Multiple thefts reported this month

Cash, cards stolen from unattended backpacks in halls

By SARAH KING
Editor in Chief

 Throughout the hallways and outside of classrooms, backpacks can often be seen lined up on the floor, their owners nowhere in sight.

However, in the past few weeks, several students have returned from classes to find the zippers on their backpacks left open, the contents rummaged through and — worst of all — their wallets emptied of valuable items like cash and debit cards.

School officials are alerting the community to the thefts and warning students to take precautions. Dean of Students Ana Campos announced in a Schoolcast message on Feb. 12 that in the previous six weeks, six students reported thefts from their unattended backpacks, prompting feelings of concern and suspicion in the Lab community.

“This is a real breach of our community trust, and it’s disappointing and upsetting,” Ms. Campos said in an e-mail interview. “I hope that it doesn’t happen again and that we can all be responsible for understanding that.”

Based on student interviews, neither the thefts nor the investigations during choir classes, when students are least expected to have their backpacks outside the classroom. Since then, the choir teachers have instructed students to bring their belongings into the classroom.

Ninth grader Sadie Ellis left her choir class on Jan. 30 to find that roughly $35 had been taken from her wallet, which she’d left on top of her backpack.

“I usually tuck my wallet behind my backpack, kind of hidden, just for precaution, but this particular day I left it on top of my backpack,” Sadie said. “Then I got out of choir and it had been unzipped and all of the cash was taken, but my credit cards, my library card and my ID, they were all still there.”

After speaking to her parents, Sadie reported the theft to Ms. Campos, who suggested she, as well as any other students who have had their belongings stolen, file a police report.

Ms. Campos said she is running her own investigation but also asks students to file police reports so the police can start their investigation.

Like Sadie, sophomore Maya Luvizzi and one of her classmates each had cash stolen while in choir class. While Maya didn’t report to Ms. Campos the $40 she had taken from her, she said she’s changed her behavior to prevent anything else from being stolen.

“This is not the first time, and when I can’t, I’ll take out the things I hold of value.”

“I now make sure my locker is secure beyond I know everyone has their backpack is on me almost 100% of the time, and when I can’t, I’ll take out the things I hold of value.”

Thefts are also happening in other areas of campus. Sophomore Daniel Wu had his credit card stolen while he was in P.E. class, after leaving his backpack in a U-High hallway.

“I was a little annoyed about that. Like, that’s not very nice to do obviously. But I was grateful I didn’t keep that much cash,” Daniel said. “It wasn’t a huge sum of money, everything was safe. I’m just disappointed.”

While Ms. Campos hopes these thefts don’t continue, she advises students to be constantly aware of their belongings, and take precautions to keep their valuables safe.

“There’s no reason to have large sums of cash, nothing that is vulnerable beyond I know everyone has phones and a laptop,” Ms. Campos said, “but it’s really important that if your things aren’t in your immediate supervision then put them in the lockers. That’s why we have them. They’re a secure place to store your things and we’ve got two for each student.”

Program of Studies adds classes, grading standards

Six new classes released across six departments

by TAARIQ AHMED
Digital Editor

The 2024-25 Program of Studies features new grading purpose statements and new course offerings in six departments.

Grading purpose statements x how each department defines success and achievement in its courses.

For example, the history department’s grading purpose statement reads, “Grades reflect and communicate our ongoing formative and summative assessment of students’ analytical abilities, including historical methods and habits of mind,” while the science department’s says, “Grading encourages students to engage actively in the learning process and meet their responsibilities as learners.”

Several educators in the community had been reading the work of Dr. Thomas Guskey.

Mr. Guskey is a renowned Chicago-based professor and former director of research for Heritage Speakers I (year-long). He said he will find them beneficial in understanding his academic performance.

“The ambition was to help students understand there are additional reasons why grades exist,” Ms. Rivera-Vazquez said. “It was about sharing with the whole high school community what faculty members believe is the purpose of grades.

Sophomore Luka Vega-Spofford said he believes the statements may not change how most students perceive their grades.

However, as a rising junior, he said he will find them beneficial in understanding his academic performance.

