u-high midway

University of Chicago Laboratory High School

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On Sept. 10, conservative activist and media personality Charlie Kirk was fatally shot. The editorial board argues that political violence, growing ever common in America, is a bipartisan issue.

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Hyde Park's 53rd and 55th Street viaducts have been renovated to include multiple murals. They now feature a selection of 19 new murals chosen from nearly 600 submissions.

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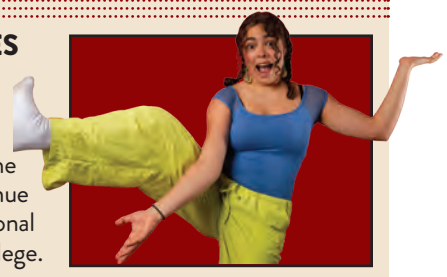
For 10 years, Satya Dominguez-Hultgren has trained in circus arts, specifically acrobatics. She is even planning to continue performing on a professional level after graduating college.



Club tiers to help set expectations

Space, activity concerns prompt new guidelines

by ORLIE WEITZMAN
Opinion Editor

Starting this year, creating a club at U-High will be more difficult, and some existing clubs may be expected to stop operating under a new policy to be implemented by the administration. Additionally, members of academic teams will have excused absences and members of non-academic clubs will be permitted a select number of field trip days.

The policy divides clubs into three tiers. Tier One features low-commitment clubs, while Tier Three comprises competitive teams such as Model United Nations and Math Team. All clubs must ensure a 70% attendance rate per month and establish annual goals. Tiers Two and Three must also submit meeting minutes and a constitution. These changes, developed last school year by a committee of students and faculty, come after the number of clubs at U-High spiked, reaching 101 last year for a student body of 622.

Dean of Students Ana Campos said much of this increase was driven by suspected résumé padding as well as space concerns.

"Sometimes people start clubs not because they want to have a lot of people join around a common interest, sometimes they want to have something to put on their college application, or it's just their group of friends," Ms. Campos said. "They're not doing much to actively recruit members."

Ms. Campos explained that the new policy is intended to ensure that all clubs are purposeful and active, rather than existing only as a name.

"There was a feeling that this wasn't a good use of space," Ms. Campos said. "We had groups entitled to a room, but if they're not using it or intending on being an active club, then it feels unfair to the clubs who want to meet and do things. Now, when you're a club leader, you're not just a leader in name only — there's a responsibility."

When it comes to the absence policy, Ms. Campos believes academic teams should be granted similar privileges as sports.

"These students are representing Lab," she said. "They are working hard, and we allow them [absences] for athletics — it feels right we allow them for competitive teams."

Junior Ledya Wreden worries about what the policy means for small clubs, such as her ENGin Club, whose members volunteer to teach English to Ukrainian refugees.

"If 70% of the club needs to attend per month, and you have a club of three people with a member who can't come a lot of the weeks, will it be shut down?" Ledya said.

Midway photo by Estelle Levinson

POSTER BOARD BEDLAM. Save the Children Action Network co-president Annabelle McCormick watches as senior Marie Hurley signs up. Nearly 90 clubs participated in club shopping, about 20 fewer than last year.

3 things.

1. Clubs are divided into three tiers with separate levels of commitment and responsibility.
2. Students on academic teams will have five excused absences, while other clubs will have two for field trips.
3. Some clubs are required to draft charters and keep attendance, which are shared with the dean of students.

— compiled by Declan Smith

While Ms. Campos did not confirm that clubs with low attendance would be forced to close, she highlighted that two clubs voluntarily stopped meeting last year due to a lack of interest.

"That decision showed a lot of maturity and integrity on those students' part and is what I would expect from any club leader if the timing isn't right for their club to exist," she said.

The number of clubs at club shopping decreased to 88 this year. Factors that could prevent a club from forming include substantial financial requirements or similarity to an existing club.

Clubs committee member Gio Nicolai, a junior, said the policy will prevent "empty clubs" from forming.

