

# u-high **midway**

DECEMBER 8, 2022  
Volume 98, Number 16

1362 East 59th Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60637  
uhighmidway.com



University of Chicago Laboratory High School

**PAGE 11 • LEISURE**

Practicing karate since she was 3 years old, senior Maile Nacu has developed a hardworking attitude, incorporating the sport's values into her everyday life as she continues competing internationally.



**PAGE 9 • HEALTH**

In recent years, CBD's popularity has drastically risen with many products claiming to relieve anxiety, reduce inflammation and muscle pain. However, claims of its efficacy are unsupported.



**PAGE 5 • FEATURES**

Recognized last year with an Unsung Hero award, café employee Ariel Williams serves as a kind, bright presence in the lives of U-High students who visit the Judd Hall coffee shop.

## Leaving Lab: Black students say the school environment is unwelcoming

by **AUDREY PARK**  
Managing Editor

About 9% of students at the Laboratory Schools are Black, but throughout the 2021-22 school year, the number of Black students who withdrew from Lab was 17%, outpacing the overall enrollment.

For many Black students, race significantly impacts their experiences at Lab to the extent that some leave and others consider leaving because they say Lab's environment is not welcoming and inclusive, while a few say they do feel welcome.

Jordan Rodgers left Lab at the end of ninth grade in 2020 and recalls a situation that tested her comfort with her Black identity.

"I used to get passed a note that said 'N-word pass' that someone asked me to sign," she said, adding that she tried to get teacher support but was told she was being distracting and disruptive. "This is one of the more subtle forms of disrespect I experienced."

She said many of her peers did not always take her seriously and felt like she was constantly trying to prove herself to her peers.

Jordan ultimately decided to transfer to Whitney Young Magnet High School because she wanted a larger Black student population and a safer place to express her Black identity.

"My experience wasn't necessarily bad, but there is definitely comfort in looking around a classroom and seeing people that look like you, and that's not something I really got at Lab," she said. "[Whitney Young] does have a bigger Black community and more diversity."

Similarly, Kinsey Smith, who left Lab after eighth grade in 2020, decided to transfer because she was looking for a larger Black community for her high school experience.

**"I was obviously Black, but I felt I had to almost be more like my white friends to fit in. Even though I did like Lab, it felt like I wasn't appreciated by teachers as much as the white students."**  
Kinsey Smith,  
former Lab student

She now attends Oak Park and River Forest High School in suburban Oak Park.

Kinsey said she did not feel valued as a Black woman in the classroom at Lab.

"I would say 50% of the reason I left was because of my race. I felt like I was losing sight of who I was," Kinsey said. "I was obviously Black, but I felt I had to almost be more like my white friends to fit in. Even though I did like Lab, it felt like I wasn't appreciated by teachers as much as the white students."

Jordan and Kinsey enjoy their new schools and feel more in tune with their Black identity.

Malacai Sanders left Lab at the end of the 2021-22 school year, partially due to racial mistreatment, he said. He is now a junior at Kenwood Academy High School.

In a series of text messages to the Midway, he wrote that he believes he was treated differently than white students.

He wrote, "I was sent to the principal for having a snowball fight with one of my friends, and when I went back outside, the white children were throwing snowballs, and nobody got in trouble."

Malacai indicated Lab needs to do more to support Black students but is unsure how.



Midway illustration by Dalin Dohrn

**RACIAL MISTREATMENT.** Black students say micro aggressions and Lab's environment devalues their Black identity, contributing to decisions on whether to leave the school or stay.

"I can't say I've talked to a Black member at Lab that hasn't discussed leaving or heard them talking about their parents wanting to move them out of the school," he wrote, "so honestly I'm not sure what support Lab could put in."

Echoing Malacai's sentiment, current U-High senior Donovan Miller considers leaving Lab "every single day." He said the school was made and established on white values.

"If I'm in my neighborhood and I'm just around all Black people, my time there

is gonna be so different than it is at Lab. There's just so much more understanding and there's less of a burden, to try to explain certain things," he said. "I'm not saying I just prefer to be in only Black spaces, or only spaces where there are people of color, I'm just saying that Lab does not allow for complete self-expression as a Black person."

Donovan said people still treat him with respect, but a lot of the discomfort he experiences stems from microaggressions.

see **Leaving Lab**, page 2

## New schedule standardizes class times, includes two versions

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Period 1 8:30 a.m. 9:20 a.m.	Lab or Co-Curricular 8:30-9:45 a.m.	Period 1 8:30 a.m. 9:20 a.m.	Period 1 8:30 a.m. 9:20 a.m.	Period 1 8:30 a.m. 9:20 a.m.
Period 2 9:25 a.m. 10:15 a.m.	Advisory 9:50-10:15	Period 2 9:25 a.m. 10:15 a.m.	Period 2 9:25 a.m. 10:15 a.m.	Period 2 9:25 a.m. 10:15 a.m.
Period 3 10:20 a.m. 11:10 a.m.	Period 3 10:20 a.m. 11:10 a.m.	Period 3 10:20 a.m. 11:10 a.m.	Advisory 10:20-10:45	Period 3 10:20 a.m. 11:10 a.m.
Period 4 11:15 a.m. 12:05 p.m.	Period 4 11:15 a.m. 12:05 p.m.	Period 4 11:15 a.m. 12:05 p.m.	Lab or Co-Curricular 10:50 a.m. 12:05 p.m.	Period 4 11:15 a.m. 12:05 p.m.
Lunch				
Period 5 12:50 p.m. 1:40 p.m.	Period 5 12:50 p.m. 1:40 p.m.	Lab or Co-Curricular 12:50 p.m. 2:05 p.m.	Period 5 12:50 p.m. 1:40 p.m.	Period 5 12:50 p.m. 1:40 p.m.
Period 6 1:45 p.m. 2:35 p.m.	Period 6 1:45 p.m. 2:35 p.m.	Lab or Co-Curricular 2:10 p.m. 3:25 p.m.	Period 6 1:45 p.m. 2:35 p.m.	Period 6 1:45 p.m. 2:35 p.m.
Period 7 2:40 p.m. 3:30 p.m.	Period 7 2:40 p.m. 3:30 p.m.		Period 7 2:40 p.m. 3:30 p.m.	Period 7 2:40 p.m. 3:30 p.m.

Midway illustration by Louis Auxenfans

by **AMY REN**  
Assistant Editor

After a committee discussed schedule changes for over a year, U-High Principal Paul Beekmeyer unveiled the new 2023-24 schedule to the student body in an open meeting Nov. 29. Every school day will begin at 8:30 a.m. and end at 3:30 p.m., with starting and ending times for classes standardized and aligned with new schedules for the lower and middle schools.

The new schedule will have seven class periods, in contrast to the current eight. Each class will meet four 50-minute periods per week, a departure from the current three 45-minute periods and one 75-minute period. Advisory will meet twice for 25 minutes each, and lunch periods will be extended from 40 to 45 minutes.

Every student will have four 75-minute periods designated for academic or co-curricular activities depending on the week. The new schedule will have two types

of weeks. During "lab weeks," students will use such times for science labs, a by-arrangement course or free periods, while during "co-curricular weeks," some or all of these periods will be occupied by assemblies, learning and counseling programming, or college counseling workshops. A universal open time for students will not be present.

Some details regarding the naming of the weeks and order of lab and advisory periods are still in discussion at time of writing.

Aria Choi, committee co-chair, hopes the new schedule will encourage non-academic programming engagement.

"My hope is that during co-curricular weeks, because they are so infrequent, that students really do consider the programming valuable and worthwhile to attend," Ms. Choi said.

She also hopes students will "continue to exercise choice over how to schedule their days and

**at a glance**

**In 2023-24 every school day will be 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

- Seven class periods; four to seven periods per day
- Each class meets four days per week for 50 minutes
- "Lab week": 75-minute periods for science labs, by-arrangement courses, free periods
- "Co-curricular week": 75-minute periods for assemblies, counseling programming
- Lunch period now 45 minutes

weeks ... to really support one's wellness."

"We are losing our open time," she said regarding the new schedule, but "it just gives students a little bit more agency and choice."



# Few attend forum to address hate speech

by SAHANA UNNI  
Features Editor

Just four students joined a dozen Student Council members to recount personal experiences and propose solutions to hateful expression at the Laboratory Schools during a forum after school on Nov. 29. The Student Council-sponsored forum followed recent incidents of hateful expression. The forum, held in the Markovitz Theater, focused specifically on the role students have in addressing instances of hate.

The small attendance highlighted the lack of student participation in discussions regarding diversity, equity and inclusion.

Graham Robbins, all-school vice president, described an increase in students who are unwilling to take action against prejudice in the school community.

"You have a responsibility to hold both yourself and others accountable for whatever you consider to be your code or your standard of morals when it comes to these issues," Graham said.

Sitting in a circle of chairs in the center of the room, students contributed ideas to effectively address hateful expression and articulated how this incident ties into a broader theme of prejudice rooted in U-High.

"Sometimes the only way, or the best way, to combat it is through uniform action through the community," junior Max Mathias said. "I think that through talking about it, that absolutely aids in a joint process of fixing whatever the problem is."



**LOW ATTENDANCE.** Senior Zara Baig speaks out at Student Council's Nov. 25 forum to address recent hate in the U-High community. She was one of four students outside of Student Council in attendance.

William Meyer, Cultural Union vice president, said that supporting affinity groups and having open forums is the best way to oppose incidents of hateful expression.

Five affinity groups had already addressed hateful expression occurring at school and on social media prior to the forum, as they issued a statement on Nov. 10 calling for administrative action.

Many at the forum voiced their frustration about the culture of purposeful instigation of hateful speech in the U-High community.

"One person might say something that is controversial, and it seems like a large group of people might start trying to provoke even worse responses out of this person, asking them questions, recording them," said Adam Cheema, junior Cultural Union representative, "and often times it's people who aren't affected by these statements trying to provoke them and elicit those types of responses."

Others said the public nature of assemblies about DEI leads to a lack of student participation.

"I really think that in large as-

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Often times it's people who aren't affected by these statements trying to provoke them and elicit those types of responses.  
Zara Baig, senior  
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semblies and large gatherings, intimate is important because you don't want your voice broadcasting to the entire grade," Max said. "Sometimes you do want to have an interactive discussion, but you can't do that."

This forum left students and spectating faculty with ideas of how to move forward with addressing hate at the Laboratory Schools. One student suggestion was setting guidelines to encourage respect during group discussions, holding those who provoke hateful comments accountable and recognizing each student's responsibility to ensure U-High is a safe place for marginalized communities.

"We've been having a lot of discussions about what are some ways or tangible applications of how we're having these conversations — what can we actively do for the community?" said senior Zara Baig, Asian Students' Association president. "I think this conversation gave me a lot of insight on what more specifics we want to be looking for. For me, as my role in the community, I came here to be more enlightened on that."

## Students struggle to find private space for virtual meetings

by CLARE O'CONNOR  
Editor-in-Chief

Throughout the pandemic, students began to use Zoom to conduct meetings and tutoring sessions, often using the two library conference rooms.

But now, the library conference rooms are often unavailable, leaving many students struggling to find quiet, isolated spaces at school to take their virtual meetings.

"When the school was designed, there was no idea that Zoom was going to be entering our lives, so there wasn't any thought put into creating places for a single person to take Zoom calls," high school librarian Susan Augustine, said. "Now, after remote school, we're seeing students that need to make calls for college interviews, for tutoring, or for classes they're taking at university, who need someplace to go."

According to Ms. Augustine, the lack of adequate space is difficult for students to anticipate. Ma-

ny students only realize the issue right before their meetings, leaving little time to secure a conference room.