“It can sometimes be ambiguous what a grade represents, so this explains things better for me,” Luka said. “There are ideas at Lab about how each class is supposed to be graded, but this puts into writing what is expected of students.”
ASA celebrates Asian American experience

In first assembly, club recognizes diversity, culture

by SKYE FREEMAN
Student Engagement Manager

With the theme of “Exploring the Diversity of the Asian American Experience Through a Contempory 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 Satsumo-Kurino and vice president Jacob Liu welcomed students with an overview of the assembly’s events, starting with a role with historical context. Katie is an editor and exaggerated features. Civilization. The drawings of the foreign ethnic groups feature racist and exaggerated features. Following the analysis and explanation of the illustrations, they jumped the timeline to a contemporary context. Social media trend, RCTA. RCTA, which stands for Asian American and Pacific Islanders. 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 Asian American and Pacific Islanders."

They then invited three performers from the local dance group Inshi Collective onto the stage. The group works to portray the challenges of Asian Americans through a variety of mediums, such as dance, music and storytelling. They began with a fusion of hip-hop and traditional dance and then walked the audience through an interactive chant as the performers moved around the stage. Guest speaker Josina Morita, Cook County Commissioner for the 13th District and the first Asian American woman to serve on the Cook County Board of Commissioners, had a moving experience with discrimination based on her identity despite growing up in a family that has been in America for over 100 years. "I know 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 and Asian Americans at the table, " Ms. Morita said. In a video, ninth graders who identify as Asian American discussed the importance of recognizing the good work at the final NSML 24-25. "Emory tournament has a big impact on us because while I was initially happy to see that there were more female students interested in taking AT Chemistry, I was obviously wrong. Dr. Hund said, now the science department chair, said. "I have been doing this for a few years, Dr. Hund has seen a large increase in the number of students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds enrolling in AT Chemistry. Thoroughly such as a gradientless system and conferring, Dr. Hund has worked to ensure students of color, or 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 thinkers, 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 telling students 'I see you, I hear you, I believe in you, and I want to encourage you to take this course, because I think you have the ability to take this course and do 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 appreciates the ways the class is run. "I do really feel like it's a safe and welcoming environment. I define the class as the class gives students more opportunities to see their peers and find their community, especially high midwife students."

"Where community members have experienced harm such as bullying or harassment," Ms. Jueds said, "the following up-follow and investigation has generally been managed by Ms. Noel. Because such injustices are not illegal, initial, 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."

Midway photo by Leila Rezania

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 contests from each grade level competed in the event. Sophic Li and Munel Wu competed in the orals competition. Team co-captain Senokshi Mutreja was pleased by the team's performance, and hopes to keep up the momentum.

"We always aim to improve and please us will be able to do this year so that we can bring home another trophy," — Victoria Washington

Changes in AT Chemistry empower students

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

At recent contests, senior Akshay Arora told the Chicago Tribune, "I don't feel like I'm in the minority anymore, but I think people are more open-minded and accepting of others now." Arora is a part of the dance group Inshi Collective, which performs at the annual Midway Assembly. The group uses dance as a way to connect the community and celebrate cultural diversity.

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The customer isn’t always right; support employees

by CLARE McROBERTS

As you enter a coffee shop, you’re greeted with the friendly face of a familiar barista. A smile of recognition. They’re even more people you consider your friends now. A high-five or a hug. Clip-on buttons. Their chip-size attitude uplifts us when the time comes to pay: the screen is the only issue that matters to them, and monitor how the cashiers plan to address them.

Not only is tipping arbitrary, but it’s also imperfect. The convention of tipping began in the Middle Ages, when servers 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 with on- and off-site tips to steal black labor. Time has passed, but the demeaning and unappreciative nature of tipping has taken root.

In a perfect world, tipping would be done with the specific issues that matter most. 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 candidates and focus on the balances of the same old names, largely unrelated to individuals in this generation. However, while Joe Biden and Donald Trump may be the most engaging candidates for the political stage today, we should hope for better representation in the future, this feeling of entrapment between a rock and a hard place must be navigated.

In an election where so much is on the table, the power of voting is even more evident than ever. Pondering for a moment, select a little more than five years ago. Would you really have thought this is the case? We should tip all of them. Because they are our leaders and a hard place must be navigated.