"Last year we had a 6:1 student club ratio," he said. "It was a lot to handle. Now, even if a club was created initially for a résumé, as it moves forward, it's trying to generate something positive."

Committee member Sophie Li, a senior, was initially surprised by the level of detail that will be required to maintain a club, but feels the changes are beneficial.

She said, "Hopefully, it will encourage club leaders to have a clear goal and achieve it."

Homecoming dance ends exciting, energetic Spirit Week

Midway photo by Peyton Palmer

GLITTERING GALA. Seniors Sophia Zheng, Malia Maki, Jasmin Brooks and Audrey Tian pose in the photo booth at the homecoming dance on Sept. 20. The evening included a diamond hunting activity, pizza and cupcakes.

by NADIA WASHINGTON
Reporter

Vault doors. Security cameras. The secret mission? A diamond heist.

On Sept. 20, a record breaking 581 students gathered in Gordon Parks Arts Hall, decorated with caution tape, Student Council members' wanted posters and red LED lasers for the "Diamond Heist"-themed homecoming dance.

Prior to the dance, students participated in spirit days Monday through Friday, culminating with homecoming games on Friday after school.

Cultural Union President Daniel Wu, a senior, said the theme — inspired by the movie "Ocean's 8" — was chosen for its simplicity and fun decorations. He stated that it was important to the Student Council that students felt like they could easily dress according to theme.

"We know that one of the concerns with [last year's] under-the-sea theme was that a lot of people were having trouble finding things that fit that theme," Daniel said.

Similarly, sophomore Cultural Union representative Zeidan Rowe hoped that the theme was well received and that students enjoyed the dance.

"I'm really excited to see our work pay off," Zeidan said. "We planned it in mind of the student body."

Earlier in the week, students celebrated Spirit Week by engaging in five dress-up themes chosen by their Student Council. The themes were Pajama Day on Monday, Sports Day on Tuesday, Formal Day on Wednesday, Grade Color Day on Thursday and Maroon Day on Friday.

Simon Ellis, a ninth grader, enjoyed dressing for the various themes.

"My favorite spirit week day was jersey day. I wore Freddie Freedman's on the Dodgers baseball jersey," Simon said.

On Sept. 19, Maroon spirit shone bright at the homecoming games as U-High competed in soccer, volleyball and tennis matches. On Kenwood Mall, food trucks and a snow cone truck were available.

The varsity dance team, U-High mascot Phil the Phoenix, and free swag such as maroon and white face paint, pom-poms and glasses encouraged the crowds as students, faculty and families supported the teams.

German exchange future uncertain

Community reacts to loss of beloved German exchange trip, program

by NAOMI BENTON
Managing Editor

The Chicago Architecture Tour, the 360 Chicago Observation Deck and the Chicago Art Institute are quintessential experiences on a visitor's trip to Chicago. The 11 German exchange students who arrived on Sept. 15 from Wildermuth Gymnasium in Tübingen, Germany, are no exception.

The German students will stay until Oct. 1. During their visit, they will shadow U-High classes, tour Chicago colleges and visit Springfield, among other activities.

The trip marks the end of the 2025-26 exchange, as 11 U-High students visited Germany from June 14 to July 1. U-High students had the opportunity to explore unique aspects of Germany through crafting their own chocolate bars, staying at a youth hostel for a weekend getaway and going on punting river tours. As the German language program comes to a close, the uncertainty of future exchange programs remains unclear. The exchange began after World War II, and U-High was one of the first schools to begin an exchange with a German school.

This exchange marks the last planned exchange.

According to middle school German teacher Annette Steinbarth, who organized the exchange, the school has allocated money for one more German exchange, but whether it happens depends on how long she will be able to stay at the Laboratory Schools. Ms. Steinbarth sees many benefits to participating in an exchange program. One of these, as she highlights, is the opportunity to make a lifelong friend.