A second hurdle is that individual students aren't allowed to book the conference rooms during open time on Tuesdays or assembly period on Thursdays.

Senior Nate Greely experienced this issue when trying to attend a virtual college interview. Interview slots are limited, and often all the times available after school hours are filled.

Nate had to cancel the first interview he attempted to schedule during school hours because the library conference rooms were reserved during his interview time.

"That interview, I ended up scheduling and rescheduling like two or three times until I just wasn't able to do it because there weren't any spots left," Nate said.

Without adequate space to attend interviews at school, Nate has had difficulty scheduling interviews at other colleges, even being

forced to pick a time slot that falls during his long commute home after school.

Ms. Augustine understands students' stress from the inconvenience and hopes the school can find a solution.

"It just adds another layer of anxiety, and stress, and inability to focus when you're trying to talk to someone online. It makes it hard to be your best self," Ms. Augustine said. "Especially with the high stakes of touring and college interviews, I think we're really doing our students a disservice."

Students have communicated issues surrounding the difficulty reserving spaces, but the school has yet to devise any solutions.

Possible private spaces are complicated by the school's duty to ensure students are supervised and by the school building's design.

"We're built for in-person," Teddy Stripling, a high school counselor, said. "That's what the school is structured around, so right now, there aren't really any answers."



**ZOOMING ZONES.** Senior Lizzy Baker attends a virtual meeting in one of the two library conference rooms where students can reserve private space.

## Leaving Lab: Racism, isolation shape students' experience

continued from page 1

Like Donovan, junior Katie Williams said she experiences a lot of microaggressions at U-High and has observed themes of tokenism, which have led her to consider leaving the school. She gave an example of opportunities such as internships.

"If I were to say, 'Lab has picked many Black students' or 'I am surprised that I am the only Black student chosen,' I have had students say to me, 'I am not surprised.' They say, 'They probably only chose you because you are Black,'" Katie said. "This devalues all of the work I have put in. It puts me in this imposter syndrome of 'Am I worthy enough?' I think this is a common theme for many students."

In a series of interviews with the Midway, multiple Black students shared details of how they are

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Lab has a serious problem with what I would say is 'racial locker room talk,' where it's a sort of underlying culture teachers like to avoid, but if you've ever heard a group of boys having a conversation on the second-floor lounge, you know it exists.  
Lusia Austen, senior  
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treated differently not only around school but also in the classroom, such as in group projects and discussions.

Senior Lusia Austen said Lab's culture often tends to deny the existence of racial mistreatments in

the school community.

"Lab has a serious problem with what I would say is 'racial locker room talk,' where it's a sort of underlying culture teachers like to avoid," she said. "But if you've ever heard a group of boys having a conversation on the second-floor lounge, you know it exists."

Unlike her peers and despite her negative experiences, Lusia has not seriously considered leaving Lab.

"I would say it's affected my time, but not in such a serious way that I would leave the school because I think there are a lot of really good things about Lab, like a commitment to a good college," she said.

Irene Reed, director of admissions and financial aid, emphasized the goal of improving the student experience. She said the admissions office pays attention to all groups but wants to ensure underrepresented groups, in partic-

ular, feel comfortable in their admissions experience at Lab.

For example, the admissions office hosted an event called "Black at Lab" on Oct. 19 where prospective families attended to gain perspective on the Black experience at Lab and their potential Lab experience, should they decide to enroll their children.

"We would always want to first understand why people are leaving, what their reasoning is, and we offer exit interviews for families who are leaving to get a better understanding," Ms. Reed said. "Step one is to understand why people are leaving, to analyze data and then to figure out which direction to take from there."

For other Black students like sophomores Courtney McDonald and Asa Brown, race has not played a significant role in their time at Lab.

"I don't feel like I've ever been disadvantaged due to being Black at school," Asa said.

Similarly, Courtney said he is treated the same as everyone else at school.

"I feel like no one really looks at me differently because of my race, even though there aren't as many Black students," he said. "No one picks on the fact that I'm Black as a student."

A Black student who requested to remain anonymous said they "despise" the pity and hyper-attention directed toward matters regarding his Black identity.

"I find it offensive when people assume I experience mistreatment because I'm Black. I don't want pity. I am confident in my identity and who I am," he said. "Especially, white folks who think they're helping sometimes only perpetuate the issue at hand."





Midway photo by Ishani Hariprasad

**CARRYING A TUNE.** Junior Max Mathias warms up in a Bel Canto rehearsal on Nov. 15. Since he began singing in a choir during the sixth grade, Max has found joy in performing and works to spread that happiness with everyone around him.

# Together in harmony

## Max Mathias matures and finds confidence through participating in Bel Canto

By CLARE MCROBERTS

Assistant Editor

Last spring, as students quietly worked through statistics problems in class, song would often emanate from one of the student desks. Sometimes it was Christmas songs, other times Adele. But it was always Max Mathias, who regularly sang for his classmates.

"I'd say I entertained about 50%," Max said, chuckling, "and I'm sure the other 50% wanted to stab me."

Max, a junior, not only sings in math class but also in the car, in the shower, while doing homework and in the U-High choral group, Bel Canto. He said he was once a shy bookworm who was brought out of his shell after joining middle school choir and later Bel Canto.

"It took a while," Max said, "but I would say that music was one of the catalysts in my growth."

In sixth grade, Max chose choir as his required music class. His mother had always enjoyed and encouraged music. His father, he acknowledged, is tone deaf.

Bel Canto, a group of about 25 singers, practices four times a week and performs regularly. The group mostly sings a cappella, though they are occasionally accompanied by piano or another instrument.

By the time high school came around, Max's choir teachers and the Bel Canto directors, Katy Sinclair and Hsing-Huei Huang, persuaded him to join the a cappella group. Ms. Sinclair said that in the six years she has known Max, one quality has stood out to her.

"He loves music," she said. "So, therefore everything that he does is not a chore. It's seeking understanding for something he loves. Max's gift is a beautiful voice and his love of music."

Max also participates in a U-High quar-

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Everything that he does is not a chore. It's seeking understanding for something he loves. Max's gift is a beautiful voice and his love of music.

Katy Sinclair, Bel Canto director

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ter. In all, he said he currently spends about 75 minutes a day on music, in one form or another.

In Bel Canto, he now sings bass parts, but said he has sung almost every part since high school began. Max said his best skill as a singer might be his ability to keep track of his part of a song even at moments when other parts are headed in different directions.

Of the many highlights Max recalls from his time in Bel Canto, the sound of one moment in "O Holy Night," a Christmas song, has stuck with him. He also said the banquets the group holds before some performances were high points.

"That is always a blast," Max said. "You get to see people — everyone's a little anxious — but really wanting to get away from the nerves. So everyone's just ready to have fun and get on stage."

At times, the commitment to Bel Canto has meant sacrifice. Max considered seeking a role as a peer leader but learned that it would be difficult to make the schedules work for both activities.

"Ultimately," Max said, "I decided to stay with Bel Canto because I enjoyed it more and I thought I could have more of an impact there."

Max plans to join an a cappella group in college to continue to pursue his passion. And brighten classrooms, spreading his joy of music wherever he goes.

# Fictionalizing true crime profits off of victim's trauma

By WILLIAM TAN

Editor-in-Chief

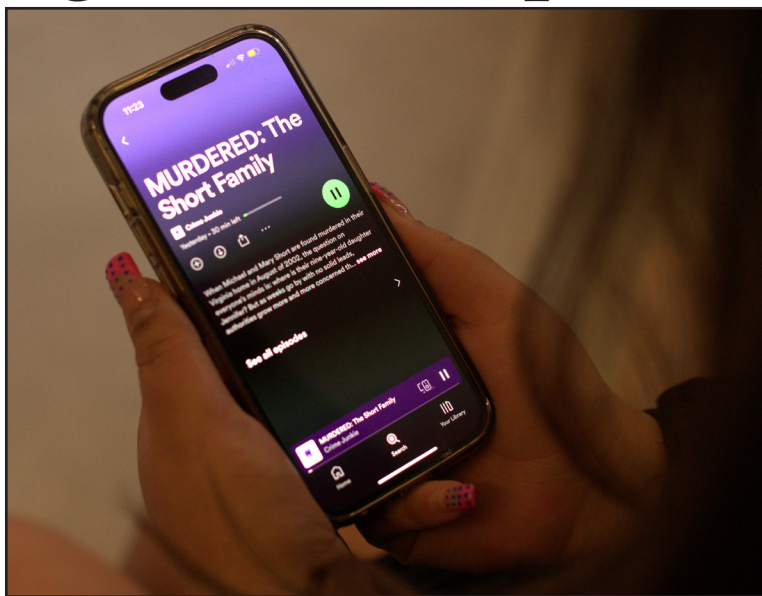
Bodies lie facedown in a pooling sea of red, surrounded by yellow tape. Gunshots and cackling laughter are silenced by the arrival of flashing red and blue lights.

Revealing the stories behind serial killers, mass murderers, untimely deaths and unsolved mysteries, the true-crime genre is in greater demand than ever. Notably, the release of true-crime season "Dahmer - Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story" on Netflix attracted significant viewership and garnered both positive and negative attention for actor Evan Peters's scarily accurate portrayal of serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer.

Gory and gruesome yet entertaining in a twisted kind of way, "Dahmer" snagged a nomination for the People's Choice Award for Favorite Bingeworthy Show. While the psychological thriller has enraptured audiences, it has faced equal criticism for its over-dramatization and glorification of human nature's darkest depths.

Series like "Dahmer," "Conversations with a Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes," "Mindhunter," "Tiger King" and many others have succeeded because of riveting narratives, but the sensationalization of the true crime genre is an exploitation of trauma with serious emotional and potentially dangerous costs.

Amanda Keeler, associate professor of digital media and per-



Midway photo by Sarah Abdelsalam

**MORBID MEDIA.** True crime media has become increasingly popular, prompting some to advocate against consuming it due to its harmful effects.

forming arts at Marquette University, believes the root of the true crime phenomenon lies in the human desire to glimpse into the mind of someone so far removed from ourselves.

"I know my students are really interested in the understanding of the psychology of what makes someone murder or do horrific acts," she said in an interview with the Midway, "and so there's definitely lots of different reasons why people watch those shows, but they're hugely popular because of that."

Still, Dr. Keeler bluntly reminded viewers that they are reveling and entertaining the most appalling of human characteristics.

"Hey, we're deriving pleasure from the darkest moments of people's lives," she said. "I do think it's important to remember that we are perhaps making light of these heavy crimes by fictionalizing them or sensationalizing them."

This effect isn't something to take lightly. Dr. Keeler referenced, "a bit of a correlation between people who watch a lot of, say, crime shows or even, like, the news, and

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I do think it's important to remember that we are perhaps making light of these heavy crimes by fictionalizing them or sensationalizing them.

Amanda Keeler,  
Marquette University

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their perceptions of how much violent crime exists in the world."

Big studios and media networks are facilitating this double-edged pleasure by copy-pasting series after series detailing the life stories, crimes and punishments of some of the worst human beings in history into frighteningly captivating plotlines.

Even worse, each of these instances obsesses primarily about the criminal as a main character. Rarely are the victims or their families offered recognition or sensitivity for the trauma induced by the actions of the criminals; instead, studios make millions of dollars spreading this trauma to millions of screens.

Dr. Keeler said, "There's definitely been some writing lately on how families [of the victims] are affected by these shows, definitely having to relive the trauma that they've been through over and over."

While there are definitely monetary and popularity-based incen-

tives motivating the studios' to engage in this form of skewed focus, the sensationalism of criminals and their inflicted trauma hurts all those who find connection to these stories. Possibly more affected than the families of these series are the actors themselves.

