He has been on swim teams for eight years, and in his third year on the U-High team, Jeffrey has become a leader.

Coach Mirko Mirkov has known Jeffrey since he started swimming for Midway Aquatics at 8 years old.

“When he was at the Midway swim club, and we were still swimming here out of the Sunny Pool,” Mr. Mirkov said. “He was a little, like, ankle-biter. He was in one of the developmental groups on our team, and now he’s swimming on the high school team.”

Over the years, not only has Jeffrey become a great swimmer, but he has become a leader and a motivation to his team.

“He understands when you practice swimming, it’s not always necessary to go fast,” Mr. Mirkov said. “He understands when he needs to go medium speed or work on technique, and pay attention to his kicks. He really understands the idea behind the practices, and that’s what makes him a very good swimmer.”

As Jeffrey has learned what swimming means to him, he has assumed the role of team co-captain.

“It meant a lot for me to become captain. It gave me an opportunity to lead the team,” Jeffrey said.

Through his leading-through-motivating mentality, Jeffery led the team to an ISL victory, showing that his leadership paid off.

“I think the ISL win was a posi-

“
This year he has been really great in competitions. He’s setting a standard for us to go fast. It’s really great to have him on the team.
”
Sebastian Gans, junior

tive motivation to see where we’re at this season now that it’s going to be over in about two or three weeks,” Jeffery said. “My role is to just do my best and swim my best and motivate the team around me.”

Sebastian Gans, a junior and a teammate, not only appreciates Jeffrey’s swimming skills but how he is a mentor for the team.

“This year he has been really great in competitions. He’s setting a standard for us to go fast. It’s really great to have him on the team. He’s a motivation for me and everyone else,” Sebastian said. “Since this year he’s a team captain I’ve seen him take more leadership positions in the team, I’ve seen him lead team chants and give speeches to us, stuff like that.”

Jeffrey, like everyone, has good and bad days. But that doesn’t stop him from getting back in the water the next day and working.

“I mean, bad practices, they often happen, I’d say once every three weeks,” Jeffrey said. “Sometimes when I have a bad practice, I’m just like, ‘God, I hate this sport so much. Why can’t I swim fast at all today?’ Usually, the best thing I do after I’ve had a bad meet is to just get back in the water the next day and just keep practicing. I usually tell myself this stuff is usually expected. Again, not every meet is going to be a perfect meet.”

For Jeffrey, swimming isn’t just about the short-term, it’s about the long-term growth.

“It’s not just a singular moment that’s going to define path and career,” Jeffrey said. “Usually after a bad meet, I just say like, ‘OK, it’s all right, let’s just shut up and swim tomorrow and it’s all going to be fine.’”

The next day, Jeffery and the team will be back at the pool, setting up for another day of practice.



Midway photo by Bryce Light

MOTIVATED MOVEMENT. Jeffrey Wang has been swimming competitively for the past eight years, and it is his third year on the U-High team. Now in his junior year he has been made captain for his skill and leadership.

Adam Tang brings eager passion to school and sports



Midway photo by Olin Nafziger

PREVALENT PASSION. Throughout his time on the U-High squash team Adam Tang has ensured that he balances both his athletics and academics.

by EDWARD PARK
Assistant Editor

It’s 6 a.m. on a Monday, and senior Adam Tang’s alarm breaks the silence. Struggling to open his eyes, thoughts of squash and joyful team memories lift him up. Grabbing his racket from one side of the room and his bookbag from the other, he heads to his early morning practice.

Adam balances his dedication to the sport with his passion for academics, being a determined leader and forming meaningful connections in both categories.

Adam started playing squash when his passion for tennis, which he played since he was 6, began to wane.

“There was a period of my life where tennis was really just dreadful and boring,” he said. “I will say that joining Lab’s tennis team has really made it a lot more fun, but squash was sort of a new excitement of a new sport that I really enjoy.”

Squash has now become Adam’s stress reliever.

“Squash is definitely one of the ones that relaxes me more than it makes me anxious. Even though Mondays are so early or Wednes-

days are so late, I really look forward to it when it is Sunday night or during the school time on Wednesday,” he said referring to his squash practices.

The love for the sport complements his academic interests in astrophysics.

“It started from my passion of physics, which was all the way in middle school when I was doing Science Olympiad,” Adam said. “It was just an area of study that really interested me and I started doing physics competitions and just physics in general, starting like around eighth grade.”

Matt Martino, who had Adam as a student last year in AT Physics II, appreciated such passions in physics.

“He’s a very studious, conscientious student. So he’s really good about putting in the time to think about complicated things and making them make sense to himself,” Dr. Martino said. “I would say self-motivated and driven as opposed to motivated due to external sources.”

Dr. Martino also expressed positive sentiments for Adam’s personality.

“He’s got a great understated

sense of humor, which I appreciate mostly. He’s not overly flashy. He is understated in his humor and in how he approaches things,” he said.

Adam brings such lovable characteristics into squash as well, fostering a warm environment.

“I think the environment that we create in the squash team is very welcoming,” he said. “Lot of times people are quiet, and I don’t really like that quiet style, so I started talking with them. I think in a school team environment, it’s a lot easier to just not force relationships, but they sort of just grow.”

Adam believes playing squash helps him stay connected with a broad group of people.

“Playing with each person in a closed environment and because you’re in a box, I think playing matches with someone, even with opposing teams, it’s very easy to get to know them,” he said. “To create more friendships than, like, opponents. I know other players on the other team, just because it’s certainly more relaxed.”

It’s 4 p.m., and after a long practice Adam sits down at his desk ready to bring equal passion and determination to his school work.

Deceptive drama

Dating TV shows draws viewers in because of drama

by CHLOË ALEXANDER

Arts Editor

On a sunny beach, a group of singles have come together to find their perfect match. But during their stay and attempts at love, they have to navigate the breaking down and building up of relationships — romantic and platonic. Friendships are made, relationships are broken. And people keep watching.

“Love Island,” “Too Hot To Handle,” “Single’s Inferno,” and “FBoy Island.” These popular reality dating shows (and more) have one thing in common: drama. The drama is what draws viewers in, and then the exaggerated relationships and the discourse in the shows causes viewers to come back again and again. And U-High students are no different.

Junior Oscar Kasthuri enjoys dating shows like “Too Hot To Handle” and “Love Island.” The drama and the relationships cause him to always come back to these shows.

“I just love the drama, if we’re being real,” Oscar said. “I love the drama that comes with dating. I think it’s beautiful, and I love to watch it. I love people arguing over boyfriends, girlfriends and staying on the show. It’s my favorite thing.”

Over the years, dating shows have evolved from “The Dating Game,” “Love Connection” and “Singled Out,” where the single female contestant would go on the show, and hear from three or more single men who would each try to convince her that he was the best choice.

Nowadays, most dating shows feature actors who are looking for jobs rather than people truly looking for love, which impacts the way relationships are portrayed. Oscar was drawn to “Love Island” because he saw a clip of it on TikTok and it featured the YouTuber Harry Jowsy, who he had been following.