"My son went with me in 2005-06 for the first exchange that I did. He's now 35 and his exchange partner came for Thanksgiving last fall with her husband and her 1 ½ year old baby," Fr. Steinbarth said. "I have many, many students like that."

Not only do exchanges build bonds, they also forge connections between diverse communities and cultures around the world. Notably, exchanges help to dispel misinformation and stereotypes that students and families believe about the other country.

"Our exchanges at our school really build bridges between our country and the partner schools' country," Ms. Steinbarth said. "Any time our community has the opportunity to interact with people from another country and another culture, that really enriches our community, and it enriches the student experience."

From an educational perspective, the German exchange offers an opportunity to master the language.

"No matter how wonderful a language teacher you are, you cannot replicate an immersion experience in your classroom," Ms. Steinbarth said. "There is just nothing like being completely immersed in a language and in a culture. Everything you experience the entire day is in the language."

Midway photo by Elspeth LaCroix-Birdthistle

EAGER EMBRACE. Sophomore Allie Parham and Marlene Zieker, a German exchange student, hug as they are reunited in front of the Blaine steps. The German exchange students arrived on Sept. 15, and will be exploring Chicago with U-High students until their departure on Oct. 1.

Argentinian exchange

A group of Argentinian exchange students arrived in Chicago on Sept. 15 and will stay until Sept. 27. During their trip, they plan to take an architectural tour, visit the Museum of Science and Industry, see the Willis Tower and more.

Aarna Arora, a senior who is hosting an exchange student, is looking forward to showing her student around.

"I am really excited for them to come here and see how the typical high school experience in America is because they have only really seen it through movies like 'High School Musical,'" she said.

U-High students visited Argentina June 14-29. During this trip, they got to experience many aspects of Argentine culture: experiencing a tango show and lesson, exploring neighborhoods such as Boca, and sampling cultural food.

— Naomi Benton

Allie Parham, a sophomore who participated in the exchange, experienced firsthand the development of her German word bank.

"I picked up a lot of new German phrases that I wouldn't have known," Allie said.

Beyond the gains she made, Allie noticed differences between the cultures of German and American families.

"The parents tend to do everything around the house, and there were no chore divisions," she said.

Annabelle Shütz, the German exchange partner of ninth grader Lily Vogel, also found things about U-High different from her experience growing up in Germany.

"You have sports where boys and girls are together. We don't have that. We have a girl gym class and we have a boy gym class," Annabelle said.

While the future of German exchanges remains unclear, the absence of this opportunity to connect with German culture affects the whole school.

"A whole culture is being eliminated from our school," Ms. Steinbarth said. "Anytime there is a loss of a culture from a community, it's a loss for everyone."

Window film prevents bird death

by CECILY BENSMAIA
Reporter

The windows on one of Lab's buildings just got safer for birds. Over the summer, a film was applied to some of the windows in Gordon Parks Arts Hall to prevent bird strikes.

This film allows the glass to remain transparent, except for white dots spaced every three inches across the glass.

Because birds see the reflection off the window, the white dots stand out against the green-and-brown environment, appearing more clearly to the birds.

Joe Wachowski, director of operations, has wanted to make it happen for years.

He said that in 2022, he became aware of the film and was interested in applying it, but his project was not funded.

"Toward the end of 2022, the university said there was going to be a budget deficit, and all units were impacted by that, including the Laboratory Schools. So, of course, the film wasn't a necessity, so it got scrapped," Mr. Wachowski said.

However, in 2024, McCormick Place installed similar film throughout its building. Through this project, they were able to stop 95% of birds from flying into the windows.

This inspired Mr. Wachowski to implement the same design at Lab.

By working with the planning department at the University of Chicago, which provided funding, Mr. Wachowski was able to install film where Lab needed it most: Gordon Parks Arts Hall.

"We get most of our bird strikes at Gordon Parks Arts Hall," Mr. Wachowski said. "Most of them seem to hit those pass-throughs on the second floor, so that's where we decided to put the bird film."