Mr. Peters, a veteran of taking roles in true-crime series such as "American Horror Story," remarked in an interview with Netflix's Tudum that he was wary of assuming the role of Dahmer due to the amount of time and headspace it would require while staying in character.

Though he received therapy following the role, Peters practiced, for months, the exact dialect and lexicon of Dahmer, the gait of Dahmer, the mannerisms of Dahmer — he essentially embodied Dahmer.

It's not hard to see that fully emulating the exact personality of such a serial killer and cannibal could take a mental and physical toll on the actor.

True crime has come to remain as a genre of choice for our generation, simultaneously impressing and horrifying audiences with the harsh realities of human behavior and the depths of madness to which individuals can descend.

Audiences must be cognizant when consuming this form of media, knowing that certain stories are being shared — or not being shared — in ways that can be potentially harmful.



# Students sew for self-expression

By CLARE O'CONNOR  
Editor-in-Chief

The foot of a sewing machine is dropped onto fabric with a soft thud. After a second of silence, noise fills the air. The metronomic sound of a needle jolting up and down punches through the machine's loud whir. The noise blends together as steady hands press the fabric forward, joining two pieces together. Among this cacophony of sound, some students have found an outlet.

Marcella Carter has been sewing for years, inspired by her parents who worked in garment construction. She learned to sew in her parents' warehouse, full of sewing machines and fabric.

"I got my first sewing machine in second grade, but even before that, I would make little clothes for my Barbie dolls with just a needle and thread," said Marcella, a junior. "I've just always been drawn to it."

Today, Marcella makes complicated pieces, full of sharp lines and volume. Her ideas are realized through her technical sewing skill, allowing Marcella to make painted corsets, cage skirts, tailored dresses and anything else she can imagine.

Other students discovered garment construction more recently. Senior Martin Oliver started in 2020, right before school went to distance learning, and sophomore Sinéad Nagubadi started in March 2021 for the spring musical. Both Martin and Sinéad discovered their passion by making costumes for school performances, which inspired them to start making their own clothes.

"There's something really valuable about making your own clothes. You start being open to a lot of possibilities," Sinéad said. "I started seeing clothes and saying, 'Oh I can make this myself,' so I wouldn't buy it. I get to challenge myself and have something wearable to show for it."

Martin echoed Sinéad's sentiment, adding that learning to make clothes has allowed him to challenge his consumption habits.

"Overall, sewing is just an important life skill, and it's fun to experiment," Martin said. "It's also really great that I don't feel the need to go out and buy a ton of



stuff. I can use materials I find second hand instead of buying something that might be unethical or cheaply made."

Understanding how to make and alter clothing also allows Martin to feel more confident in his outward presentation. Martin has dyed fabric, learned to sew ruffles and searched for unique fabrics, all to create one-of-a-kind garments that give him a sense of ownership and confidence.

"It allows me to make pieces that are tailored to what I specifically like," Martin said. "I can make combinations of different pieces, I don't have to settle for someone else's idea, and I can make stuff that fits me in a way that makes me feel more comfortable than a piece I buy at a store."

For all three students, the process starts with translating an idea into a pattern, a template drawn on paper outlining the shape of each piece of fabric needed.

"I either make my own pattern or find one online," Marcella said. "I like making my own patterns. I can take some measurements

and use that to make a pattern, or I base a pattern off of a piece of clothing I already have, adjusting it where I want to."

Sinéad explained that after getting a pattern, the process can be more simple than people think.

"I really hope people start to realize how easy it is to make your own clothes or even just to upcycle clothes you think are boring," Sinéad said. "I feel like there's this block of 'Oh, I have to learn to sew and use a machine' but really, once you get past the basics, it's really easy and fun."

Sinéad has been sewing for less than a year, and while she has more to learn, Sinéad already knows that she wants to keep sewing throughout her life. Garment construction has become a deep passion for Sinéad, a way to channel her creativity into a physical expression of her individuality.

"It's really important to me," Sinéad said. "For a long time, I was worried that I wouldn't find something unique to me, like a specific passion, but then I started sewing."

**DEDICATED DESIGNER.** In a homemade outfit, Martin Oliver sews his own clothes. Martin acquired the material for the striped shirt from working on costume design and said the garment is one of his favorite pieces he has made recently. The purple velvet featured in his vest was made by cutting up a robe he got at a flea market. Martin said that making his own clothes has helped him grow confidence.

Midway photo by Patrice Graham

**MER-MADE DRESS.** Having had a passion for sewing for years, junior Marcella Carter uses a self-timer to model her own clothing. After drawing three patterns outlining the corset top, pencil skirt and tulle circle skirt with an embroidered overlay, Marcella sewed this dress out of cotton jersey. She also used one-fourth-inch boning, grommets and ribbon to construct the corset.

Photo by Marcella Carter



## Au Revoir! Exchange students enjoy month in Chicago

For first time since the pandemic, French students visit Hyde Park

By MIA LIPSON  
Assistant Editor

Each school day during fourth period, Miyana Badiane walked into the sleek, airy walls of a classroom in Gordon Parks Arts Hall, the room flooded with light. She stepped into the new class, Sew-Called Creations, joining junior Stella Sturgill and becoming engrossed in a sea of stitches and textiles. The class vastly differed from her roster of typical core classes that extended throughout the lengthy school day.

Miyana is one of the French exchange students who joined their host families in Chicago in October and were able to experience a new culture, one that vastly contrasted both their expectations and lives in La Rochelle.

"I found the class really enjoyable and nice," Miyana said. "I liked the fact that we were mixed with other grades. In France, we stay with one group most of the



Midway photo by Kaden Moubayed

**ALL SMILES.** French exchange student Sarah Chaillé Chaillé grins as she chats in class with junior Max Mathias during her stay in Chicago.

time, but here, I think it's really great to be able to interact with all of these people."

Five French exchange students experienced the life of a U-High student from Oct. 15-Nov. 12 as a part of the Eliade Scholarship Program, immersing themselves in a new lifestyle in Chicago. Following the program's shutdown in 2020 due to COVID-19, these students were able to experience a different environment, explore cultural diversity and build relationships with students from across

the world — elements of the program that had been lost over the past two years.

In late 2019, before stay-at-home orders went into effect across the United States in March 2020, French exchange students attended the first half of the program. Then, merely days before U-High's two selected students were supposed to leave for France, they had to call off the trip.

"I was working with the administration and we had so many questions. What should we do?

Can we send them? What about the borders? There was so much unknown," said French teacher Catherine Collet-Jarard, who has run the program for over 20 years. "Now we hope that, you know, history doesn't repeat itself when our students go to France."

In March, with school activities back in full swing, U-High will send three students to La Rochelle — one more than is usually permitted since the program retained the unused funds from the previous canceled trips. Ms. Collet-Jarard was delighted to offer one more position this year, allowing more students to experience the essential cross-cultural connections and lifelong relationships between families the Eliade Scholarship Program provides. The two remaining U-High students will visit France over the summer on a trip that is not funded by the school.

Host student Clara Cui enjoyed the experience of meeting students from a completely different background.

"It was a lot of fun learning the similarities and differences between life in Chicago and life in La Rochelle," Clara said. "It was also interesting to see how the students viewed Chicago for the first

time, as I have lived in Chicago almost all my life so I don't notice many of the unique characteristics."

Exchange student Tiana Burgaud spent her free time exploring the city with friends, bemused by the skyscrapers and seemingly ubiquitous Starbucks locations. At Lab, she was captivated by the Gothic architecture of the historic campus, with its ivy-covered exterior and hints of maroon.

In the class she enjoyed the most, French, she conversed with some of the students, inspired by their curiosity and dedication to learn the language she speaks at home.

"I was surprised by the kindness of the students. Many came to talk to us, and I really enjoyed it," Tiana said. "There was a good atmosphere in my classes that I will miss."

On Nov. 11, the five exchange students spent their last day at U-High, saying goodbye to their peers, and leaving the classrooms for the final time.

With the return of the program, this experience has proven to be invaluable for the host and exchange students, a reminder of the cultural immersion and delight this trip provides.



# MADE WITH CARE

Barista, cashier provides cheer, daily comfort through genuine conversation

By PETER COX  
City Life Editor

Before school starts, and during the first few periods, people filter in and out of a small café with fogged glass windows just off the Judd lobby. Inside, a woman stands behind a counter making coffee drinks and handing out baked goods from the display case.

She already knows the name and order of almost everyone who walks in. As she quickly prepares orders, Ariel Williams is also holding a stream of conversation with each customer: asking them how their day has been, how classes are going, if they're tired.

Ms. Williams is a constant bright spot in the often stressful lives of U-High students, providing an energizing drink and some kind words when they're most needed.

Ms. Williams has worked for food service vendor Quest Food at Lab since November 2019 and started working in the coffee shop in January 2020. She transferred from a Quest location downtown after it closed and moved to Lab so she could work closer to her home in Hyde Park.

"I live right here, like literally a block away," Ms. Williams said. "When the track team is running, they're running past my apartment."

Ms. Williams, who goes by Ms. Ariel to students, opens the coffee shop every school day at 7:30 a.m. and stays until 11:30, when the shop



Midway photo by Matt Petres

**STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART.** Ariel Williams laughs as she converses with a customer. Ms. Williams keeps conversation flowing as she prepares drinks and hands out baked goods. Talking to her in the coffee shop has become a highlight of many people's days.

closes for lunch. The shop reopens at 1:30 p.m., and though Ms. Williams' shift ends at 2:30, the shop stays open until 3:45.

For students who get coffee from her every morning, talking to Ms. Williams becomes a simple pick-me-up. Senior Michael Ewing is one such student.

"Since we see each other literally at the beginning of every day, and usually at the end sometimes, we always check in on each other, ask how we're doing," Michael said. "Even when there's a lot of people, she always makes sure to wave to me whenever I walk in or whenever I'm leaving."

Last May, the Class of 2024 recognized Ms. Williams as an Unsung Hero for her contributions to the Lab community. The award, determined via student nomination, is given to someone at the

"I don't want people to just act like I'm just like a number or some money. I'm not just money walking around. I'm a whole person, so I want to treat people like that, too."

Ariel Williams,  
café employee

school whose positive influence has gone unnoticed.

"I wasn't expecting it, I wasn't," Ms. Williams said. "I was very honored and shocked. And I cried, I cried the whole ceremony."

When asked about people's appreciation of her, Ms. Williams laughs it off lightly.

"I don't know how I feel about it because it's really sweet," Ms. Williams said. "It means a lot to me because I just want everybody to be happy and especially here, it's like really stressful. It's stressful for the teachers. It's stressful for y'all, the students."

She wants to do what she can to help people in the Lab community deal with the stress she sees that they're experiencing.

"I just want the coffee shop to be like a safe space," she said. "I want everybody to be like, 'Oh, I'm gonna come here. I'm gonna get my drink and I'm gonna be OK for the 10 minutes I'm here in line.'"

Sophomore Sinead Nagubadi can attest that Ms. Williams has succeeded in this goal.

"She's just the sweetest person," Sinead said. "She always makes my day. She always has a really nice

conversation with me."

Besides talking to people, Ms. Williams also tries to bring additional food into the café. She recently got marshmallow and peppermint syrup so that she could make seasonal winter drinks for students. It might seem like a small thing, but she personally advocated for something to make students' days just a bit better.

It would be easier for Ms. Williams to just do her job without putting in any extra effort. But that just isn't the way that she sees the world.

"I like to treat people how I want to be treated," Ms. Williams said. "And I don't want people to just act like I'm just like a number or some money. I'm not just money walking around. I'm a whole person, so I want to treat people like that, too."