Watching relationships getting played up on TV affects how teens view their own relationships. Sophomore Kate Ryan said she definitely sees and believes that dating shows affect the ways teenagers view their relationships because it’s the only experience with them they have.



Midway illustration by Sygne Stole

SUCKED IN. Reality dating shows draw in their viewers with drama, romance and recognizable faces.

“I mean, I think it affects relationships a lot because it’s the content we’re consuming all the time,” Kate said. “And if that’s your only exposure to dating, and when you haven’t had much experience with it, and that’s what you see and that’s what all your friends are seeing, it becomes part of the culture and part of the dating culture that most people see.”

Kaavya Peddinti, a junior, used to be an avid enjoyer of dating shows but stopped watching because she wanted to enjoy TV that had an actual plot and a meaning.

“I thought it was really entertaining, and all of them were so

dramatic that it was just so funny to watch,” Kaavya said, “which I know it’s kind of rude to say that people having conversations is dramatic, but it really is. But I stopped watching about a year ago because I got more interested in plots and meaning.”

Although Kaavya isn’t an enjoyer of these reality dating shows anymore, she still finds enjoyment in “Indian Matchmaking,” a Netflix series following Sima Tapari, a veteran matchmaker in Mumbai, who searches to find people their perfect other half.

“I literally love ‘Indian Matchmaking’ because the other dat-

ing shows are actually all stupid,” Kaavya said. “And it’s so funny to watch, and I love seeing Indian representation. But ‘Indian Matchmaking’ is a very different process than other dating shows.”

As the show comes to an end, after all the ups and downs, and a public voting, the couple that has lasted throughout the show’s trials gets handed two envelopes: one with money inside, one empty.

If the one with the money shares it they were in it for the love, but if they keep it they were just in it for the money — and the viewer is even more intrigued with that one final moment of drama.

vox pop.

Do you think dating shows have changed your or other people’s perspective on relationships?

“I think they are kind of stupid. They are usually fake or not realistic, I guess. It can just give people an inaccurate idea of what dating actually is.”

— **Dalia Sancristobal**, ninth grader

“I think they have provided some insight into the male perspective. The shows have also made me feel less awkward about being in uncomfortable situations when someone likes you and you don’t like them back and vice versa.”

— **Nadia Washington**, ninth grader

“Sometimes when I watch reality TV shows I’m like, ‘OK I probably shouldn’t do this.’ I just look at it as fiction, rather than something I should actually take seriously.”

— **Nyel Khan**, junior

“I don’t think they really impact relationships, because if you realize that it’s all just TV and acting, I feel like it shouldn’t impact your relationship.”

— **Dash Smith**, junior

“Reality dating shows, along with the often hilarious characters and surface-level entertainment that they produce, can also add a really interesting element of perspective onto our own lives.”

— **Isadora Glick**, senior

— compiled by Chloë Alexander and Jaya Alenghat

ArtsFest changes to bring new workshops, experiences



Midway photo by Lucy Byrnes

ARTSY FESTIVITIES. ArtsFest board hopes to engage students with art in a different way than they’re used to with new workshops and schedule.

by MILO PLATZ-WALKER

Reporter

Taking place on Feb. 28, ArtsFest is a dynamic event that celebrates creativity and self-expression among students through a variety of workshops led by students, faculty and guest artists. This annual event offers an immersive experience that explores many different forms of art, from traditional to unconventional mediums. This year, students can expect one, longer assembly at the beginning of the day with a panel of artists. Additionally, this year’s ArtsFest will offer a variety of Workshops from a tour of Rockefeller Chapel to medieval fighting.

A notable change for ArtsFest 2024 is the decision to condense the traditional two assemblies into one in the morning, offering a streamlined experience for students. This year’s assembly will feature a range of artists on a panel led by Principal Martin Woods.

“The assembly will feature a performing artist, recording artist, a comedian and a streetwear designer. This year we have no

noteworthy

Four spotlight workshops, new and old, for this year’s Artsfest are: a tour of Rockefeller chapple; Japense book binding; Medieval fighting; and a swinging competiton.

Read a longer description of these events at our website, uhighmidway.com

— compiled by Milo Platz-Walker

traditional visual artists,” faculty adviser Brian Wildeman said. “The assembly focuses on what it’s like being a young professional in art.”

Elizabeth Oyler, ArtsFest president, emphasizes the importance of this unified assembly in setting the tone for the day’s activities.

“I think it’s a great way to mix everything in and keep students engaged. We want to make sure it’s a day for the students as opposed to a day for the faculty to tell students to ‘do’ art,” Elizabeth said.

Elizabeth brings a new per-

spective to ArtsFest this year. As a senior, Elizabeth is passionate about redefining the boundaries of ArtsFest, encouraging her peers to explore new mediums of expression.

“As the president, the way I wanted to approach it is redefining the way we see art,” Elizabeth said. “People at Lab are creative in many ways, and I see art as a way that someone expresses themselves, the way we choose to spend our time and the way we creatively engage with the world.”

Mr. Wildeman brings excitement and enthusiasm for this year’s ArtsFest and is committed to creating a wide range of workshops for students to enjoy.

“This year we have workshops led by administrators, teachers, students, parents, alumni and guest artists,” Mr. Wildeman said. “We have a lot of good workshops for students this year.”

Mr. Wildeman will have the signup form go live Feb. 21, a week before ArtsFest. This may be delayed due to planning and technical complications.

Vinyl revival

Despite myriad of music listening options, vinyl makes a comeback

by **LIGHT DOHRN**
Assistant Editor

The Beatles. The Smiths. Lana Del Rey. Sophomore Carolyn Payne's vinyl record collection ranges from albums she picks up at thrift stores to ones that she brings back from her grandmother's home in England.

"I'll bring one back kind of every time I visit her," Carolyn said. "I picked up a Smiths album and a Cure album last time I was there."

With the rise of music streaming platforms such as Spotify, iTunes and Apple Music, the use of physical vinyl records, especially among young people, might seem redundant. Why pay \$20-40 for an album you could listen to for free on a smartphone or laptop — not to mention using what can sometimes be an extremely pricey record player? It would make sense to believe that the only records Gen Z would see are in a dusty cabinet in their grandparents' basement.

But for many teenagers and students at U-High, vinyl records and record players are an intriguing window into old-fashioned lifestyles and a unique way of expressing themselves and their musical tastes. In fact, vinyl album sales comprised 43.4% of all album purchases in the United States in 2022, and the best-selling albums are quite modern, such as Taylor Swift's "Midnights," Harry Styles' "Harry's House," and Olivia Rodrigo's "Sour."

"I do really like the sound, especially when it comes to certain types of different types of music and genres," Carolyn said.

"Like Chemtrails Over the

record recs

Hyde Park Records 1377 E. 53rd St.

A neighborhood record store offering a variety of new and used items, including vinyl, CDs, DVDs and books, while also engaging in the purchase of those items.

Reckless Records 26 E. Madison St.

Known for its large and comprehensive collection, Reckless Records in the Loop offers a diverse array of vinyls, CDs and cassettes across various genres.