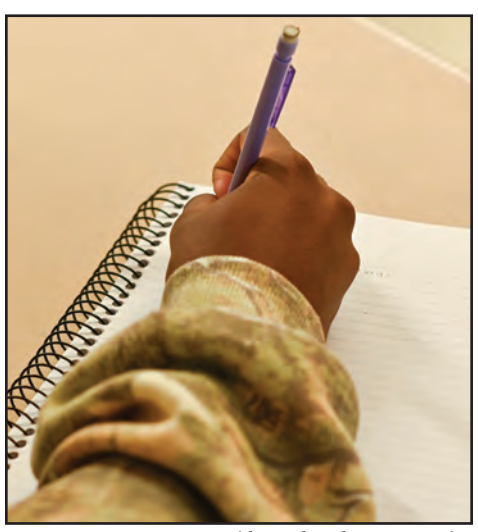
Mr. Wachowski hopes that eventually they'll be able to expand these bird films to other buildings on Lab's campus, including Earl Shapiro Hall.

He believes preventing birds from flying into windows will not only have a positive effect on the birds, but on the people as well.

"There's a psychological aspect too," Mr. Wachowski said, "Not so much for middle or high school kids, but when it happens at Earl Shapiro Hall, it really impacts little kids."

Midway photo by Estelle Levinson

DEDICATED DOTS. A film was applied to a few windows on the Gordon Parks Arts Hall in order to slow the rates of birds flying into the windows.



Midway photo by N.C. Gunning

WATCHFUL WRITING. Teachers hold varied perspectives on the appropriateness of AI use on homework and assignments. Some have moved to impliment more in-class activities.

Teachers account for AI use with change

by KABIR JOSHI
Editor-in-Chief

Generative artificial intelligence has gone from novelty to a daily presence in schools. Once seen as a threat to academic integrity, AI tools such as ChatGPT and Google's Gemini are now being approached with more nuance by teachers — some even hope to strike a balance between the positive and negative effects of AI, and some to tighten restrictions. The result of such measures is not only a shift in classroom culture but also learning in general.

Some teachers are actively taking measures to ensure students are not using AI in the classroom or at home. Mark Krewatch, an English teacher, has started to implement more in-class writing assignments where students are given a quote and told to explicate it. He hopes to ensure that the work being submitted by students reflects the student's own ability to write instead of the student's ability to manipulate prompts.

This has been implemented in English 2 as of last year through in-class writing assignments and is being implemented in more classes this year.

Mr. Krewatch said, "It is about struggle. It's about struggling to organize. What you learn when you start to organize something, and it doesn't work is you're learning how those ideas work together or don't work together, and that is a process, and you learn it by doing it yourself. You learn by doing."

Mr. Krewatch's approach reflects a concern held by most educators: while AI may be a helpful study tool, it may cause a student to not understand or learn through the process of failure.

On the other hand, some teachers encourage students to use AI to understand assignments. Fatema Burhani, a math teacher, suggests that students use AI as a tool to understand content instead of just looking at the answers and copying down work.

"If you're really lost and you looked at the notes and you couldn't quite find it, maybe just ask AI, 'What is the first step?'" Ms. Burhani said. "Sometimes you just need a little bit of help."

While AI can be used in positive ways as Ms. Burhani suggests, students using AI to cheat and skip work is still a big issue that teachers face.

Moreover, it's discouraging for students who don't use AI to see classmates getting high scores after using AI for assignments.

"We know that it's being done enough, that it can be really disconcerting to other students and really a temptation," Mr. Krewatch said.

Disagree with discourse, not violence

Future generations must work toward peaceful pathways

On Sept. 10, conservative activist and media personality Charlie Kirk was fatally shot at an event at Utah Valley University where he was speaking. Soon after, social media platforms were flooded with conflicting opinions. Some expressed their disgust at the incident, while others began streaming "No One Mourns the Wicked" by Ariana Grande on Spotify. Users argued whether Mr. Kirk deserved sympathy because of his views, and returned to the age-old debate about political violence in the United States.