## In nationwide trek, alumni find kindness

By CLARE MCROBERTS  
Assistant Editor

A blanket of snow covers the New Mexico landscape, and 10 long hours of walking lie ahead in biting cold air. As hours pass, the snow becomes gooey mud. A wheel breaks off a stroller, which is carrying all the camping gear. There's no one to call for help; it's a cellphone dead zone.

This is what a walk across the United States can look like on its bleakest days.

James Dill and Sam Rezaei, 2018 U-High graduates, expect to finish a five-and-a-half month walk from New York to Los Angeles in early December. They've suffered blisters, grappled with crushing heat and bitter cold, and made their way next to sometimes-dangerous highway traffic.

But along the way, they say, they've also found something they didn't expect: boundless kindness and generosity from strangers.

"Throughout the whole trip, we've had people just give us food or water out of their car without even asking what we're doing, just expressing concern for our well being," James said. "Someone threw me a pair of jeans out of their truck — they threw it right in front of me on the interstate."

Sam and James, who became friends at Lab in ninth grade and



Photo provided by James Dill

**BITTERLY COLD.** James Dill and Sam Rezaei sleep in tents throughout their journey, braving harsh conditions both day and night.

stayed close after they left for college (Sam to Northwestern and James to Oberlin), embarked on their trip after Sam came up with the plan late one January night.

"I had this idea, and then I actually went out and did it," Sam said. "It was something that I thought was really cool" — a rare part of life that didn't involve the support of an institution or a program, he noted.

The two began their expedition on June 17, stepping off the Co-

ney Island Boardwalk in Brooklyn. They've walked more than 2,000 miles, about 25 miles a day. They sleep mainly in tents and often walk along interstate highways. Their hope is to finish their adventure on the pier at Santa Monica, California, in the next few days.

A couple of months into their trip, the pair began to consider gathering donations for a cause. After research, they landed on raising money for an organization based in Chicago that helps people

experiencing homelessness, Night Ministry.

James and Sam were inspired, in part, by people they met in the first weeks of their walk.

"We had a couple interactions early on, particularly one in Pennsylvania at this gas station, with a clerk who was previously homeless," Sam said, "and we just found their stories and their experiences really touching."

They have sent dispatches from their journey on Instagram, using the account @theamericantrail. It includes their GoFundMe on behalf of Night Ministry.

One of their most memorable experiences occurred early in the trip, on July 4. They were walking along when a car drove up. The motorist, a man named Ed, offered the pair Gatorade and candy bars. They shared their story with him, and Ed recalled how he had once hiked the Appalachian Trail. He invited them to his son's home, not far away. By the time they arrived, pizzas, fireworks and beer were waiting.

"I'm never going to forget about that," Sam said. "When you're down in the dumps after a long day, it's crazy what just a nice conversation can do for you."

Still, the kindness of strangers couldn't spare them from the more grueling aspects of their trip.

"When you're down in the dumps after a long day, it's crazy what just a nice conversation can do for you."

Sam Rezaei,  
2018 alumnus

At times, their feet ached, and at one point, in Columbus, Ohio, blisters from the boots Sam had been wearing grew miserable.

"It looked like my feet were through a meat grinder," he said.

At another point, in the summer heat of the Midwest, Sam began experiencing daily migraines. And carrying their gear was a challenge: They went from using backpacks to Walmart shopping carts to strollers.

Through good and the bad, the simplicity of walking brought the pair new clarity about life, they said.

Before the journey, "I felt like I always needed something that I could look forward to at the end of the day — otherwise, it was going to be a crappy day," Sam said. "But I think I've kind of shed that necessity on this trip because each day is so simple."



# Is it really the most wonderful time of year?

*It's the season of holidays, celebrations and gatherings. Almost everyone has something to celebrate, brightening the colder months. While many holidays are celebrated this month, certain traditions seem to overshadow the rest. So consider testing your skills on the ice rink to munching on tasty treats or finding something new to engage in — you won't regret it.*



Midway illustration by Dalin Dohrn

## Manage family differences, emotions during holidays

by ERICH RAUMANN  
Deputy Managing Editor

Families, friends and older siblings come together for the holiday season for a time of warmth and togetherness, but differences can also arise about anything from politics to household rules. U-High counselor Aria Choi gives advice and solutions to some of the most common issues which arise from family gatherings.

**How should students address differences in household culture of hosts, especially if they don't feel comfortable conforming to it?**

If you have a strong preference, I think from a guest's perspective, it's totally OK to ask the host what they feel comfortable with things like, say, wearing shoes or not wearing shoes. If you are the host, it's best to just gently tell folks, you can put your shoes here. If you are a guest hopefully you feel comfortable asking questions about appropriate behavior while you're being hosted. Hosts, just remember to remind folks how to be or how not to be in your space.

**If a student doesn't want**

**to discuss politics but another attendee might, what's the best way to resolve the conversation?**

Folks should feel OK stepping away from conversations. If they genuinely do not want to engage in a conversation around politics, then just communicate to the other person that they'd rather keep the conversation lighter, or want to focus on something other than politics, and then broach whatever topic they would want to discuss.

**If people have differences in political views and want to discuss them, how can people ensure that the conversation stays constructive?**

If they want to engage in a conversation about politics or something similar that they do feel really passionate about, I would say approach the conversation to seek understanding and not a victory. By victory, I mean there's a winner and a loser, right and wrong, or good and bad. If you approach conversations to seek understanding, hopefully it naturally reshapes your statements to be ques-

Stick to responding to the idea, and avoid making judgments on the people. That's one way to really help manage feelings, because they can get really strong.

**How would you advise students to deal with tension sometimes caused by new-found differences with older siblings returning for college for the holidays?**

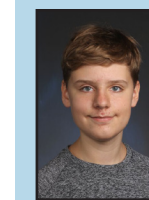
As humans, change is uncomfortable — they can be scary. I think it's to be expected to have a reaction or deeper strong feelings about someone you thought you knew who has changed. That can feel disruptive and scary and confusing at times. When people don't recognize their sibling in some way, it becomes harder to trust and understand them the way they did before. Connections are made, and remade, when people feel understood, so be shocked or scared, have your feelings. You just have to seek understanding. Similarly, if someone is having those feelings towards you, it's the same thing: seek understanding.

## vox pop.

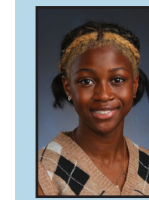
What's your favorite memory of celebrating Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa or New Year's, and what are you looking forward to celebrating this year? Compiled by Jaya Alenghat and Haley Mahary



**HANUKKAH:** Lauren Tapper, senior  
"My favorite memory of celebrating Hanukkah is definitely seeing my family, it's really special, lighting the menorah together, and I'm looking forward to eating latkes this Hanukkah."



**CHRISTMAS:** Max Gurinas, sophomore  
"We used to decorate the Christmas tree together as a family every year. We would go to the store and pick out this Christmas tree. We'd all just hang out, picking out the Christmas tree and just decorating it, and that was really fun. We are going to be traveling for the first time this Christmas, so that is going to be interesting but different."



**KWANZAA:** Olivia Adams, sophomore  
"When I was younger, my mom and I would get invited to, like, her friend's family Kwanzaa celebration. And I think that was kind of my favorite memory because I got to hang out with a lot of family friends and it was just, like, a really nice community and we just had a really nice celebration. I'm looking forward to celebrating it this year because it's something that my mom likes to celebrate, and it's kind of become a part of what I celebrate, too."



**NEW YEAR'S:** Valeria Godina, junior  
"One memory I have from New Year's was trying to frantically find a channel or any online website that would provide the countdown in Chicago time while also being in the Spanish language. We saw that it was about time for it to be the new year and we were in a rush to get the countdown going because this was our first year doing the traditional eating the 12 grapes to bring luck. Once we found a countdown, there were only a few seconds left and we unfortunately were unable to finish our grapes before the countdown hit zero. However, I remember how funny it was to see the entire family be in a frenzy to get a televised countdown going."

# Christmas season keeps creeping closer

by KRISHITA DUTTA  
Opinion Editor

On the morning of Nov. 1, Chicago receives a drastic makeover, swapping the pumpkin and skeleton decorations to fill the streets with Christmas embellishments. Walk into Target or Macy's for the next two months and you'll find red and green ornaments dangling in every aisle and Santa hats everywhere. However, is immersing everybody in two months of Christmas too much?

While students treasure holiday spirit, many are confused by why Christmas serves as the focal point for this winter joy. They believe the season's upbeat air can be achieved without giving an overshadowing importance to a religious holiday that either excludes many people or coerces its celebration.

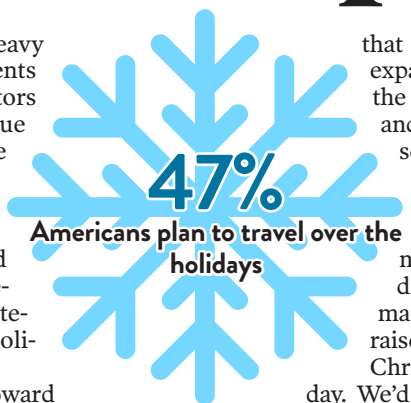
Christmas is a sacred religious holiday for Christians that celebrates the birth of Jesus. However, its prominence has made the occasion intertwined in winter festivities worldwide and

makes it impossible to miss due to its heavy presence in the commercial world. Students feel that some non-Christmas celebrators or non-Christians are uncomfortable due to the strong correlation people have made between winter holiday spirit and Christmas.

A survey conducted in 2013 by Pew Research asked people what they liked least about the holidays, and the top response was the commercialism and materialism of Christmas throughout the holidays, which was 33% of the answers.

Furthermore, the discomfort toward Christmas's heavy dominance over the holidays has increased significantly, as seen in a 2015 Pew Research study that found roughly 30% of those surveyed saying Christmas displays should only be allowed if they are accompanied by other religious symbols, like a menorah for Hanukkah.

Junior Sophia Shahul found



win- and snow- man decorations, or by going ice skating as a family," Sophia said. "But it was impossible to get through the season without people trying to immerse me in more Christmas-y traditions, like teachers pretending to be Santa or being told Christianity-based Christmas tales that I then believed were true."

According to Sophia, this trend doesn't

that Christmas had expanded beyond the stores or malls and into her schooling as a child.

"I remember as a kid, my parents didn't think it made sense to raise me with a Christian holiday. We'd still celebrate

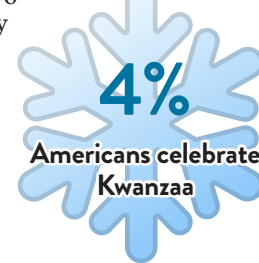
ter holidays with snowflake decorations, or by going ice skating as a family," Sophia said. "But it was impossible to get through the season without people trying to immerse me in more Christmas-y traditions, like teachers pretending to be Santa or being told Christianity-based Christmas tales that I then believed were true."

make sense, and she feels uncomfortable that a celebration from a religion different from her own had been made the foundation of winter celebrations ever since she was a little girl. She believes that celebrating the holidays should not entail a Christmas celebration as a requirement.

Senior Ben King also believes that the power and long duration of Christmas celebrations during the holiday season can be too much and take away from the authenticity and warmth around the celebration.

"I love Christmas so much. It just brings my family together. But I agree that it goes on for so much longer than it needs to, or starts too early," Ben said. "It spreads the celebration too thin and makes December 25th less special, because everyone's already been talking about it for, like, two months. I also just find the way that stores advertise Christmas to seem so unauthentic."

Other students believe the overpowering presence of



Christmas during the season overshadows other cultural and religious holidays.

Senior Lauren Tapper loves winter holiday spirit because it brings light during cold and darker times, but she believes that Christmas's heavy presence distracts from her and her Jewish peers' celebration of Hanukkah.