Miyagi Records 307 E. Garfield Blvd.

Miyagi Records is a Chicago-based record dealer specializing in classic genres like Soul, Funk, Jazz, Latin, Rock, Blues, World Music, New Wave, Hip-Hop, Disco and House LP.

— compiled by Light Dohrn

Country Club," she added, citing the Lana Del Rey album. "I love the way that one sounds when it's coming from right next to me."

For most students, though, vinyl is not a replacement for streaming services that can be used from a phone or laptop. Carolyn prefers to make an experience out of listening to vinyl, rather than use it for her everyday music. Convenience must still be taken into consideration.

"When I listen to music, it's usu-



Midway photo by Nathan Li

TIMELESS TUNES. Holding a Tame Impala record, a customer browses through records at Hyde Park Records on 53rd street. Vinyl has seen a recent boom in popularity, despite the other listening platforms available.

ally when I'm doing homework or walking around," Carolyn said. "And obviously I can't bring my record player with me."

After a normal school day, sophomore Adam Tapper has his work cut out for him. Like any high school student, assignments and studying await him, and he knows just the strategy of attack: He puts on a vinyl record and flops onto his bed to begin the long homework process. Like Carolyn and her grandmother, Adam's father has vinyls that Adam sometimes picks out to listen to.

"My dad still has vinyls, which I

do use sometimes, because he still has some of his from when he was a teenager," Adam said. "But I have a lot of old live concerts caught on vinyl," Adam said. "Like, I have a 1982 Grateful Dead concert on vinyl, which is pretty cool."

As with most U-High students who listen to music on vinyl, it doesn't replace modern music streaming. Like Carolyn, Adam prefers to listen to vinyl when he has enough time to fully enjoy the experience, as opposed to doing it every day. In fact, Adam mostly listens to vinyl music for songs and albums that would be difficult

or impossible to find on streaming services or websites.

"I mostly buy physical music that I can't stream on Spotify," Adam said, "so, stuff that's not available to me through streaming services or YouTube. Often, I'm able to find physical copies of the music, and then I can listen to it without having to, like, scour the deepest corners of the internet."

For Carolyn, vinyl is a journey. Watching a shiny record spin on her player, she smiles, feeling close to her grandmother and, she says, to a time when music was even more precious and appreciated.

DoorDash delivers: Food service app outmatches U-High cafeteria for some students due to quality, payment convenience

by **TINSON XU**
Reporter

A notification banner pops up on the screen of an iPhone. Sophomore Daniel Wu looks down and reads, "Your order was dropped off. Please refer to this photo your Dasher provided to see where it was left." He quickly puts his phone down.

But he's not ordering from home. Daniel is in school with five minutes left in history class.

Some students are using DoorDash to get food delivered to school at lunch and other times because they say it provides a better variety of food options than the cafeteria and is more convenient than walking to a restaurant.

DoorDash partners with over 390,000 restaurants and stores globally.

"Personally, my tummy starts rumbling in fourth period, and I start to get a little hungry during that time," Daniel said, "and sometimes the cafeteria just isn't enough for me."

Although the current high school schedule gives students an additional five minutes to eat lunch compared to last year, the extra time has not been enough to improve Daniel's DoorDash ordering experience, he said.

Other students have different perspectives on the new timetable, such as Kathryn Bean, a sophomore who usually orders her food

“
Deep Purpl is a favorite of me and my friends, especially when we don't want to walk all the way and we can just DoorDash it.
Kathryn Bean, sophomore
”

right before lunch.

"I think the extra five minutes does add to the time, but also the free periods on Wednesday and the free periods in other times of the day gives me other opportunities to order food," she said. "The food is more expensive than the cafeteria, but it tastes better, and there is more variety."

DoorDash offers a payment plan called DashPass, which eliminates delivery fees entirely regardless of distance.

Kathryn said she doesn't order enough from DoorDash for a DashPass subscription, costing \$9.99 a month, to be useful.

Neighborhood restaurants are popular among DoorDash users because the delivery fee is reduced for closer locations.

"Deep Purpl is a favorite of me and my friends, especially when we don't want to walk all the way and we can just DoorDash it," Kathryn said about the Harper

Court restaurant. "Sometimes we will share the food because we do order a lot."

Zetta Mrizek, a senior, also orders from DoorDash with her friends outside of school.

"One person will order food for everyone and then we'll pay them back," she said, "and we'll share whatever food we get."

Zetta is also one of the co-presidents of the Jewish Students Association. At school, she mainly uses DoorDash for club events.

"When we had our Hanukkah party, we doordashed pizza," Zetta said. "That's just because we can't get large amounts of pizza in the cafeteria."

In addition, she described the pizza in the cafeteria as "raw" and "doughy."

"Last year we ordered some pizza from Papa Johns. This year we got some from Medici," Zetta said. "I think I liked the pizzas that I ordered better than the ones in the cafeteria."

Surrounded by the chatter of his classmates, Daniel walks down the staircase to the high school entrance. Waiting in the lobby is a DoorDash delivery driver. After thanking the DoorDasher and picking up his order, still slightly warm, Daniel heads back inside to the second-floor lounge.

The aroma of Chipotle tacos fills the air as he opens his bag and takes a bite — delicious.



Midway photo by Carter Chang

FAST AND FLAVORFUL. Just beside Kenwood mall, junior Ben O'Donnell receives his DoorDash delivery from Dunkin' Donuts.

Mocktail Mania

Fruity, fizzy drinks offer nonalcoholic, fun beverage option

by HALEY MAHARRY
Reporter

Ice crunches. A bottle cap hits the counter top with a hollow click. The scent of maraschino cherries hangs in the air. One of the most well-known mocktails is the Shirley Temple, made with Sprite or 7 Up, grenadine syrup, ice and, of course, maraschino cherries.

But mocktails don't stop with Shirley Temples.

Mocktails are more than a passing trend, or just an alternative to an alcoholic drink. They are quickly becoming a way to connect with friends, and a way to explore fun and interesting experimental drinks.

Along with the rise in mocktail popularity, there is a decline in alcohol consumption, especially in younger generations. On TikTok, the hashtag #mocktails has over 1 billion views.

"I just think it's just a new age," said Justin Ware, a bartender at Truth Be Told, a tavern-style restaurant just across the Midway Plaisance from Lab.

And he's not alone in this belief. Mary Moss, the owner of Beverly Dry Goods, a boutique in Chicago's Beverly neighborhood that sells mixers, spirits and candles, seconded Mr. Ware's thoughts.

"It's growing even proportionately larger in the Gen Z market," Ms. Moss said.

Ms. Moss explained that her business has grown to reflect this change in taste over the past four years.

"We opened in July of 2020. And we started carrying NA's in October of 2020," she said, using an abbreviation for nonalcoholic. "At the time, it was just maybe two shelves on a bookcase. And now it's 75% of my store."

Andrea King, a UChicago professor of psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience who focuses on substance disorders, thinks this uptick in mocktails comes with positives and negatives.

"On one hand, this is a positive change, to allow people to have more choices when they are out,



Scan this QR code to watch a video where we try three unique mocktail recipes.