However, in a press conference on Sept. 12, a different type of message was shared by Utah Gov. Spencer Cox. Gov. Cox pleaded to young Americans, stating, "You are inheriting a country where politics feels like rage. It feels like rage is the only option. But through those words we have a reminder that we can choose a different path. Your generation has an opportunity to build a culture that is very different from what we are suffering through right now."

Gov. Cox imparts a crucial message to our generation that includes Tyler Robinson, Mr. Kirk's alleged shooter. He pinpoints the idea that we have a choice about the path we take when we disagree with someone.

as the midway sees it.

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

In a time when political violence has numbed us all, changes can and should be made on a small scale. While the whole country may not seek to improve the violence issue, we as individuals can work toward nonviolent and utilitarian approaches to political discourse.

The idea of nonviolent acts of disagreement is not to do with Mr. Kirk's political viewpoints. His death was a reminder that violence spares no one, transcending political ideology. This year alone acts of violence have spanned the political spectrum, including when Minnesota Democratic legislator Melissa Hortman and her husband were killed in their home.

The First Amendment protects free speech, meaning that people should never have to fear for their lives because of their political affiliation or opinions.

At Lab there are ways to get involved with nonviolent approaches to disagreement. Last year, the U-High Progressives Club and Lab Liberty came together to form the Coalition for Free Speech at Lab. They gathered to discuss political issues, attempting to find some common ground. Clubs should continue the coalition this year so our generation can practice what political discourse should look like.

In a country that is so polarized, it is important to truly understand others' point of view before reacting in ways that are potentially harmful. Both Republicans and Democrats tend to underestimate the diversity of each other's views, and if these preconceived notions about each other are challenged, political tensions can be eased and approached with tangible solutions. Consumption of media and research not just of your political affiliation is important, but perhaps most importantly, engaging with others who may not necessarily agree with you.

As Gov. Cox said, we as a young generation must choose a different path. We must choose the path of healing, where children, adults and those in the political spotlight are spared from violence, and instead are pushed toward a healthier discourse.

by the numbers

Charlie Kirk's murder is the latest in a series of recent politically-motivated violent acts.

7

incidences in the past year

— compiled by Orlie Weitzman

Midway illustration by Tyra DeWeese

Support international students; level opportunities

ABHAY CHANDRAN
City Life Editor

Last spring, I tried to apply for a research apprenticeship at the Lincoln Park Zoo. After spending months preparing, I submitted my essays and moved to the final page of the application, some simple demographic information.

It was then that I first met a phrase that would grow to haunt me, a phrase that would soon lock me out of dozens of opportunities: "Enter nine-digit Social Security number."

In 2024, 1,582,808 international students made up 6% of the American student population.

Colleges and graduate schools are often aware of these students, and design programs with them in mind so that all students can gain essential experience.

Of those international students, 3.94% are currently in K-12 schools, and the systems they take part in are far less prepared for them.

K-12 programs should strive to be more aware of international students and actively provide them with processes to ensure they have the same essential opportunities as their peers.

This is particularly a problem when it comes to high school students.

Earlier universal experiences, like field trips and youth sports, are available to international students and give them a solid foundation into the culture of American education, but later experiences like part-time jobs and political participation require citizenship. This puts international students in a position where they are behind their peers in life experience.

The United States has long been known as a culturally diverse country, but with recent changes in visa rules and general sentiment toward international students, America is already starting to lose this diversity.

> **"The least we can do to preserve diversity is to ensure that the students who are already here by necessity feel welcomed, willing and able to continue living in the United States."**

The least we can do to preserve diversity is to ensure that the students who are already here by necessity feel welcomed, willing and able to continue living in the United States.

As far as international high school students go, I've been pretty lucky. This summer, I had the opportunity to participate in the Science Summer Link program as a lab volunteer, not because that was the standard for international students, but because there was no standard.

Simply working the same hours without pay allowed me to finally gain the same experience my peers did. If that's all it takes to take a step toward preserving diversity, it seems worthwhile to me.