For students, the Midway is a student-run newspaper for the entire University of Chicago Laboratory High School. We are a student-run editorial board consisting of students, faculty, and professional journalists. The Midway is an independent newspaper that strives for excellence in all aspects of news coverage, particularly in the field of digital media.

Please place your vote in the Nov. 5 election. We have no specific issues to vote on, but we do feel that connection to the candidates and campaign can help foster 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 changes on the ballot.

For students not yet eligible to vote, you may feel less inclined to pay attention to the election, there are so many ways for you 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.

With the pertinent social issues which matter, it is imperative for young adults to vote, support a candidate, voice their opinion on social topics which may strike a chord with them — in-person or on social media.

THURSDAY, FEB. 22, 2024

U-High Midway illustration by Noah Bahlali

Students: Don’t ignore the election
In hydration or expression?

Water bottles help students hydrate and stay stylish

by KATIE SASAMOTO-KURISU

Carried through the halls of U-High, held in the hands of students, some big, some small, in all shapes and sizes and designs, they're being drunk by all kinds of water bottles. These objects are simply vessels to help keep you hydrated. But in recent years they have evolved into something bigger in culture — a personal expression of self 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 Miller, a senior who uses his Zyn 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 hype in certain reusable water bottles, like the Stanley cup, Hydro Flask and Osval bottle crazes, is underscored by a cultural shift toward health-conscious consumerism.

Senior Stella Sturgill believes this shift has both health-oriented and aesthetic elements to it. “I think especially as sort of a health fad has been taken over mainstream culture, there’s more cultural and brand significance and a marketing tactic to sell you water bottles that you have, which I think is kind of ridiculous,” she said. “But at the same time, I think it is helping more people drink water by aestheticizing it.”

Water bottles are also a means for students to feel connected. Many students, like junior Millie Norton, 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 persons.”

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 fashionable elements. “These features make drinking water so 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 guarantees that they’re going to be getting, at the very least, minimal 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 $60, 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. Poten-
tially 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.

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 hashtag #ZynTok.

“I heard some of my friends were doing them, and it’s also a big thing in Sweden,” 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. In the form of white powder, unlike their oral nicotine counterpart, these products contain 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 cause cancer,” she said. “So you don’t have the same level of harm as with a tobacco product, but there are other additives and such.”

Student A said the pouches are convenient because they are not noticeable to those around them. “It is like wearing 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 harmful 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 add-
ored 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 compared 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.”
Migrant evictions delayed

By JAYA ALENGATH 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 uncer
tain.

Chicago Mayor Brandon John
don announced that the new evic
tion 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 evictions during the harsh winter weather.

“Our plan for emergency tempo
rary shelter was never meant as a
temporary housing solution,” May
or 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
time enough to process their work
authorization, find housing, start a
job, and planes from other states may
have arrived in Chicago via buses.

Migrants are coming to our
city, and that’s being done through
no coordination with the gover

2024. "Eviction is absolutely not ide
al," Ald. Rodriguez said in an in
terview with the Midway. “Evic
tion could lead to destabilization
of families. It could increase the
population of individuals living on
the streets in the city of Chicago.”

Jennif Fuentes, Ward 36 Alder
person and another committee
member, feels the same.

“I think it’s the most humane
treatment that we could do as a
city,” Ald. Fuentes said in an inter
view with the Midway. Ald. Rodriguez views migrants
coming to the city as an opportu
nity rather than a crisis.

“It’s a migrant opportunity,” Ald. Rodriguez said. “Our coun
try needs migrants, and young mi
grants, to come to this country to
do jobs, some of which many oth
ers would not do — and to help
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 govern
ors in Texas or Florida,” Ald.
Rodriguez said. “They’re putting
tem 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 unfor
tunate conditions.

“We want what we do to be able
to provide the best conditions
in what we understand 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 mat
ter hearings on the current con
ditions and what the city is plan
ning 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 us the best
place possible.”

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

“We’ve got to do a better job of
out-migration and getting people
in a small pot of all these differ
cult 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 basicall
ly walk through different parts of the
world.”
Youth voters wary of Biden reelection

by CLARE NAGORESS

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.

In an unsanctioned 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. Enthusiasm and 4 represents high enthusiasm. There were 85 responses total.