JUST A SPLASH. Mocktails are a fruity and fun nonalcoholic beverage option and a unique activity to do with friends or family. Mocktails have become more and more popular in recent years, as alcohol consumption has declined.

Midway photo by Olin Nafziger

or making drinks at home. It normalizes not drinking alcohol and may improve health," Dr. King said. "On the other hand, for people with alcohol use disorder, a mocktail may be too close to the real thing and be a trigger or cue for them to then crave the alcohol-containing version of that drink."

While some people see mocktails as a way to explore new drinks, others see it as a way to form bonds.

Hana Javed, a U-High junior, makes mocktails as a way to con-

nect with her friends and family.

"My mom wanted to make them as a family when I was little," she said. "She bought grenadine and Sprite and we would make Shirley Temples together."

As a kid, Hana liked making mocktails with her close family and cousins, not only because of the time she spent with them, but also because mocktails made her feel grown up.

"When I was little I would pretend they were like, serious mixtures," she said.

But not every mocktail she

made was a hit. She remembers mixing all the sodas in her house together to make a unique concoction.

Ms. Moss also talked about things to keep in mind when experimenting with mocktails.

"Try a multitude of flavors," she said, "and realize that if you're substituting nonalcoholic spirits you need to use a little bit more flavor."

Mr. Ware's advice for young people who are new to mocktails was to explore.

"Don't be afraid to venture out there. There's an array of ingre-

dients for everyone. Any cocktail with alcohol can be made into a mocktail," he said.

Dr. King explained that mocktails are growing more popular because of social media.

"I do think the direction of this movement shows growth each year," she said. "Social media is fueling that, so I believe it will likely continue in popularity, particularly for people wanting to curtail their alcohol consumption for health, personal or financial reasons, and not feel alone in that endeavor."

Teachers deploy online tools learned during COVID

by SKYE FREEMAN

Audience Engagement Manager

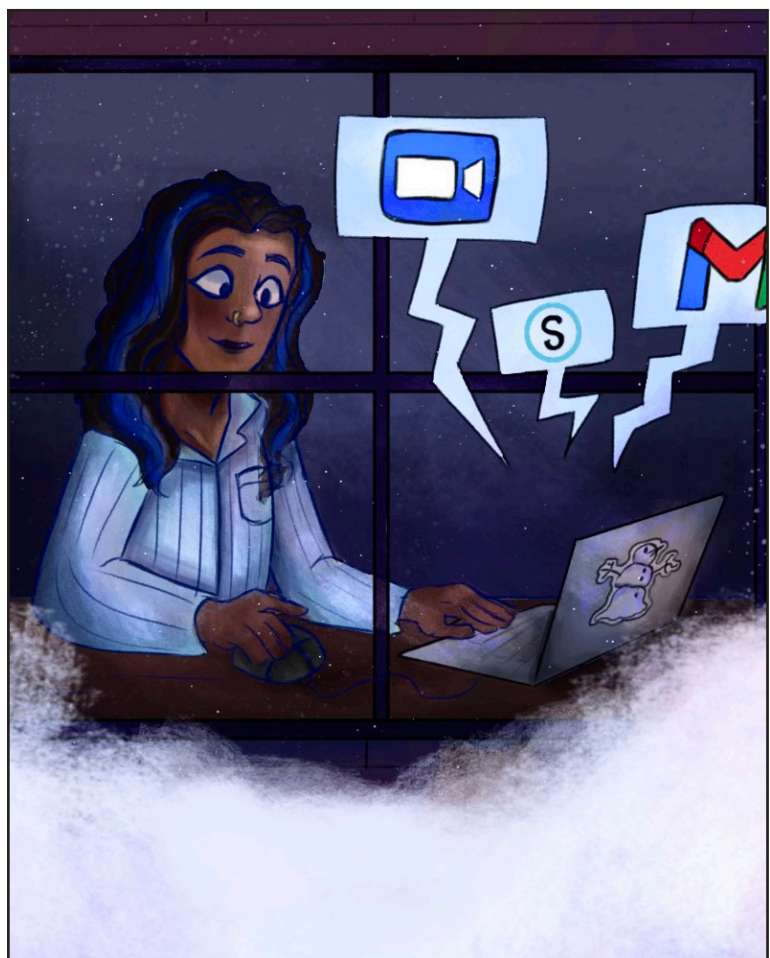
As U-High students looked out of their windows on Friday, Jan. 12, they were met with flurries of freshly fallen snow and the promise of a day off from school. The extra day turned into a five-day weekend, from Friday to the following Tuesday.

However, having realized the missed time would affect their schedules for the upcoming end of the semester, teachers assigned remote schoolwork that Tuesday. The process was effortless and quick, with most teachers having assignments up by noon.

Many of them say their habits — and students' habits — from the pandemic are what made the procedure so easy to manage.

"I think what the pandemic trained kids to do, which I really appreciate, is now they do look at Schoology in those situations," English teacher Mark Krewatch said. "The fact that students and teachers learned how to do that for an extended period of time certainly makes it easier to do now."

During the pandemic, most departments adapted by simplifying some elements. Use of Schoology became the norm. Teachers learned to work on Zoom. And faculty members say they were forced to cut topics from their curriculum.



Midway illustration by Eliza Dearing

READY FOR ANYTHING. Teachers are utilizing digital skills gained from distance learning to orchestrate classes on emergency days.

“
I feel like things are back to somewhat of a baseline. The expectations, the format, everything has kind of returned to normal.
”
Zachary Hund, chemistry teacher

In January, when students unexpectedly got the five-day break from school, some teachers assigned reading or essay pre-work, and others, like AT Chemistry teacher Zachary Hund, uploaded video lessons with accompanying homework.

Except, his videos weren't new. Over the pandemic, he made a whole year's worth of videos for his classes, and now finds them to be a useful tool when he or his students are absent but don't want to fall behind. While they're useful in unpredictable circumstances, and he's glad he found such a resource through the pandemic, he would never voluntarily go back to the online format.

"I teach because I like being in the room and working with students, and a lot is lost in translation. I get Zoom is still kind of the same language, but it's a different language; the tone is different, the attitude is different, the focus from

students," Dr. Hund said. "I'm definitely someone who wants to use body language, and it's really hard to do that over Zoom, so I will always take in-person teaching over virtual."

As useful as the tools teachers learned from the pandemic have proven in emergencies, including snow days, no one wishes to return to that period, when in-person classes were canceled for months. The impacts from it, teachers said, still linger.

"I feel like things are back to somewhat of a baseline. The expectations, the format, everything has kind of returned to normal," Dr. Hund said. "I think I still try to be very aware of students' mental health because it was so much in focus in that two- to three-year period that I don't want to forget that students are still dealing with a lot in high school. My classes feel like normal, but I do continue to appreciate the in-person time because I know just how much better it is than being on Zoom."

While the threat of another lockdown still lingers, the adaptive resources and skills teachers gained over the pandemic still prove useful, especially in case of future emergencies. The Wednesday after the sub-zero asynchronous work day, students returned to school, and all was back to normal.