"I don't think that Christmas should be the defining holiday for the winter," Lauren said. "I think the United States has so much diverse cultures within it that celebrate so many different holidays and events during the season, and it would benefit our country to celebrate all of these holidays and have them come to the forefront rather than be overshadowed by Christmas."

But how should the holidays be celebrated without making the Christmas spirit

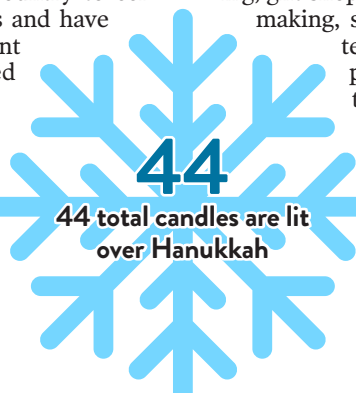


a necessity for everyone? According to junior Hannah Shubin, winter holiday spirit doesn't need to entail Christmas at

all.

"I think I feel more comfortable hearing 'Happy holidays' rather than 'Merry Christmas,'" Hannah said. "It would be so ideal and easy to celebrate the holidays without having to hear about Christmas. There's enough traditions like hot chocolate, skating, gift shopping, snow-angel making, snow fights, winter wonderland parks, et cetera, that I think eradicate the need for Christmas emblems to be everywhere altogether."

Senior Maile Nacu agrees with Hannah.



"I mean, I get how Christmas can make some people uncomfortable. I feel like it's too assumed that everybody celebrates it, even if they are not Christian, which shouldn't be the case now that I think about it," Maile said. "I think we could celebrate the holidays without Christmas by just doing winter-y things and that would be enough."

Winter weather can be rough, and it's wonderful to celebrate and engage in activities with family and friends to embrace the holidays. To make sure everyone is able to do this comfortably, though, means not assuming Christmas is on everybody's winter holiday tradition list or excluding other cultures and traditions.

Additional writing contributed by Amy Ren.



Statistics compiled by Ethan Swinger and Téa Tamburo.

## Light up the season with city's holiday activities

Take in the holiday spirit with a variety of locations and activities throughout the city. From holiday lights to extravagant drinks, there's something for everyone to engage in seasonal festivities.

### food & drink



Midway photo by Téa Tamburo

### Cookie baking

It's not the holiday season without delicious sweets! Fill your home with the scent of home-baked treats and listen to some of your favorite music while doing so. Gingerbread and shortbread are classics, or give Taylor Swift's trending chai cookie recipe a try.

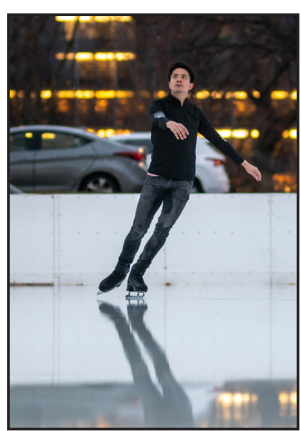
### Starbucks holiday menu

The holiday menu provides a festive spin on quintessential winter items with drinks such as toasted white chocolate and peppermint mocha, and treats like snowmen cookies to indulge in the holiday spirit. Drinks will be served in Starbucks' disposable holiday cups to add to the festivity.

### Making your own hot chocolate

While cafes have extensive holiday drink menus, you can make your own holiday hot chocolate beverage at home. Ghirardelli, Godiva and other companies sell hot chocolate mix in different flavors, and it's typically more affordable to make yourself, especially if you're a frequent hot chocolate consumer. Just imagine curling up in your home with a holiday movie and your hot chocolate as the fireplace blazes in the background.

### activities



Midway photo by Patrice Graham

### Ice skating

What better way to spend the holiday season than testing your ice-skating abilities? Try the Midway Plaisance ice rink or Maggie Daley Park's skating ribbon for a seasonal outdoor activity. Online registration is required for both locations. Open skating is free, but there's a fee to rent skates if you don't have your own.

### Gingerbread house decorating

Get crafty this season with gingerbread house decorating. Using pre-made decorating kits or homemade gingerbread, whip out some icing and gumdrops for a holiday activity that turns tasty afterward. As a bonus, the gingerbread house will fill your home with cinnamon and nutmeg scents, and it's also a great excuse to eat more candy.

### BomboBar

Stop by the BomboBar in the West Loop to try hot chocolate with toasted marshmallows and bomboloni doughnuts. Bomboloni flavors rotate seasonally, and the current selection offers white chocolate malt, s'mores and more. Offering delivery and pickup, their sweets will get to you even in a snowstorm.

### places



Michael Barera, CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons

### Millennium Park Christmas tree

This year, Millennium Park's Christmas tree is 55 feet tall and is considered Chicago's official Christmas tree. Viewable from the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Washington Street, you don't even need to enter the park to see it. This is Chicago's 109th annual tree, and it will be up until Jan. 8.

### ZooLights

With one of the largest holiday lights displays in the city, Lincoln Park Zoo's ZooLights features various light displays, holiday snacks and live ice carving. For more activities to enjoy, ticketed attractions include an animal-themed Ferris wheel, light maze, s'mores and more. Tickets are required. Mondays are free and other days cost \$5.

### Navy Pier's "Light Up the Lake"

Bringing the winter festivities inside, Light Up the Lake features multiple attractions and interactive light displays. A skating rink, reflection pond, light show with 600,000 bulbs and more are all inside Navy Pier's festival. Tickets must be booked online in advance and include a ride in the Ferris wheel.



# Diversity doesn't reflect neighborhood

It's a familiar cycle. Racist incident. Public outcry. Email from the administration. Forums with affinity groups. In-class discussions. Assemblies. A few weeks later, people stop talking about it.

Our school has a poisonous and exhausting problem. In the short term, there always seems to be a significant effort put into fixing it. However, this work goes in vain as the cycle inevitably repeats. As a result, we now know, a disproportionate number of Black students are leaving the school. We all must do more to transform our school environment into something more welcoming.

**as the  
midway  
sees it.**

To truly ensure Black students feel supported and valued at school, both the administration and student body need to take active steps to promote anti-racism and greater diversity.

Every incident is nuanced, and there is always complicated context. However, we ask — again — that at the very least, the administration condemn the racist behavior that has become a pattern. To truly send an authentic message that our community values Black students, the leaders in our community need to embody that message through bold words and actions. Students, we also must be intentional about our behaviors, understand the context of problematic behaviors and hold each other accountable.

This month, the Midway re-

ported that former Black Lab students cited feeling unable to express their authentic selves as one reason they decided to leave the school. This is unacceptable. We could combat this feeling of isolation by putting in the work to make our school actually reflect Chicago and its Black communities, setting an expectation of diversity.

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning reports that in two neighborhoods adjacent to

Lab, Hyde Park and Kenwood, African Americans make up 24% and 66% of the population respectively. Although 45% of Lab's student body is from Hyde Park and Kenwood,

only 9% of total students are Black. This disproportionate ethnic breakdown of local children enrolled is cause for concern. Although the university services many local children through its charter schools which are made up of over 95% of Black students, Lab must increase the effort to more accurately represent the neighborhoods around us.

Additionally, Lab reports that 55% of students are affiliated with University of Chicago faculty. This leads to further inequity as only 9.7% of employees at UChicago are Black. This data reveals systemic issues with diversity in Lab admissions that needs to be actively counteracted.

To further balance representation at Lab, the school must make an effort to recruit, hire and retain



Midway illustration by Eliza Dearing

more Black teachers.

Teachers of all backgrounds should facilitate welcoming and safe classroom spaces, and many do. However, with a homogeneous population of teachers, perspectives may go overlooked or misunderstood in class. Conversations about race and identity are hard, especially when the vast majority of them are guided by teachers who do not share your identity. With a more diverse faculty,

classroom settings may become more multi-perspective, understanding and generally more welcoming for Black students. Finally, the school must actively empower and welcome Black students and prospective families. By promoting student identity groups like the Black Students' Association through assembly exposure, sponsored events and increased budgets, the administration can help students feel more heard by the

school and their peers. Additionally, admissions events like "Black at Lab," hosted to show prospective families the Black experience at Lab, are great ways to foster relationships with Black families and should be expanded.

Through these changes, it could be possible to break this seemingly never-ending cycle. Hopefully one day soon, our school can genuinely embody the mission we so proudly display.

## New income tax bill must pass to address growing wealth gap

by **AINSLEY WILLIAMS**

Reporter

During the pandemic, unemployment skyrocketed with nearly 25 million jobs lost, leaving people in lower economic classes with less disposable income. Meanwhile, people in the top 1%, like Tesla CEO Elon Musk, only got richer. Mr. Musk reportedly saw his wealth grow by nearly \$118 billion in 2021 alone, meaning almost \$300 million a day, making him the world's wealthiest individual.

The median income of the global top 10% was almost 38 times higher than that of the bottom 50% in 2020, compared to 53 times

higher in 1980. Yet, the current level is comparable to the income gap in 1910, when the median income of the global top 10% was 41 times higher.

In March, President Joe Biden proposed the Billionaire Minimum Income Tax that would require households worth over \$100 million, the top 0.01%, to pay at least 20% on all income. The Biden administration

said this tax would raise around \$360 million over the next decade.

The BMIT must be passed for it is essential to ensure the top 1% richest Americans pay their fair share of taxes and to help dissolve the wealth gap.

So far, the efforts to bridge the wealth gap between rich and poor have been to create more jobs, and provide equal access to education, but these are only temporary solutions to the larger problem.

Even with their wealth expanding, a ProPublica investigation showed that billionaires paid little taxes in that period. This investigation showed that Mr. Musk only

paid \$65,000 in taxes in 2017, and none in 2018, paying an average 3% tax rate. In comparison, the average American household paid 14% of income in taxes in this time period. While the majority of Americans earn their salaries through work, the ultra-wealthy may receive income from stocks, interest and capital gains, which is not as heavily taxed. Mr. Musk is not the only billionaire to dodge paying their fair share of taxes. Another ProPublica investigation showed that Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos paid no taxes in both 2007 and 2011. Billionaire Warren Buffett, an advocate for fairer taxing, reportedly

paid a tax rate of 0.1%.

While the 1% were planning to buy social media platforms and building rocket ships, over 100 million people descended into poverty.

The real-world impact is that tax avoidance leaves non-billionaires funding the nation's schools, military and infrastructure — all things that the 1% benefit from but pay few taxes to support.

With the implementation of BMIT, the top 1% will finally be paying their fair cut of taxes, thus closing the wealth gap and expanding opportunities for the average American household.



Ainsley Williams

## Implementation of supervised injection sites in Chicago would save lives

by **MIA LIPSON**

Assistant Editor

In August, California Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed a bill that would have allowed Los Angeles, Oakland and San Francisco to open supervised drug injection sites. The pilot program would have provided people with a safe, supervised, hygienic environment for people dealing with drug addictions to partake in illegal drugs.

Although controversial, supervised injection sites hold promise to save lives, provide necessary medical treatment and reduce addiction rates. In light of the massive public health crisis, they represent a progressive way to intervene and deserve to be im-

plemented in Chicago as a step to combat the deaths caused by overdose.

Critics of supervised injection sites argue they promote illegal drug use. However, the absence of these sites does not diminish the number of people using such substances. Providing a sterile, supervised space for users will reduce the risk of death by overdose and disease caused by shared needles.

How these sites impact the rate

of addiction or promote overall drug use remains to be seen. However, while these aspects merit further study, they are secondary outcomes. The primary impact of these sites is to save lives, a task they have already begun to accomplish.