The responses below are from non-voting respondents and the right represent all grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“I feel excited to vote for Biden.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“I’m not voting for Biden, but I’m okay with him.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“I don’t think Biden is the best candidate, but I’m not going to vote for Trump.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“I don’t think Biden is doing a good job.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Sophomore Catherine Graves rated a 2: “The candidate I’m voting for a Biden. I don’t think a lot of people are unhappy with him and there’s a pretty high chance that he won’t run. I’m not excited about being a rematch between Trump and Biden.”

Sophomore Kaia Ryan rated a 2: “I don’t really identify with a party. I don’t think I’m a Democrat or Republican. I think it’s important, however, I’m 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 Cassie 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 these people and take a risk, and everyone has been deadlocked in that for so long.”

Senior Theo Williams rated a 2: “I feel like I’m not voting for the other person then voting for my person. I don’t think it’s just a 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 so you’d be voting for people.”

Sophomore Joaquin Skalsky rated a 1: “I just feel like it’s a vast majority of the time it’s just old white men versus old white men. 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.”

North grade Joaquin Skalsky rated a 1: “I feel like Joe Biden has handled the economy very well. I feel like there needs to be more discussion on what we need to be spending the American public on.”

Sophomore Kaia Ryan rated a 2: “I don’t really identify with a party. I don’t think I’m a Democrat or Republican. I think it’s important.”

Midway illustration by Chloe Alexander

SETTLING FOR BIDEN ...again?

Young voters wary of Biden reelection

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.

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Tens 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 commemorate 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 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 Day is emerging as a trend. 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 the way they met. Rossi spent the day in bed with his girlfriend.

“We’re going to reenact what our first date was like: a similar Wednesday on Valentine’s last year,” Julian said before the day. “We’re going to hide behind a puzzle, then get back 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.

“It think it’s more meaningful,” Julian said. “I get to fulfill what the holiday actually is instead of just giving candy.”

Senior Bella Walzter 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.”

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.

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.
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 motivator to his team.

“He understands when you practice swimming, it’s not always necessary to go fast,” Mr. Mirkov said. “I mean, bad practices, they often happen, I’d say once every three weeks,” Jeffrey said. “Some-times 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. Usually, I usually tell myself this stuff is usually not everything. And, not everyone 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 over in about two or three days’.”

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

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

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 steam 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 Wednesdays 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. “I 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 2, 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 him-self,” 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. “A 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 CHLOÉ ALEXANDER

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 cause viewers to come back again and again. And U-High students are no different.

Junior Oscar Kashuri 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, girls fighting and staying on the show. It’s my favorite thing.”

Over the years, dating shows have evolved from “The Dating Game,” “Love Connection,” and “Singuled 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 out on TV can help people view their own relationships. Sophomore Kate Ryan said she often watches to view their relationships because it’s the only experience with love, which impacts the way they see love, impacts their relationships.

“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,” Nyla Wellington, ninth grader.

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

“Reality TV dating shows, along with the often hilarious characters and situations that emerge, provide entertainment that they produce. They can also add a really interesting element of perspective onto our own lives,” Isadora Glick, senior.

— compiled by Chloë Alexander and Joa Alenhat

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

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

“Sometimes when I watch things on TV, I’m like, ‘This is just TV and not real.’” — compiled by Milo Platz-Walker and Jaya Alenghat

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

THURSDAY, FEB. 22, 2024

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

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 guest 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 traditional visual artists,” facul- ty advisor 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 perspective 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 someone expresses themselves, the way we choose to spend our time and the way we create and relive the world.”

Mr. Wildeman brings excitement and enthusiasm to 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, student parents, alumni and guest artists,” Mr. Wildeman said.

“There are a lot of good workshops for students this year.”

Mr. Wildeman will have the top form go live Feb. 21, a week before ArtsFest. This may be a response to creating new and technical complications.
Despite myriad of music listening options, vinyl makes a comeback

by LIGHT DOHNR

The Beatles. The Smiths. La- na Del Rey. Sophomore Carolyn Payne’s vinyl record collection ranges from albums she picks out to listen to. She brings back from her grandmother’s home in England. “I’ll bring one back kind of every time I visit her,” Carolyn said.