EVERYDAY + extraordinary COMMUNITY PROFILES

Sewn together

The couple behind Vogue Cleaners charms customers

by SKYE FREEMAN

Audience Engagement Manager

The little storefront on 57th Street between South Harper and South Blackstone Avenues, with its faded maroon awning and windows covered by posters, doesn't stand out much. Yet, walking in to the shop, you are met with a unique scene: the crescendo of classical music, the pleasant smell of fresh laundry, and garment conveyors whirring crisp, ironed clothing in garment bags around the store.

A bell rings as two clients walk in, yet before they can say a word, from the curtained depths of clothing Ki Kim emerges with their belongings in hand. Pleasant smiles are exchanged, and the customers are on their way, sharing looks of pleasant surprise.

A gem to the Hyde Park community, Vogue Cleaners, the dry cleaning, sewing and alterations store, is known by locals and university students alike for speedy yet thorough work.

The charming shop has been open since 1995, serving generations of families. The business, owned by Mr. Ki Kim and his wife, Yang Kim, holds memories of not just their hard work but their dedication to each other over the years.

They met through Mrs. Kim's brother, who had met Mr. Kim when he had first moved to Chicago, and after receiving her father's approval, they had an arranged marriage in 1981. Mrs. Kim's father founded a sewing company in Korea, and she and Mr. Kim have been in the retail business since moving to the United States.

"We lived in Chicago but not always Hyde Park," Mrs. Kim said. "He had a hardware store by the Midway Airport, in Cicero, and we lived around that area, across

from the store. We always try to live near our business. That way we can do better and don't have to drive back and forth."

They currently live just around the corner from the store. Before moving to their current townhouse, they lived on Harper Avenue, just across the street from Judith McCue. Mrs. McCue is a friend and customer, refusing to go anywhere else for cleaning services.

"They are first-generation immigrants, and I think they're exceptional in the way they haven't just moved to another country, become American citizens and opened up a business; They have knitted into a community in a way that few first-generation immigrants are able to do," Mrs. McCue said. "It's a very hard thing to do, but they're extraordinary in how they've done that."

In addition to making friends and building connections around Hyde Park, their days are spent enjoying home-cooked meals together, working alongside each other in the store from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., and pursuing their hobbies.

"At some points, it's like live together, always work together, all day long," Mrs. Kim said. "We are kind of... How can I explain? We know each other better and have almost the same idea for this service and the community."

Despite all of their time spent together both at work and at home, they find time to indulge in their respective hobbies.

"I've been singing with the university chorus for a long time. I have kind of eye problems so I've stopped doing it right now, though," Mrs. Kim said. "He loves cello music, and my kids play the instruments, so just before the pandemic I started cello lessons."

In addition to her interest in music, Mrs. Kim enjoys cooking Korean dishes, as she and Mr. Kim always try to eat a home-cooked meal. Mr. Kim loves to read and is known for playing classical mu-



Midway photo by Elspeth LaCroix-Birdthistle

A RAW WORKSHOP. Ki and Yang Kim have owned and operated Vogue Cleaners on 57th Street since its opening in 1995, serving an array of Hyde Park residents and Lab students alike. Despite meeting through an arranged marriage, their time together has only strengthened their bond as they work alongside each other day after day.

sic in the store. Yet the job, with its long hours and requirements for social interaction, takes away from time to enjoy these pursuits.

"It's hard to have a hobby with this kind of business," Mr. Kim said. "It's almost required, six days a week, 7 to 6. It's hard."

They rarely have time to visit family. They have a daughter and a son, both adults who've moved out of the house, and family back home in South Korea, whom they hardly see.

"I haven't been to Korea, because with a small business like this, it's hard to get away," Mrs.

Kim said. "My sisters are still there, two sisters, but one passed away, so sometime around 2019, I visited after 30 years of not being in Korea."

While they don't plan on moving back anytime soon, they hope to either take a year off to live close to their daughter and her family in New York City or wait until retirement to explore the world.

"We haven't been traveling for how many years? I mean, we work, work, work," Mrs. Kim said. "We want to see different countries, not just Korea, but we want to go to see European countries."

With the constraints of such a pivotal job to the Hyde Park community, it's hard to get away. Yet, they still want to travel sometime soon, even if in state.

From behind the pin cushion and fabric-covered counter, Mr. Kim exclaims that he especially hopes for one specific destination: "We want to go to Disney World!"

He and Mrs. Kim exchange laughter, and a glance extends for a moment longer. Despite always being around each other, their connection seems to have lasted over the years, even their inside jokes.

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Successful salon entrepreneur:
Sheila Dantzer



Enthusiastic educator:
Jeanne Fitzsimmons



Talented musician:
Bethany Pickens



Optimistic shop owner:
Sajal Patel

Scan this QR to read more community profiles on the U-High Midway's website, uhighmidway.com



Devoted driver

Habeeb Mohammed's warm persona connects him with students he drives

By **MIA LIPSON**
News Editor

One October morning before school, fifth grader Zach Chmura and his younger sister Zoey stood waiting for their car in their North Side apartment lobby. The air was beginning to chill, reminding them that Halloween was rapidly approaching. They stepped into their typical morning car, a big, black SUV, and greeted their driver Habeeb Mohammed — the man who drives them and multiple other Lab students to school every morning. He insists that the children call him by just his first name, Habeeb.

As the trio chatted about their days, Zach mentioned his favorite Halloween candy, Kit Kats. The next day, when he stepped into the black SUV once again, he was greeted with an enormous bag of his favorite treat.

"It's really nice on his van. He always provided me with everything — food, water, music, Kit Kats. He's always so nice to us," Zach said.

In his car, Mr. Mohammed goes above and beyond for the Lab students he drives to and from school, forming a close-knit community by providing support, conversation and kindness.

Ninth grader Saanika Dutta rides with Zach on Mr. Mohammed's van every morning. She said Mr. Mohammed has gotten to know her really well, especially for her love of Taylor Swift, whose music he always lets Saanika play.

"I love being in Habeeb's van. He is one of the nicest and most welcoming people I know," Saanika

“
When I'm with the kids in the car I'm really happy. I tell them they're like my kids. I feel like I'm dropping my kids and picking them up from school every day.
”

Habeeb Mohammed, driver

ka said. "His van always has a really warm atmosphere, which I love to be in since it cheers me up when I am grumpy in the mornings or when I have had a bad day."

Mr. Mohammed has been a driver for GTS Limos for the past few months, and has loved getting to know Lab students.

"When I'm with the kids in the car I'm really happy," Mr. Mohammed said. "I tell them they're like my kids. I feel like I'm dropping my kids and picking them up from school every day."

In the time he has spent with Lab students, he has developed a special relationship with them, due to his own situation with his family, who he has not been able to see in years.

Four years ago, Mr. Mohammed moved to Chicago and settled in Lakeview.

His wife and three kids were not able to come with him and live in Hyderabad, the capital of Telangana, India.

In his hour with Lab students every day, Mr. Mohammed gets to bond with kids who remind him of his own.