Similar harm reduction strategies have existed across the country for many years. Needle exchange sites provide sterile supplies, safe disposal of previously used sharps and assistance in administering tests to look for contaminants such as fentanyl.

The Department of Health began a pilot program for these sites in 1989, as the AIDS crisis progressed and one in two drug us-

ers in New York City were testing HIV-positive. While originally unprecedented and controversial, these needle exchanges have proven invaluable, and they have contributed to reducing the spread of diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis B and C.

Yet while the contribution of needle exchanges is immense, their impact is still somewhat limited, as they provide immediate assistance in the event of overdose. On the other hand, supervised injection sites provide more direct care to individuals. While syringe exchange programs can provide overdose reduction materials, having a trained individual present to administer such medicine is

a more reliable strategy to reduce the risk of fatalities.

Members of the Institute for Clinical and Economic Review, the ICER, concluded that in addition to saving lives by preventing overdoses, supervised injection sites are also more cost-effective than syringe exchange sites.

As deaths continue to rise, measures to combat the opioid crisis have proven to be necessary. These sites deserve to be tested in a limited, trial program to view their efficacy.

The need for action is prevalent, yet the delay to implement these sites presents a symbol of American inertia, one that will continue to cause more lives lost.



Mia Lipson

### u-high midway

Published during the school year by journalism and photojournalism students of University High School, University of Chicago Laboratory Schools.

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Journalism students,  
University High School  
Printed by Grace Printing,  
Chicago, Illinois

[uhighmidway.com](http://uhighmidway.com)

### 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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# The ABCs of CBD

Though growing in popularity, research shows that the drug has few known effects

By **AMY REN**  
 Assistant Editor

When she was in middle school, Haley Sturgill recalled that she was “immersed” in CBD products. With her friends and families, she said she would get drinks or lip balm with CBD.

“I remember when we were really young, like sixth grade, we thought it was really funny, and this one time some girl drank some CBD drink and pretended to be high, which is a misconception, because THC is the thing that alters your mind, not CBD.”

THC, an abbreviation for tetrahydrocannabinol, is the main psychoactive component of marijuana, which comes from the cannabis plant. It alters brain function and can affect mood, appetite and sensory perception, along with impairing judgment, coordination and reaction time, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. CBD, or cannabidiol, is another substance present in cannabis, but it does not have the same effects as THC.

Even though most products containing CBD do not have government approval, and there is little scientific evidence clearly establishing the benefits of their use, the popularity of CBD has skyrocketed in recent years, with the compound appearing in everything from body lotions to sports drinks to topical oils.

CBD is claimed to help relieve

## legal or not?

CBD products can lurk in a legal gray area, since they can be made from hemp or marijuana, which both come from the cannabis plant and are distinguished only by their THC concentration in dry weight.

In 2018, Congress passed the Farm Bill, making hemp, which is cannabis with less than 0.3% THC content, legal in the United States.

Thus, CBD products can be legal if they come from hemp, but cannabis with over 0.3% THC in dry weight is considered marijuana and is not allowed in states where marijuana is illegal.

How a CBD product is marketed can determine its legality. It is illegal to promote CBD as a food additive or a dietary supplement, and the FDA has only approved one CBD product, Epidiolex, a prescription drug used to treat seizures for a few neurological conditions.

anxiety, reduce inflammation and reduce muscle pain, among other conditions, but the Food and Drug Administration has not vetted these claims, and UChicago research shows they have little effect.

Haley is familiar with the products because her mom is a psychi-



Midway photo by Henry Benton

**CBD CLAIMS.** CBD products do little to nothing despite being thought to have various health benefits, University of Chicago Professor Harriet de Wit concluded. “Look very carefully at what the claims are that people make on those bottles and at the doses that they administer and the purity of the product,” Dr. de Wit said. “Be skeptical.”

atrist who sometimes uses CBD in her practice. In middle school, Haley occasionally took CBD supplements for a soothing effect, believing they’re not as strong as anxiety medications and could have fewer side effects.

“It’s kind of like taking an all-natural calming supplement that will help you with anxiety, but it’s not very strong,” Haley, now a junior, said. “It can maybe calm you, for some people; for me, it doesn’t really do anything.”

Harriet de Wit, a research professor of psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience at the University of Chicago, ran an experiment studying the effects of CBD on 36 healthy adults.

“We measured how the drug made them feel, how it made them behave on emotion tasks, and we measured their heart rate and blood pressure,” Dr. de Wit said.

The results showed that the CBD had few effects on healthy adults.

“Basically, we found that the drug did nothing,” she said.

Dr. de Wit said that although not much is known about CBD, the drug isn’t toxic. She still recommends caution when looking at CBD products, since the effects of the compound are largely unknown.

“Look very carefully at what the claims are that people make on those bottles and at the doses that

they administer and the purity of the product,” Dr. de Wit said. “Be skeptical.”

The FDA recognizes that not much is known about CBD and that some companies are marketing CBD products that may put the health and safety of consumers at risk. Dr. de Wit said the CBD product’s source can cause the drug to be dangerous, even if pure CBD itself has little emotional effect on humans.

“I don’t think it does much harm,” Dr. de Wit said, “so you’re not going to hurt yourself, unless you’re getting it from a questionable source and there are other ingredients in there that aren’t good for you.”

# Energy drinks provide alternate caffeine intake

Popular beverages provide energy boost but can have more detriments than benefits for health

By **AINSLEY WILLIAMS**  
 Reporter

If you find yourself needing an energy boost, a cup of coffee might be the jolt you need. But if you are like the millions of people who aren’t looking for a latte to fix the midday slump, you may end up grabbing an energy drink. Many of these drinks can contain around 200 milligrams of caffeine, the amount of two cups of coffee. The Food and Drug Administration recommends that healthy adults consume at most 400 milligrams of caffeine per day.

Frequent consumption of this amount of caffeine is linked to health problems like high blood pressure, irritability, depression, stomach problems, insomnia and even a caffeine addiction. Other energy-promoting ingredients like guarana seed extract and ginseng are commonly added but lack scientific evidence of their effectiveness.

Global energy drink sales are expected to reach \$53.1 billion by the end of 2022 with projected profits to rise to \$86.1 billion by 2027, which the National Institutes of Health credits to an increase in a growing focus on exercise and health coupled with the hectic lifestyles of consumers, the majority of which are adolescents, despite warnings on energy drink websites and the sides of cans.



**Celsius**

**Price:** \$2.49 for one 12-fluid ounce can

**Flavor:** There are 12 flavors such as kiwi guava and watermelon berry.

**Contents:** For one 12-fluid ounce can, there are 0 grams of sugar, 0 grams of sodium, 10 calories and 200 milligrams of caffeine.

**Energy type:** Celsius has caffeine, taurine, guarana seed extract, ginger extract and green tea leaf extract. Some studies show green tea leaf can promote weight loss and disease prevention.

**Taste:** The kiwi guava flavor is quite fragrant with a muted kiwi taste at first, with the guava being a syrupy aftertaste resembling a tropical gum.



**Monster**

**Price:** \$2.39 for one 16-fluid ounce can

**Flavor:** There are 34 flavors such as watermelon and blue ice.

**Contents:** For one 16-fluid ounce, there are 160 milligrams of caffeine, 54 grams of sugar, 370 milligrams of sodium and 230 calories.

**Energy type:** Monster Energy has caffeine, taurine, B vitamins and L-carnitine. L-carnitine is a chemical shown to help turn body fat into energy and is important for many body processes.

**Taste:** The flavor of the original Monster is very similar to the Red Bull but with more of a green apple taste mixed in but without the sticky sweetness.



**Alani Nu Energy**

**Price:** \$2.79 for one 12-fluid ounce can

**Flavor:** There are 13 flavors such as tropical and cherry slush.

**Contents:** One 12-fluid ounce can contains 0 grams of sugar, 170 milligrams of sodium and 200 milligrams of caffeine. The drink also contains a vitamin called biotin which is shown to strengthen hair and nails.

**Energy type:** Alani Nu Energy contains caffeine, B vitamins, taurine and guarana seed extract which is known for its ability to boost energy.

**Taste:** The Tropsical flavor is a quite strong resemblance to a refreshing piña colada with hints of mango, pineapple and coconut.



**Red Bull**

**Price:** \$2.29 for one 8.4-fluid ounce can

**Flavor:** There are currently 10 flavors of Red Bull including sugar free.

**Contents:** For one 8.4-fluid ounce can, there are 26 grams of sugar, 105 milligrams of sodium, 110 calories and 77 milligrams of caffeine. The drink also contains taurine, which some studies suggest that coupled with caffeine can boost mental performance.

**Energy type:** The energy source in Red Bull is found in the caffeine, taurine, B vitamins and sugar.

**Taste:** The flavor of the original Red Bull strongly resembles licorice, guarana and an almost citrus cough syrup aftertaste and is highly carbonated.



**Bang Energy**

**Price:** \$1.99 for one 16-fluid ounce can

**Flavor:** There are 40 flavors such as peach mango and root beer blaze.

**Contents:** A 16-fluid ounce can contains 0 grams of sugar, 40 milligrams of sodium, 300 milligrams of caffeine and 4-32.5mg of super creatine which some studies say aids in muscle growth and improvement of endurance.

**Energy type:** Bang Energy uses caffeine, taurine and B Vitamins.

**Taste:** The “Rainbow Unicorn” flavor is a strong almost fruit punch flavor mixed with bubblegum and cotton candy. The taste is chemical and overall, unpleasurable.

Midway photos by Ellis Calleri



# MSI trees show cultural traditions

Now in its 80th year, the MSI event *Christmas Around The World* exhibits how holidays are celebrated globally

by CHLOE ALEXANDER

Assistant Editor

A Grand Tree filled with more than 45,000 lights and decorated with purple, pink, silver and gold ornaments stands 45 feet tall on the third floor rotunda of the Museum of Science and Industry for the Christmas Around the World exhibit. The Grand Tree is surrounded by smaller trees decorated with lights and ornaments illuminating the rotunda. Each of the smaller trees are decorated a different way, representing cultures and holiday customs around the world.

This year is the 80th anniversary of this Chicago tradition and the exhibit ends Jan. 8, 2023. This tradition began in 1942 to represent the countries fighting alongside the United States during World War II. The exhibit also went on during the coronavirus pandemic.

"It was a single tree that was decorated every day for 12 days," said Peter Vega, MSI's deputy director of communications and engagement. "So it was a tradition that the museum started in 1942, as a way to, you know, bring communities together in a challenging time in the world."

Over the years, the number of trees has increased, expanding the representation in the exhibit to reflect the diversity of Chicago. Christmas Around the World shows more than 50 trees displaying the different ways customs are celebrated around the world.

Mr. Vega said what brings the trees together is the community involved. The trees are decorated by community volunteers

Japan, Kenya and Australia are just a few of the countries that have trees dedicated to them. Community organizations and volunteers from Chicago decorate each tree and display to represent the different holiday traditions. Australia's tree is decorated with different native animals, Japan's tree is filled with origami and handcrafted ornaments while Kenya's tree uses different childrens toys, clothes and flags to decorate.

"Every few years, we have new community members reach out

"Every year, we have new community members reach out to us wanting to decorate different trees [...] the driving force of the whole exhibit is the community in Chicago.

Peter Vega,  
Museum of Science and Industry

to us wanting to decorate different trees. And we open up the opportunities for that," Mr. Vega said. "So really, the driving force of the whole exhibit is the community in Chicago that gets behind it."

In addition to the trees, a part of the exhibit is the Holiday of Light Celebration. Around the rotunda with the trees vignettes represent the Chinese New Year, Diwali, Kwanzaa, Ramadan, Hanukkah and St. Lucia Day.