Just beside Kenwood mall, junior Ben and genres, “Carolyn said. Swift’s “Midnights,” Harry Styles’ are quite modern, such as Taylor 2022, and the best-selling albums sales comprised 43.4% of all album sales. In fact, vinyl album pressing themselves and their music listeners at U-High, vinyl records and a dusty cabinet in their grandparent’s basement.

But for many teenagers and students at U-High, vinyl records and record players are an intriguing window into old-fashioned lifestyle 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 Rodri- gue’s “Sour.”

“I do really like the sound, especially when it comes to certain types of different types of musical genres,” Carolyn said. “Like Chemtrails Over the 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 usually when I’m doing homework or walking around,” Carolyn said. “I obviously 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 boss onto his bed to begin the long home-work 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, 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 serv- ices or YouTube. Often, I’m able to find physical copies of the mu-sic, 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 TISON XU

A notification banner pops up on the screen of an iPhone. Soph- omore Daniel Wu looks down and 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 dropped off. Please refer to this photo your Dashers provided to see when it was left.” He quickly puts his phone down.

“Personally, my stomach starts to rumble 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.”

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

“Last year we ordered some pizza from Papa John’s. This year we got some from Medici,” Zetta said. “I think I liked the pizzas that I or- dered 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.

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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.

When I was little I would prepare mocktails with her close family, not only because of the love and cousins, but also because mocktails made her feel grown up. 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 we 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.

"My mom wanted them to do that over Zoom, so I will always take in-person teaching over virtual," Dr. Hund said. "I think I still try to do that over Zoom, but it's hard to do that over Zoom, so I will always take in-person teaching over virtual.

"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 to do that on an extended period of time certainly makes it easier to do now.

"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 to do that on an extended period of time certainly makes it easier to do now.

"During the pandemic, most depart- ments adapted by simplify- ing some elements. Use of School- ogy became the norm. Teachers learned to work on Zoom. And faculty members say they were forced to cut topics from their curriculum.

"I feel like things are back to some- thing of a baseline. The expecta- tions, the format, everything has kind of returned to normal.

In January, when students un- expectedly got the five-day break from school, some teachers as- signed 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 stu- dents are absent but don’t want to fall behind. "I feel like things are back to some- thing of a baseline. The expecta- tions, the format, everything has kind of returned to normal," Zachary Hund, chemistry teacher said.

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we lived around that area, across Midway Airport, in Cicero, and “He had a hardware store by the ways Hyde Park," Mrs. Kim said.

Korea, and she and Mr. Kim have founded a sewing company in approval, they had an arranged go, and after receiving her father's when he had first moved to Chica

The charming shop has been open since 1995, serving gener

“A gem to the Hyde Park community, Vogue Cleaners, the dry cleaning, sewing and alterations store, is known by locals and uni

“Some points, it’s like live togeth

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 uni

While they don't plan on mov

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.
Boiled eggs to business:

By LIGHT DOHRN  News-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, when he was 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 hipster,” 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 profit. “The hustle” did not become easier for a conscientious entrepreneur.

“Oh, man, I mean, when I started off, I didn’t just 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.”

But as the store got bigger, and expanded, and Mr. Williams began to make connections with many people, he started to consider this relationships to be among the most valuable part 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 the just the people,” Mr. Williams said, “I’ve met so many people over these 26 years, just 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 believes to the ambitions 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 someone D.J.’s 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 sold it. Those are really important things, and it’s nice to think that 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 profession—”I was into music. 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 think there’s something else — and maybe I don’t even know what that is yet.”

Habeeb Mohammed’s warm persona connects him with students he drives.

By MIA LIPSON  News-Editor

One October morning before school, fifth grade Zach Chmurek and his younger sister Zoey stood waiting for their car in their North Side apartment lobby. The sky above was gray, and the temperature was cool, but their spirits were high. Zac was always looking forward to his morning ride with Mr. Mohammed, the driver for the Lab students he drives to and from school every day.

Mr. Mohammed is the driver for the Lab students he drives to and from school every day. He gets to know Zach well due to his own situation with his family, who he has not been able to come with him and live in the United States. His wife and three kids were not able to come with him and live in the United States. 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 says helps distract him and keep him happy.

“I spend 10 hours driving all day. I don’t have my family or 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 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 all 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. Mohammed 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 the 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 Disney movie, Mr. Mohammed always knows what to do make Zach smile during the commute home — his favorite time of the day.