"I'm trying to get my wife and



Midway photo by Aubrey Felsen

DAILY DRIVING DELIGHT. Driver Habeeb Mohammed, who transports Lab students to and from school, has created a joyful environment in his car. From bringing students snacks to playing their favorite songs, he treats them as his family. This relationship with the people he drives makes Mr. Mohammed a unique and engaging driver.

kids here, but it's very tough sometimes because, you know, the immigration process takes a long time," Mr. Mohammed said. "That's why I love driving the kids so much. They are like my children. We are united and like family now."

Mr. Mohammed has been driving on this schedule for four months.

When he's not dropping off Lab students at school, he drives other clients around Chicago. He works every day of the week, which he said helps distract him and keep him happy.

"I spend 10 hours driving all day. I don't have my family or my kids at home now so when I go home,

I feel homesick," Mr. Mohammed said. "When I'm in the car and I get to talk to all the kids or like when Saanika plays Taylor Swift, I feel less alone."

Saanika's favorite part of their drives with Mr. Mohammed is her daily conversation with him.

"He always asks me about my day, about what I did. He always listens, and I always look forward to our conversations. We also share our experiences living in India, which is really nice to do. It is fun to talk to someone else who knows what India is like to live in," Saanika said. "He makes me feel very heard."

Zach always knows exactly which questions Mr. Moham-

med will ask and looks forward to talking to him every day.

"It was always a good conversation. He always asks about my day. Always. He asks what I ate for breakfast, how was my day — and I always ask him about his day," Zach said. "I like that routine in our conversation."

Among the many other Lab students he drives, Mr. Mohammed has gotten to know Zach well from the hours spent commuting to and from school in his car. From his love of Kit Kats to his favorite Imagine Dragons song, Mr. Mohammed always knows what to do to make Zach smile during the commute home — his favorite time of the day.

Boiled eggs to business: Eric Williams transitions from street vendor to boutique owner

By **LIGHT DOHRN**
Assistant Editor

At age 7, Eric Williams began working his first job: selling boiled eggs at his father's bar. When he reached his teenage years, he worked at Taco Bell. Then, throughout the better part of his 20s, he made his living selling peanuts outside football games.

Now, Mr. Williams is a business owner. He's the founder of the Silver Room, a well-known boutique on 53rd Street in Hyde Park that sells fashion, jewelry, art, political apparel and cultural artifacts. He founded the business in 1997 after deciding that the peanut trade wasn't going to cut it for him long-term.

"I think it was romantic in some way for the first couple years, that hustle," Mr. Williams said, "And then I was like, 'OK, I'm 27 now, you know? I can't be doing this forever.' So I wanted to take what I knew about selling and take it inside."

When Mr. Williams created the Silver Room, it was little more than a small jewelry store, and he continued to grind each day in order to make a living. The "hustle" did not become easier for a considerable time.

"Oh, man, I mean, when I started off, I just did not have any money," Mr. Williams said, laughing. "You know, phone getting cut off, gas getting cut off, just the struggles of trying to make it. Those were probably the toughest times."



Midway photo by Delaney Connell

SILVER SOUL. Eric Williams, the owner of Hyde Park's "Silver Room," embodies the vibrant community spirit that defines his store. He considers his relationships with the people he interacts with in the space to be the most valuable part of running it. Mr. Williams is now a successful business owner, his success stemming from his hard work.

But as the store grew and changed, and Mr. Williams began to make connections with many people, he started to consider these relationships to be among the most valuable parts of running the Silver Room — which is now a bustling, vibrant retail space, art gallery and community hub.

"I would say the best times are

probably just the people," Mr. Williams said, "I've met so many people over these 26 years, just thousands and thousands. We've had two weddings in the store. I've sold folks so many wedding rings, and there are so many couples. It's just the people, for sure."

Even more than weddings, Mr. Williams bears witness to the am-

bitions and hopes of so many people — whether they're successful and accomplished or just starting out. He hopes the store can serve as a foundation of creativity and artistic expression for anyone who needs it.

"We are a platform for other people's dreams," Mr. Williams said, "so be it the first time some-

one DJed in the store. First time someone had an art show. First time someone read their poetry. First time someone made a T-shirt or a candle or something and sold it. Those are really important things to me, and the fact that it's somewhere people can come and just try things out."

For Mr. Williams, the Silver Room is more than just a business endeavor: the shop is a physical reflection of his passions, many of which stem from his young adulthood.

For years, Mr. Williams has had an affinity for music and art and even sought to be a professional DJ.

"It's not just a retail space," Mr. Williams said. "It's actually like my living room. It's turntables in the space. It's art on the wall. It's poetry, you know, happening."

Mr. Williams is currently at work on a new project: the Bronzeville Winery, a restaurant located at 4420 S. Cottage Grove Ave. that offers a "well-curated wine list and perfectly executed local menu." He looks to the future excitedly, wondering what's next in his career and personal life.

"I'm really curious on what is next for me," Mr. Williams said. "Being at the store has been such a staple in the community, and it's so meaningful to so many people. But I don't think it's all that I have. I think there's something else — and maybe I don't even know what that is yet."

Repair with care: Neighborhood auto shop connects beyond cars

Phil Raoul forms friendships with his customers

by CLARE MCROBERTS
Features Editor

On a foggy fall afternoon beside Nichols Park, wet leaves cover the sidewalk. Brick residential buildings blend into seasonal shades. Street lights dimly illuminate the path. But there, hidden in plain sight, is one of Hyde Park's most iconic businesses. Tucked between these homes, a sign barely in view, sits the Foreign Car Hospital, an auto-repair shop that has been there for nearly 60 years.

If you get lost finding the place — or weren't even aware of its existence — you are not alone. Phil Raoul, the business' general manager, says he gets confused calls from intersections all over Hyde Park — people struggling to locate his shop, having passed right by it. "That's a daily occurrence," he said, chuckling.

Like the name suggests, Raoul's business provides such tender care to his customers that it has developed a connection with the community that goes far beyond car repair. People come for the engine checks but stay for the conversation.

"Sometimes I call it — the front desk here — my sort of a therapy counter because we talk about many other things besides cars. Family, some history. I've learned a lot talking to many of the alumni and neighborhood folk," he said.

He later added, "A lot of that conversation, back-and-forth, goes on right here at the front desk."

Mr. Raoul was raised in Hyde Park. He attended Ancona School, just a short walk from his shop. His

“
Social interaction with many of the clients is absolutely at the top of the list, but the primary purpose is to be here and solve issues and solve problems.
”
Phil Raoul, general manager

daughter attended U-High and his two sons attended Mount Carmel High School. One of his cousins happens to also be a Lab alumnus and neighborhood resident, Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul, who gets his car serviced at the shop.

This location of Foreign Car Hospital opened in the mid 1960s. It originated on Lake Park Avenue and later moved to South Exchange Avenue, Mr. Raoul said. All along, neighborhood people flocked to the place.

Mr. Raoul's familiarity with the vehicles he services is so ingrained that he can identify them at a glance whenever he's out and about in Hyde Park. In fact, while he remembers some faces but not others, he almost never fails to connect the car to a customer.