"We also include the other holidays that are broader than just Christmas because the trees obviously are more of a symbol of Christmas," Mr. Vega said. "But we have these vignettes that are decorated by different volunteers as well that represent different cultural holidays."

Mr. Vega says it's important to show the culture and tell the history of different heritages around the world.

"We really want this to be a moment for everyone as a reminder to appreciate differences and the similarities that make everyone unique. It's really a moment to bring everyone you know together in challenging times," Mr. Vega said. "We had this exhibit during COVID, and we wanted to make sure to bring community together during challenging times the same way that it was done in 1942."

Eighty years after the first tree was decorated for 12 days in 1942, the Christmas Around the World exhibit creates a place to show how different cultures celebrate the holidays. Representing a variety of customs brings light to the diversity of Chicago and the different cultures that make up the city.



**AUSTRALIA.** Christmas in Australia happens during their summer, but they do celebrate it. The tree showcases the variety of environments and landscapes in Australia. Places throughout the tree are animals native to Australia such as koalas and kangaroos. There are also trinkets to represent Australia's neighboring country New Zealand.



**JAPAN.** A Christmas tree filled with large golden lights, handcrafted ornaments and origami cranes. Wrapping around the tree is a chain on origami cranes of different colors. Embroidered silk thread balls (Tsumami), paper dolls (Washi-Ningyo), Samurai warrior's helmet (Kabuto) and more fill the tree with bright colors and intricate designs.



**KENYA.** Kenya's tree is filled with red, green and yellow lights. Children's toys, dolls, drums and balls from different sports (football, baseball, gold and rugby) hang from the tree branches. Patterned fabrics, cloths and the Kenyan flag also adorn the tree. At the bottom of the tree are two baskets filled with different fruits and vegetables.

Midway photos by Matt Petres

## Book lists Chicago history event for every day in a year

by AMY REN  
Assistant Editor

From a perpetually-active downtown to diverse neighborhoods bursting with culture to a sprawling lakefront, the city of Chicago, formally established in 1837, has layers upon layers of rich history that many of its inhabitants haven't fully explored.

In "Every Goddamn Day: A Highly Selective, Definitely Opinionated, and Alternatingly Humorous and Heartbreaking Historical Tour of Chicago," Chicago Sun-Times columnist and freelance writer Neil Steinberg examines Chicago's past, finding one story for every day in the year.

Mr. Steinberg has written for the Sun-Times for 35 years and splits his time between the newspaper and his personal blog, which shares its name with his new book. "I have a blog called 'Every Goddamn Day,' where, true to its name, I write something every day for the past nine years," Mr. Steinberg said. "Three days a week, it's my newspaper column. Four days a week, it's something else."

About two years ago, the University of Chicago Press asked Mr.

Steinberg to write a book of history similar to his blog.

"They said, 'Could you do a book of history, like your blog?'" Mr. Steinberg said.

The University of Chicago Press was inspired by Mychael Barratt's "London Map of Days," which explores history in a similar day-by-day fashion, and wished to mirror that for Chicago.

Mr. Steinberg wanted a compelling reason to write another book. "Every Goddamn Day" is his ninth book. He has previously written about the city in a memoir, "You Were Never in Chicago," and thought the format the University of Chicago Press wanted would be challenging.

Another reason he wrote "Every Goddamn Day" is because he believes that understanding history is critical for improving the present and future.

"One thing about history is you have to apply it to our lives now. And given what we're facing in this country now, this history is very timely," Mr. Steinberg said. "To understand the grotesque racism that was in Chicago then, and frankly now, is very important."

He first thought about Chicago's past and identified key times he wanted to cover.

"What is the history of Chicago about? It's about race, it's about labor, it's about industry, it's about art," Mr. Steinberg said. "I divided in my mind, you know, bases I wanted to hit, and then I set about to start to fill the dates."

He felt compelled to include some days key to Chicago history.

"Certain dates you kind of have to have. October 8, 1871 is the Great Chicago Fire, although I ended up having two dates," Mr. Steinberg said. "October 8 is the day it started, and October 9 was sort of the day that it really did its damage."

Due to Mr. Steinberg's experience as a newspaper columnist, he had specific philosophical approaches to writing about history.

"One way to bore people is to tell people what they already know," he said, so when he approached stories familiar to the public, he investigated the story and presented it in a new way.

The St. Valentine's Day Massacre in 1929 was one event he focused on through a different perspective.

"The St. Valentine's Day Massacre was never really solved, and that bothered people, and they said, 'We should have a Scotland Yard,' which is the British governmental detective agency," Mr. Steinberg said. "So Northwestern University set up the first crime lab, and this was several years before the FBI did, and I didn't know that, so I focused on the crime lab, which is something unusual for people."

Mr. Steinberg tried to find stories that were both interesting and from a diverse array of communities. Among other sources, he contacted some cultural museum founders to do this.

"We live in a very racially charged time, and so I didn't want this to be the white guy's history of Chicago," he said. "I made a point of going and looking to different groups and to try to include them."

History is an ever-changing story dependent on its interpreter, and while uncovering the whole truth of events may not be possible, "Every Goddamn Day" seeks to bring bits of Chicago history out of the dark just as it happened: day by day.

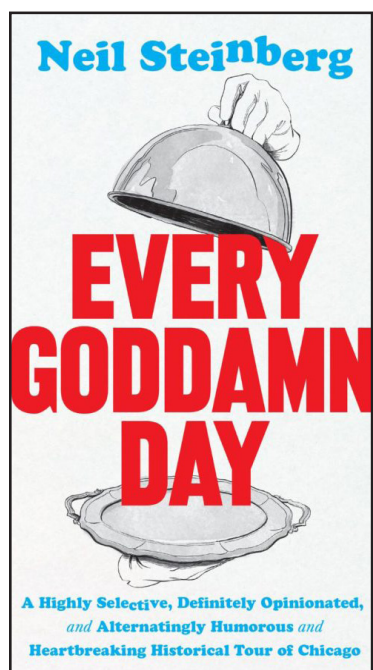


Image source: University of Chicago Press

**SEARCHING HISTORY.** Author and newspaper columnist Neil Steinberg found one event from Chicago history, ranging from iconic to obscure, for every day of the year for his book.



# Striking success

*Maile Nacu applies the skills and values of karate to everyday life. Her strong work ethic has made her a top competitor and leader.*

By **VICTORIA WASHINGTON**

*Audience Engagement Manager*

During an international karate competition in the fall of 2019, Maile Nacu visited Fukuyama, Japan, with four teammates. Fully immersed in Japanese culture, she trained with younger kids at the hosting dojo and toured around the city.

Her dedication to the sport allowed her to see a country she always wanted to travel to. The hospitality she experienced in Japan represents a core value of her karate practice: respect for others.

"There are a few principles that we follow daily in our karate, and I like to apply them in my everyday life: seek perfection of character, be faithful, endeavor, respect others and refrain from violent behavior," Maile said.

Maile's hardworking attitude allows her to be a top athlete and apply the skills she learns in karate to her everyday life.

While she has participated in several international tournaments, Maile recently competed in the WKU U21 Junior & Cadet World Championships, which is the highest level of competition athletes under 21 can attend. On Team Kata, which represents the top seed of each country, Maile competed for the United States with two other teammates.

"We do a team form together, and then we show the application of it: mainly throwing and flips," Maile said. "It was really hard, so we got 13th place."

Encouraged by her parents, who own the Enso Karate where she practices, Maile has been participating in the sport since she was 3 years old.

"My parents put us in classes, and I've never stopped since then," Maile said. "I enjoy karate a lot, especially since I've gotten to this higher level of competition and I've wanted to train more."

Even though she's wanted to quit at times, Maile continues to enjoy karate.

She trains four to five times a week, or more if she's preparing for a tournament.

Milo Platz-Walker, a sophomore, practices at Maile's dojo, and the time she spends perfecting her craft hasn't gone unnoticed.

"Her work ethic is really strong. I don't think I've ever been at practice and haven't seen her working really hard and always pushing herself," Milo said. "She's always encouraging others and being a good role model."

The time spent with her family through karate has been another important aspect for Maile. When she was younger, she traveled to local and national tournaments with her extended family, providing an opportunity to form relationships with them.

"Before all of the advanced competition, karate has been a chance for me to spend time with my family. Not even my immediate family but my cousins, aunts and uncles did it with us, and that was another way for us to all bond,"



Midway photo by Patrice Graham

**KICKING HIGH.** Senior Maile Nacu throws a kick into the air. Maile trains in karate four to five times a week. She is part of her family's Enso Karate School. Maile applies the core values of karate to everyday life and competition.

Maile said. "My family have been the ones who motivated me to go to the advanced level."

The community at Maile's dojo has felt welcoming and supportive to everyone. Milo has also felt the familial bond ever since he began practicing there.

"It's like a family," Milo said, "I've known Maile's entire family for six or seven years, and the

whole time I've always felt part of one big family, they've always been very supportive of me."

Because of the relationship with the people at her dojo as well as her commitment to karate, Maile has had the opportunity to train with top athletes and improve her skills.

"The opportunities to train with other high level karate people, like

Olympians who are in karate and other seminars with the National Team. All those experiences have been based from my dojo community with my family," Maile said.

Because of her commitment to the core principles of karate, Maile has been successful both in karate as a top athlete and outside of practice as a role model to her peers.

## 'Nutcracker' rehearsals develop tightknit community

by **ETHAN SWINGER**

*Assistant Editor*

With precision, she glides across the paneled room. Her snowy-white dress flows around her. Every move has been rehearsed countless times. Tape lines the laminated floor and colorful costumes are strewn across the heated studio. Snow cascades down, just visible from inside the window-lit room. Narrowing her focus, she deliberates the exacting movements. Subdued classical music sets the sentimental tone with the upcoming show just days away.

This is a winter rehearsal for a dancer in the Hyde Park School of Dance. Years of ballet training and months of work will culminate in one annual holiday season staple: "The Nutcracker."

Dancers at the Hyde Park School of Dance foster a long-standing community and mind-body connection that will be exemplified in their upcoming performance of "The Nutcracker."

The Hyde Park School of Dance is a nonprofit that primarily teaches ballet, among other dance forms, to all ages. They also perform annual shows, one of which is the winter Nutcracker. "The Nutcracker" will be held at the University of Chicago's Mandel Hall on Dec. 9 at 7 p.m., Dec. 10 at 1 and 6 p.m., and Dec. 11 at 2 p.m. Tickets are available online.

Senior Sarina Zhao has been attending the dance school for over 13 years and takes ballet and modern dance. In "The Nutcracker,"

she will take on the role of the Snow Queen. Sarina said practicing for the upcoming show in rehearsals can take up to 15 hours weekly, but the process remains extremely rewarding.

"I think one really rewarding thing about dance in general, or really like any sport, is to see improvement, which is proportional to the amount of time and effort you put into it," Sarina said.

Sarina believes the Hyde Park School of Dance maintains an exceptionally close troupe that has provided her with ongoing support over the years the students have danced together.

"It's a really tightknit community," Sarina said, "and I think knowing that I have that space where I'm supported by everyone around me... is really special, especially at this time of year."

Sarina thinks that this exceptional group has been one of the most valuable aspects of the school. The team and ballet have helped her reduce stress.

"It definitely helps relieve stress, just having that community," Sarina said, "and I am able to spend time with those people together throughout the week."

Junior Taylor Patterson has danced with the Hyde Park School of Dance for 13 years and has the role of Clara in "The Nutcracker." Taylor has also experienced the same closeknit community and enriching experience.

"You get to see yourself improve, and that's super," Taylor said. "It also creates such a fun

community."