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 like his family. This relationship with the people he drives makes Mr. Mohammed a distinctive and engaging driver.
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 setting 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 habit 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, unappreciated 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 go home at night 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. “It was a mutual feeling among him to pursue the line of work he’s spent a large part of his life: He needed a better way to communicate.”

“Let’s change our whole thought process,” Mr. Harris said. “I was making myself mad, because I was struggling with what I was doing. It goes back to communication, having an open mind to other things.”

Mr. Harris has worked for the Department of Safety Services, 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 it at Foreign Car Hospital since 1988, he has not discovered it.

“There really isn’t a hard part, 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 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 is 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,” Mr. Raoul, general manager.

Mr. 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.

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Beloved Barber

Quentin Chothem displays dedication, engagement with haircutting craft

by MILO PLATZ-WALKER

In his childhood home on the Southeast side of Chicago, a young Quentin Chothem discovered the art of being a barber for an unprece- dented group of people: his neigh- borhood 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.

“Of course he had his birthday the day I told my mum 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 getting his whole neighbor- hood.”

Quentin Chothem has made a name for himself in the Hyde Park area as a skilled and dedi- cated barber. Mr. Chothem is now 23 but grew up in Jefferson Manor, a northeast side of Chicago's Hyde Park east side about 20 minutes south of Lab. He now lives in Hyde Park along with his four younger family members.

Returning a formal barber school, Mr. Chothem's early experiences as a barber sparked a natu- ral 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 al- ways had a knock 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 con- stant practice quickly backfired as he at- tempted a design in his own hair. “In high school I was cutting ev- erybody's hair, and I started get- ting 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 Ar- hin Ganapathi, finds Quentin's ser- vice 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,” Arhin said. “But Quentin did just what you would hope for, he was on time, and I started to build more trust with him.”

In addition to appreciating his reliability, Arhin 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,” Arhin said.

Beyond his technical skills, Mr. Chothem's success can be attribut- ed to his commitment to commu- nity service and his desire to be known in Hyde Park. He values building relationships with his cli- ents and taking the time to under- stand their interests and prefer- ences in addition to being atten- tive to the child's needs.

“Building a relationship with my clients I really just see what they are interested in,” Mr. Chothem said. “I think the best way to relate to somebody is to be personable and show that you 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 sit- uations like these, Mr. Chothem emphasizes attentiveness and pa- tience to the child's needs. “It's really main thing man, a lot of the times you just got to coach people who they are, and ev- ery 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 learn- ing experience.

“Everybody is different, so you have to approach each client pro- fessionally. It's about adapting and learning patience,” Mr. Chothem said.

For Mr. Chothem, the most re- warding aspect of his profession goes beyond the money. “It's the relationships,” he says emphatically. “Building connec- tions 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 value- added experiences for aspiring barbers, especially those still in high school.

“You really gotta love it,” Mr. Chothem admitted. “You have to have it in your heart, 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 do it for passion.”

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

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

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

by JAYA ALENGHAT

As long as it’s not snowing, raining or freezing anyone walk- ing past the Kenwood Communi- ty Park tennis courts will see Mr. Mason start playing against a friend of his, a tennis club or a local resident. Mr. Mason started playing tennis when he was 19 years old, and he’s continued to play since then from where I grew up.”

While teaching on the courts, he meets new people daily, whether they are interested in — just all races, creeds, and different personalities 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 pro- tects the kids — even those who do not take lessons with him.

“He is very involved in the Ken- wood community. He has coached lots of adults and gone on to coach their children,” Mr. 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.

The community knows that it’s sort of a safe environment around the courts when I’m there,” Mr. Mason said, “because it’s not just the block to see what’s going on.”

Mr. Chothem’s passion for cutting hair is driven by passion and dedication. He enjoys engaging with his community with service.

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

Tyrones 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. Mas- son 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. Cheren- fant 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 Gaht, Cheren- fant, 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 teach- er that’s always like, ‘do this, do that,’ he’s a funny guy,” she said, “but like, other times he’s funny.”

Mr. Mason does not view coach- ing 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 na- tionalities that I come in contact with,” Mr. Mason said. “It’s different from where I grew up.”

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