"That's kind of the way it works for me," he said. "I drive through the neighborhood and I'll recognize cars, knowing who they are just by seeing their car. I remember some faces, obviously. But by car, I certainly make the connection almost all the time."

Usually working in the shop with one other employee, Mr. Raoul's days are generally spent tending to appointments set by a handful of customers in need. If there is a downside to the work



Midway photo by Eli Raikhel

A COMMUNITY ESSENTIAL. Phil Raoul is the owner of Hyde Park's Foreign Car Hospital, a hidden auto-repair shop that is at the heart of the community. Mr. Raoul loves his connections with clients, but his favorite part of the job is the repair itself.

Mr. Raoul has been doing at Foreign Car Hospital since 1988, he has not discovered it.

"There really isn't a hard part, it's, you know, I think that I'm just lucky and blessed to be in this situation and I don't even have to go into a whole other community every day to work," he said.

He later added, "I think all of that coming together makes it fairly easy."

While Mr. Raoul cherishes the daily conversations he has with clients, his favorite part of the job gets at the heart of the auto-repair profession: solving problems.

"Social interaction with many

of the clients is absolutely at the top of the list, but the primary purpose is to be here and solve issues and solve problems," he said. "Just the satisfaction of repairing a car or fixing it and just that gratification of, you know, figuring something out. It feels good to be able to repair some of these things."

Sam Harris' passion for helping uplifts those around

by KATIE SASAMOTO-KURISU
Editor-in-Chief

For his entire life, Sam Harris has always been a helper. In middle school, he'd spend his free time helping others in both social and academic situations, from sorting out disagreements between fellow students to assisting teachers while mentoring peers during after-school programming. Today, Mr. Harris continues his passion for helping people, a help underscored by a belief in the power of connection — the ability to use open communication to solve problems and transcend differences.

Mr. Harris attended Mollison Elementary School, a public school located in Bronzeville. Despite always collaborating with peers and teachers, he hated school. He felt discouraged by it, unmotivated by the harsh, authoritative words of the adults in his life.

"Everything was pressure. All the teachers were like, 'You need to do this, you need to do that.' You're not going to be anything in life," Mr. Harris said. "So when you're dealing with that pressure and then you have other things going on in your life, school discourages you."

He noticed this among his peers as well. This is what prompted him to pursue the line of work he's spent a large part of his life: He wanted to find a better way to communicate.

"I had to change my whole thought process," Mr. Harris said. "I was making myself mad, because I was not changing what I was doing. It goes back to communication — talking, having an open mind to other things."

Mr. Harris has worked for the Department of Safety Services



Midway photo by Danny Aronsohn

COMMUNITY WITH COMMUNICATION. Sam Harris has uplifted his community by advocating for interactions and open conversations. Despite his own experience at school, he hopes to create a more engaged community. In doing so, he believes he and people in general can make a difference.

“
Sam Harris is a person who loves. He really does. It really is, I think a defining feature of Sam.
”
Sari Weichbrodt, former Lab parent

for the University of Chicago Police for 17 years. His first role was at the Booth School of Business, where he'd spend his days in the

student common area starting conversations between students.

"Instead of everybody being close to each other, they were very far apart," Mr. Harris said. "One would be sitting and one standing, so I'd come around. Then they both would speak and talk and that's how they got the sense to talk with one another."

Such interactions showed Mr. Harris he wanted to address these problems with younger ages, so he transitioned to being a security guard at the Laboratory Schools. He worked in Blaine Hall greet-

ing families and young students, always insisting they refer to him by his first name.

"Sam would make it a point to speak to everybody," said Sari Weichbrodt, a friend and former Lab parent. "He would do it in a way that was friendly, approachable, nonjudgmental. I think that newer parents or families to the school would notice that everyone talks to Sam."

Since 2019, Mr. Harris has worked a few blocks away as the supervisor of community service officers at the UChicago Woodlawn Charter School. He enjoys it because he relates to the students he serves.

"I think it's fulfilling. A lot of them start off going to school because their parents tell them to go to school," Mr. Harris said. "As they stay here, and I talk and communicate with them, they go to school for themselves."

Mr. Harris spends his days bonding and interacting with those around him, something he's carried with him throughout his entire life. This is what has made him such an impactful member in the Lab, Hyde Park and South Side communities.

"Sam Harris is a person who loves people. He really does," said Ms. Weichbrodt. "It really is, I think, the defining feature of Sam."

Mr. Harris sees his interactions with others as small ways to make a difference. He views communication to be as simple as being human.

Iman. So by you being human, you have feelings," Mr. Harris said. "I love talking to people. I love trying to make people's day. As long as I know I've made your day for that time that I was with you, what happens after that, you can carry with you."

four life tips

- **Check-in with people**
"I enjoy helping people, making sure everybody's fine and trying to make them smile because tomorrow's not promised. I try to make them feel good about what they want to do in life and how they're approaching it at that time. I like to discuss, if they'd like to discuss things, what is bothering or troubling them."
- **Listen, don't interrogate**
"As a child growing up, even when your parents and adults in this world ask you to do something and you don't do it correctly, the first thing they say is, 'What did I tell you?' The first thing we should do is be like, 'What's going on? Tell me what's wrong. What happened?' It doesn't come off offensive."
- **Be your authentic self**
"It's hard to be two people. You can only be one person in one place. If you go out and are somebody else, it's not going to work. Do what's best for you, because when it's all said and done, nobody can answer for you. You let nobody change who you are."
- **Get involved**
"Get resources of how you can help everybody else in the neighborhood and see what they're lacking, because there may be a need for that."

Beloved barber

Quintin Chothem displays dedication, engagement with haircutting craft

by **MILO PLATZ-WALKER**
Reporter

In his childhood home on the Southeast side of Chicago, a young Quintin Chothem discovered the art of being a barber in an unexpected way. Armed with determination and a pair of clippers, Mr. Chothem set out to cut his brother's hair for picture day.

Little did he know, this seemingly ordinary haircut would ignite Mr. Chothem's passion for cutting hair, setting the stage for a journey into the world of cutting hair.

"My little brother had a picture day, but I told my mom I would save her the trouble," Mr. Chothem said. "I just practiced on his head, and soon his friends just started coming, and eventually I was just cutting the whole neighborhood."

Quintin Chothem has made a name for himself in the Hyde Park area as a skilled and dedicated barber. Mr. Chothem is now 31 but grew up in Jeffery Manor, a neighborhood on Chicago's Southeast side about 20 minutes south of Lab. He now lives in Hyde Park along with a couple of his family members.

Before attending a formal barber school, Mr. Chothem's early experiences as a barber sparked a natural talent for the profession. These experiences laid the foundation for his journey into hairstyling and engaging with the community.

"It was rough at first. I had my own bowl cut disasters, but I always had a knack for creativity," Mr. Chothem said. "Haircutting became my outlet, my creative space."

Reflecting on his early years of learning how to cut hair, Mr. Chothem recognizes how his confi-

"I feel like it's a lot of trust to put into someone. But Quintin listened to me from the jump, so over time I started to build more trust with him."