Champion humanities through advanced English courses

ELLIE ROSENBERG
Reporter

As early as sixth grade, students are separated into math classes based on their learning pace. Meanwhile, through sophomore year, those same students are in humanities and English classes solely based on grade level. Fewer options and tracking in STEM courses leads to a perception that humanities classes are less valuable.

The insufficient attention and importance Lab places on humanities courses — especially compared to STEM courses — is demeaning toward students, as well as the field, so Lab needs to uplift all types of students by offering courses for an array of interests.

Despite being known for its academic rigor, U-High lacks variety and extra challenges when it comes to English courses, such as Advanced Topics courses or English "tracks." While English Seminar is a solid start to increasing humanities programs, it is not widely known, has a limited number of spots, and is not a traditional class.

According to the English department, the idea of introducing more English options has not been ignored, but teachers prefer to not have students in tracks and also want to preserve the community created in English courses. While community is important, challenging yourself and working with people who are just as passionate are both essential to push you to become the best possible. As a humanities-driven student, challenging myself through English classes has proven difficult because U-High does not offer AT English courses. This absence of advanced English classes sets a precedent for English as a subject of less importance. The future of AI is uncertain, and maintaining human creativity in forms of reading and writing is more important than ever. While learning calculus is important and vital for many students who intend to pursue STEM fields, according to the Journal for Research Scholars and Professionals of English Language Teaching, writing is a skill that will help in every aspect of life.

English courses help students understand how to communicate and organize thoughts persuasively and effectively. Communication and analysis of others' ideas is crucial to understanding the world around us. Regardless of your anticipated career choice, the skill of effective communication is undeniably important.

When English is seen as a class with lesser value and is not promoted through diverse class options, the opportunity for not only humanities-driven students to pursue what they love is taken away, but all students are robbed of the chance to learn the greatest skill: communication.

u-high midway

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mission and editorial policy.

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

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

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

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Underrated Overpass: *Viaduct art reflects spirit, community*

by LUCY SHIRRELL
Health and Wellness Editor

As you wander underneath the train tracks at 55th or 53rd Street, your first thought may not be how beautiful they are. The path along these viaducts is dark and often scattered with dirt and food wrappers. Many may hurry through it to the other side, or to a train quickly without a second glance.

But displayed along the walls are colorful images of figures, hands, suns and more — a new collection of art that makes a seemingly ordinary space into a collection of experiences, ideas and values.

The renovation of the 55th and 53rd Street viaducts, now features 19 new murals chosen from nearly 600 submissions. The goal of this project — a collaboration among Special Service Area #61/Downtown Hyde Park, the Chicago Public Art Group and the South East Chicago Commission — is to make the area more welcoming through art that reflects community values.

For artist Lewis Lain, a Chicago resident of 25 years, having his mural under the viaduct was an opportunity to continue a story he'd already explored in his artwork and bring a piece to Hyde Park.

Mr. Lain's piece fits into a larger series of pieces he's created throughout his career inspired by the shapes created from a painting he did on a discarded window. Over time, these works developed into a larger story that were messages from another world, Mr. Lain said.

His painted mural, "The Sun," depicts a sun both rising and setting over the lake's horizon.

"It's a starting point. It's an ending point. It's a time to begin. It's a time to rest."

Mr. Lain feels this is a moment that represents Chicago.

"The idea is that the singular moment contains so much energy and so much possibility," Mr. Lain said. "To me, it felt like capturing that in Chicago properly."

Another piece featured in the viaduct is "Held-Upon," a photo showing four hands all holding each other in the same position with the first hand holding a ceramic figure.

Artist Kushala Vora created "Held-Upon" with the idea of coexistence in mind.

"I wanted to suggest camaraderie, like the synchronicity within the community of Hyde Park," Ms. Vora said.

For both artists, their care for the Chicago community comes through in their work selected for the viaducts.