Taylor believes that, much like ballet, the Hyde Park School of Dance is grounded in various traditions. Many of these take place in the winter and create a family-like bond among dancers.

"We have our company sweaters that we make every year, and they'll just say the dance we're in," Taylor said. "We also do secret Santa in the company, and we do sister gifts."

Celine Derroite, a junior who has been attending the dance school for nine years, will be taking the role of the Sugar Plum Fairy and the understudy for Dew-drop.

According to Celine, ballet is an art form that requires many of the same demands that many sports do.

"It's not a sport, but you're still an athlete in the way that you have to have such intense stamina and you're working really hard," Celine said.

Though rewarding, Celine believes that like any sport the tryouts and rehearsals for "The Nutcracker" are an arduous process. According to Celine after years of training and months of rehearsal, the chance to perform is more than worthwhile.

"It's very long and intense and we have tryouts starting in late September," Celine said. "So it's like a lot of buildups and I think that that goes with any sport that you are working your entire life to exhibit something and to try and achieve something."



Midway photo by Ishani Hariprasad

**SNOW QUEEN.** Senior Sarina Zhao practices her performance during a rehearsal for the Hyde Park School of Dance's "The Nutcracker."



head to head

# Time to cut the no-cut?

U-High teams have never had tryouts. Do the benefits of the inclusive no-cut policy make up for its logistical drawbacks?

## Too many on the field

By AMON GRAY

Sports and Leisure Editor

As Lab students returned from the pandemic, there was a sharp increase in signups for athletics teams. With the total student body having grown larger than in previous years, many of those teams are the largest they have ever been.

Lab's athletic experience has never just been about winning championships. It is about building a community based on achieving a common goal. So far, the no-cut policy has supported that goal, but with ever-extending rosters for school teams, the policy has perpetuated an outdated system that now is inhibiting the athletic experience for the athletes most committed to their teams.

I'm not saying that Lab should chop the rosters in half or recruit students based on athletic ability. Lab has already had success in both individual and team sports while taking nothing away from academics. However, there needs to be some kind of balance so that the space, time and resources that each team needs are not spread thin. Cutting wouldn't be required for most sports and might never be a problem for some, but there should be a reasonable cap on the number of athletes that each team can support.

Lab's facilities include a limited amount of practice space in Kovler and Sunny gymnasiums and on nearby courts and fields. Scheduling practice for the nine total middle school and high school basketball teams during the winter season has been a challenge. This has resulted in teams of 30 athletes only having half a court on which to practice, while coaches have little time to give players individual attention or instruction. Teams also have to wait for practice space, causing difficulties for athletes with long commutes.

For teams such as baseball and golf that regularly practice at facilities off campus, transportation is an added cost. The shuttle bus system is not completely reliable and transportation sometimes has to be organized by coaches and players.

The role of a coach is to organize planning and logistics while also instructing and guiding the team. However, when a team reaches a certain capacity, more and more of a coach's time is taken up by the organizational aspect rather than the athletes themselves.

In taking on more teams, coaches and athletes, the school needs to spend more on uniforms, transportation and equipment. Even if the school continues to cover these costs, the limits placed on each team by their facilities remain.

Teams also lose some of their competitive aspect when all that is required to join the team is signing up and showing up. If a place on the team is earned and not guaranteed, athletes will be more committed to being at practice and working to improve.

Some may argue that the no-cut policy indicates that Lab is more dedicated to the camaraderie and inclusion that comes with

being on a team rather than being an athletic powerhouse. However, that experience is made difficult when the team becomes too large to be a tight knit group and the most committed athletes need to make accommodations.

Each of Lab's teams should have a limit on the number of athletes who can join a team. Most teams probably would not reach that number and have no need for tryouts. However, tryouts should be an option so that overflow does not occur.

For students who may not be sure if they want to commit to a sport competitively, the P.E. program could offer units in fencing, golf and squash so students could explore these sports without taking up spots on a team.

# Policy has existed for 7 decades

By WILLIAM TAN

Editor in Chief

For more than 70 years, a tenet of the U-High athletics program has been its no-cut policy, which allows students of any grade and ability to join one or more of the many school sports teams. Unlike many high schools in the Independent School League and across Illinois and the nation, Lab allows students of varying athletic experiences to participate fully in all team practices and games while maintaining a competitive presence across many sports.

At its inception, the no-cut policy was established as an extension of Lab's principles.

"I think the philosophy behind it is rooted in progressive education. I think historically, there is participation in education to learn as you're doing, right, including athletics," David Ribbens, athletics director, said. "So the belief that that's good for students to participate in has been the under-

lying philosophy."

Today, Mr. Ribbens believes this policy still holds value in the Lab community, specifically among the student body.

"That affiliation with a team, with teammates ... is their driving factor in being involved in an athletic [sport]. That affiliation is important, and I still think that that's the case here," he said.

Yet it is hard to ignore that athletics at Lab has grown exponentially. More and more students are joining sports teams, raising concerns regarding the logistical feasibility and purpose of maintaining a no-cut policy. From coaches to uniforms to practice spaces, there are a larger amount of challenges to coordinating sports.

With sports involvement only trending upward, these values and questions are important to consider. Is the no-cut policy an impractical relic of the past, or a valued characteristic of the athletics program worth preserving?

## Everyone plays their part

By WILLIAM TAN

Editor in Chief

At Lab, we believe in inclusion. Granting equitable opportunities for all students is the foundation for realizing Lab's mission of "learning experientially, exhibiting kindness, and honoring diversity."

There is no reason why our educational philosophy shouldn't also apply to our sports teams. The no-cut policy is a valuable means to encourage inclusivity in sports and inspire passion in student-athletes. This is something the Lab athletics program should pride itself on preserving.

A central reason we have school sports teams is to build a close-knit student community. I'm not an athlete, but I see the effects of their camaraderie in our

spirit assemblies, Homecoming games, and in my friends who have found a sense of affiliation with their respective teams. Combined with our naturally competitive nature, athletics brings us as a student body together.

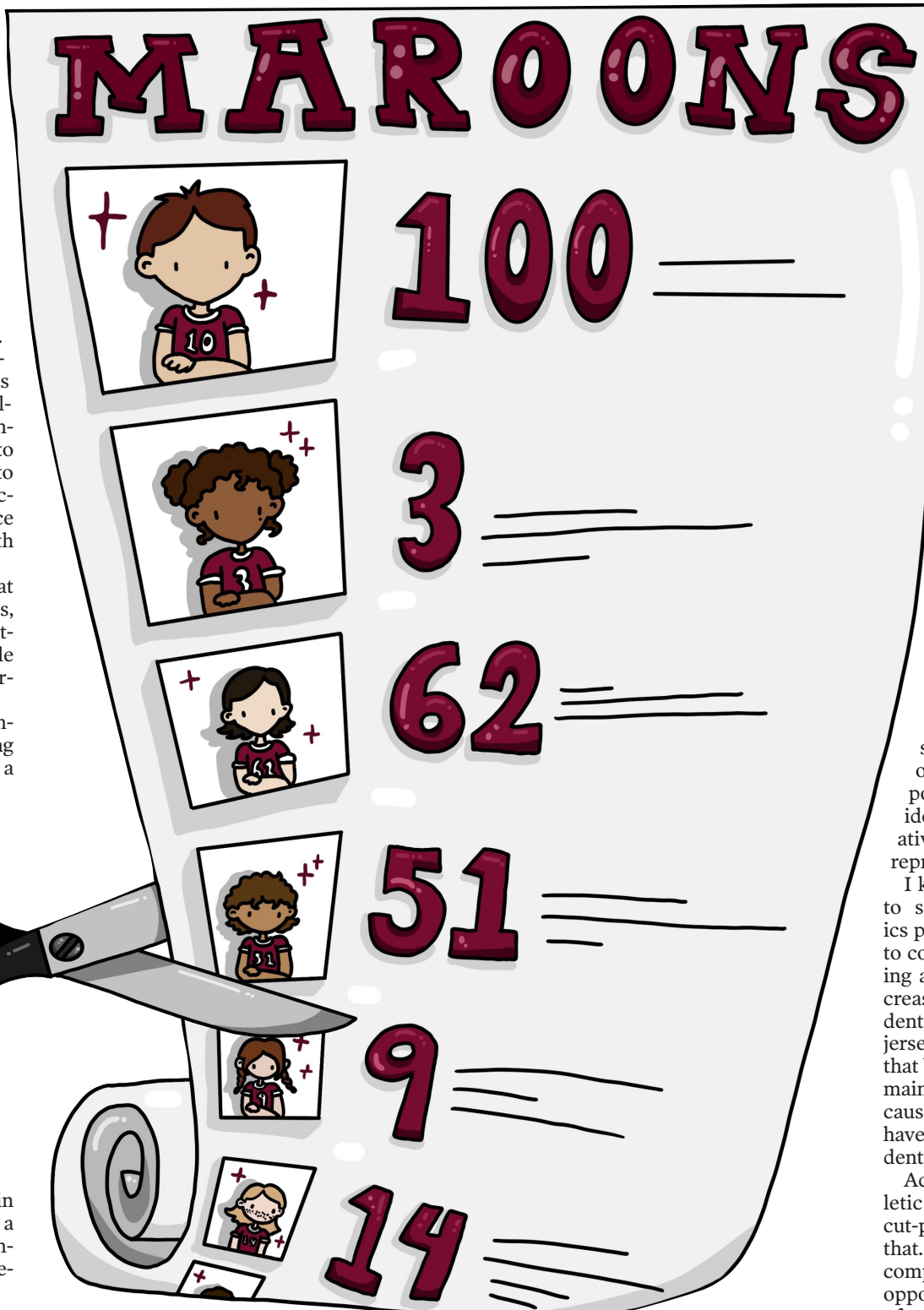
But what happens when not everyone can take part in this experience? Having a cut policy, likely based on skill level, sits fully opposite to the values we hold as a school. Actively disallowing participation based on athletic ability discourages passion for sports and sets a precedent that we will support the athletic experience of a few students over that of many. A student who's interested in a sport or wants to spend time with friends might not be able to join because they're simply not good enough. On our mission statement principles, that's just not right.

I'm aware our commitment to creating a sense of community comes with an equal desire to achieve success. Our sports teams deserve to be as good as possible, and students of varying levels playing together might seem counterproductive to that goal. Yet that's why we have multiple tiers of teams and clear divisions between levels — varsity, JV, etc. — to support the number of students who want to participate. Everyone gets a shot to play, and those who are at the highest level will naturally rise to the top tier.

Moreover, in many sports, it is known there are a select number of spots — a final cut — available to represent Lab in the IHSA sectional and state competitions. Athletes go into their seasons understanding that just a few will advance to these final competitions. Those who care about advancing are encouraged to engage in healthy competition to decide the representative group, while those who are there for recreational reasons or who are less focused on the scoreboards have a different purpose altogether. These groups have no reason to clash over the course of the season, and this trend is supported by our teams historically doing well in the postseason. There's little substantive evidence to prove adding members has negatively impacted the performance of the representative athletes.

I know there are also logistical concerns to scaling this rapidly-expanding athletics program. But I believe it's more feasible to consider hiring a new coach or purchasing a new bus than to force an overall decreased engagement in sports because students don't feel they belong in our Maroon jerseys or have lost interest in the activity that brought them joy. Decisions need to remain in favor of prioritizing inclusivity because we're not yet at the point where we have a detrimental oversubscription of student athletes.

Across the nation, schools tout their athletic success as the product of selective cut-policy programs. At Lab, we don't need that. We can maintain our reputation as a competitive athletic school while offering opportunities for all students — regardless of grade or skill — to become a valuable part of the athletic community. Let's keep proving that we're different.



Midway illustration by Dalin Dohrn