Arhan Ganapathi, junior

dence quickly backfired as he attempted a design in his own hair.

"In high school I was cutting everybody's hair, and I started getting confident with my designs. Eventually someone dared me to do a design in my own head," Mr. Chothem explained. "You know, I was so confident in myself that I could do it, but you know, I got nervous while I was doing it and ended up with a bald patch on my head for the week."

Mr. Chothem has become a go-to barber for multiple students at U-High. One customer, junior Arhan Ganapathi, finds Quintin's service reliable and trustworthy.

"It's kind of hard to find a good barber, you know? I feel like it's a lot of trust to put into someone," Arhan said. "But Quintin listened to me from the jump, so over time I started to build more trust with him."

In addition to appreciating his reliability, Arhan also finds the service quick and well priced.

"The haircut only takes about 20 minutes and it's only like \$20, so I think it's really good, all things considered," Arhan said.

Beyond his technical skills, Mr. Chothem's success can be attributed to his commitment to commu-



Midway photo by Alex Diamond

CLIPPER COMMITMENT. Quintin Chothem creates relationships with his clients, making sure they have the best experience possible. Outside of the barbershop, Mr. Chotem enjoys engaging with his community with service.

nity service and his desire to be known in Hyde Park. He values building relationships with his clients and taking the time to understand their interests and preferences in addition to being attentive to all clients.

"To build a relationship with my clients I really just see what they are interested in," Mr. Chothem said. "The best way to relate to somebody is to be personable and just see what they are looking for."

Mr. Chothem's connection to the community extends to the younger generation as well. When entering the shop, Mr. Chothem is often giving haircuts to young children, who tend to be more distracted and squirmish. For situations like these, Mr. Chothem emphasizes attentiveness and patience to the child's needs.

"It's mainly patience man, a lot

of the times you just got to reach people where they at, and every kid is different," Mr. Chothem said. "Every kid needs a different amount of attention and patience. It's really about being attentive."

Challenges have always been a part of Mr. Chothem's journey, and he acknowledges the diversity in his clientele as a constant learning experience.

"Everybody is different, so you have to approach each client professionally. It's about adapting and learning patience," Mr. Chothem said.

For Mr. Chothem, the most rewarding aspect of his profession goes beyond the money.

"It's the relationships," he says emphatically. "Building connections with people, hearing their stories, and becoming a part of their lives — that's what makes it

truly rewarding."

As Mr. Chothem continues to excel in his career, he has valuable advice for aspiring barbers, especially those still in high school.

"You really gotta love it," Mr. Chothem advised. "Figure out if it's your passion. It can't be just for the money; it has to be something you genuinely enjoy. The time and effort it takes will be worth it if you love what you do."

What began as a simple act to help his mom and cut his brother's hair evolved into a thriving career for Mr. Chothem, showcasing his commitment to his craft and community.

But for Mr. Chothem, his story is not just about cutting hair; it's about building relationships, embracing challenges and finding fulfillment in a profession driven by passion and dedication.

Tyrone Mason acts as the eyes and ears of 49th and Dorchester

by **JAYA ALENGHAT**
City Life Editor

As long as it's not snowing, raining or freezing, anyone walking past the Kenwood Community Park tennis courts will see the same coach with his signature lawn chair, camped out on the courts for the day, teaching and making friendly conversation with members of the neighborhood.

His job as a local tennis coach has helped Tyrone Mason become involved in the Kenwood community, allowing him to connect with his students and the neighborhood. Mr. Mason started playing tennis when he was 19 years old, after graduating from high school on the south side of Chicago. He first played against a friend of his, and was defeated — but the experience only made Mr. Mason want to improve.

"I decided, OK, well, I'm just gonna play until I learn how to get good enough to beat him, and then I'll stop," Mr. Mason said. "But from there, it just kept growing and growing."

As Mr. Mason fell in love with the sport, he quit his previous job as a window washer and worked hard to get better at tennis.

"It was a challenge that I could not conquer. So I wanted to see if I could conquer it," Mr. Mason said. "And I still haven't conquered it."

Throughout his tennis career, Mr. Mason played many tournaments, traveled, and met and



Midway photo by Ryan Burke-Stevenson

CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY. Local tennis coach Tyrone Mason interacts with the Kenwood community as he coaches. He builds relationships with his students and neighborhood, becoming well-known in the area.

taught famous people. Here in Kenwood, he taught Malia and Sasha Obama.

When he first started playing, Mr. Mason did not expect tennis to be his future career.

"I was young, and it was a journey that I didn't really set out to embark on," Mr. Mason said. "But once I embarked on it, I saw that it was really fulfilling — especially working with the kids — because there's always something new that

they bring to the table."

Four years after being introduced to the sport, he started working as a coach at the Hyde Park Tennis Club, and 10 years after that, he decided to leave and become a private tennis coach.

"Coaching gives me the opportunity to meet the people that live in the neighborhood — gives me an opportunity to meet the parents, watch the kids grow up," Mr. Mason said.

Tyrone's tips

Tyrone Mason's tips for being a good coach:

1. Listening to your students
2. Being flexible
3. Having good communication
4. Making adjustments
5. Staying open to criticism

Mr. Mason teaches the kids of Lab parent Mistry Cherenfant. Ms. Cherenfant always saw Mr. Mason teaching at the neighborhood courts, and knew friends who had him as their coach. So, when her kids needed an outdoor hobby during the pandemic, Ms. Cherenfant contacted Mr. Mason.

"He doesn't just see them as a tennis player. He sees them as a whole child," Ms. Cherenfant said, "and I appreciate that about him."

Second grader Gage Cherenfant, one of her children, likes Mr. Mason's teaching style.

"Sometimes he's strict and sometimes he's funny. So like, if you don't want a strict teacher that's always like, 'do this, do that,'" Gage said, "but like, other times he's funny."

Mr. Mason does not view coaching solely as his job, but also as an opportunity to connect with the Kenwood community around him.

"I like the Kenwood community because it's a different, diverse kind of people that I've come in contact

with — just all races, creeds, and just different personalities and nationalities that I come in contact with," Mr. Mason said. "It's different from where I grew up."

Lab parent Cheryl Rudbeck knows Mr. Mason because he teaches one of her daughters. She has noticed his connection with the neighborhood and how he protects her kids — even those who do not take lessons with him.

"He is very involved in the Kenwood community. He has coached lots of adults and gone on to coach their children," Ms. Rudbeck said, "and he's always looking out for the kids."

Mr. Mason looks after kids in the neighborhood as if they were his own.

While teaching on the courts, he makes sure they are getting back and forth from school without any trouble.

"The community knows that it's sort of a safe environment around the courts when I'm there," Mr. Mason said, "because I look after the block to see what's going on."

Ms. Cherenfant also notices how Mr. Mason watches over the community when he teaches.

"He is always just sitting on the courts. Everybody who walks by, he knows them or he acknowledges them," Ms. Cherenfant said. "In addition to being a tennis coach, he is for the community. He is the eyes and ears of 49th and Dorchester."