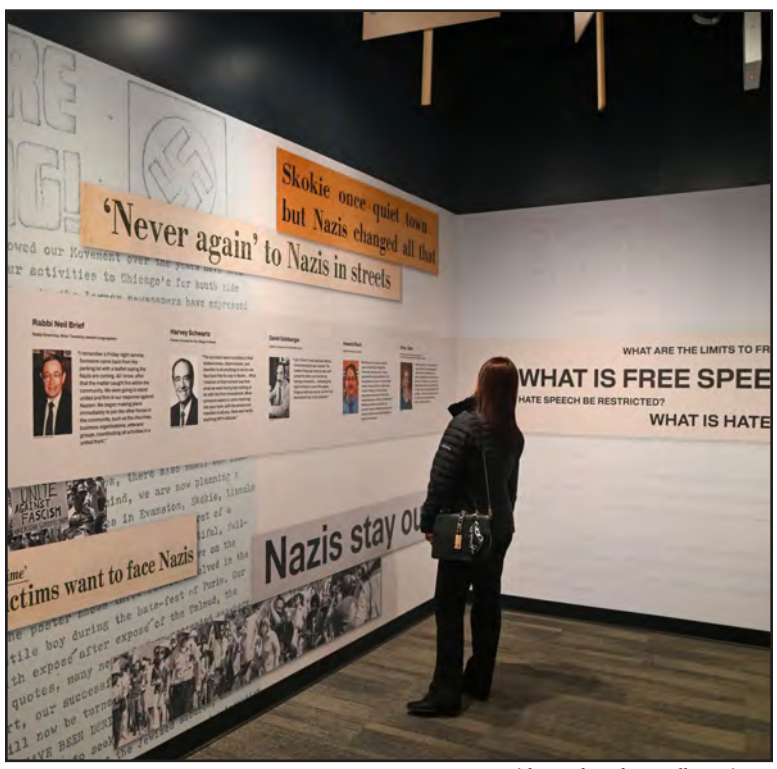
"Chicago's important to me. I'm a Midwesterner, but I am a city dweller. I love being in this environment," Mr. Lain said. "I love that there are 2.7 million of us here. I love that we manage to live together relatively well. I love that there are different flavors throughout this entirety that is Chicago."

The refreshed viaducts at 53rd and 55th Streets allow for Mr. Lain, Ms. Vora and other artists to weave their lives, values and experiences into the fabric of Hyde Park and let visitors see special pieces of their community in ordinary places.

Midway photo by Dallan Krewatch

REFLECTIVE REFRESH. The 53rd Street and 55th Street viaduct panels are now home to 19 new murals from local artists with ties to the neighborhood, replacing pieces that had been made 18 years prior. The artworks, located under the Metra Electric tracks near Lake Park Avenue, are meant to represent each artist's individual take on a representation of Hyde Park. Lewis Lain's "The Sun" (bottom left) is meant to represent the sun rising over the lake's horizon, a moment he felt represented the energy and possibility of Chicago. Kushala Vora's "Held-Upon" (bottom right) is meant to invoke the feeling of coexistance and synchronicity present in Hyde Park.

Holocaust museum opens downtown satellite location



Midway photo by Estelle Levinson

MAKING MEMORIES MATTER. An exhibit at the Illinois Holocaust Museum describes the attempted 1978 neo-Nazi march on Skokie, a Chicago suburb home to 7,000 Holocaust survivors at the time. The exhibit has temporarily moved from Skokie to a satellite location in downtown Chicago.

by NAOMI BENTON
Managing Editor

A new location for the Illinois Holocaust Museum will help ensure the museum's vital mission continues at a time when rising antisemitism and hatred make Holocaust and genocide education more urgent than ever, according to the museum's communications manager, Amanda Berman.

The Illinois Holocaust Museum opened a satellite location in River North on Aug. 26 and plans to keep it open through June 2026. The pop-up, called Experience 360, features five exhibits from the museum's Skokie location that focus on remembering the Holocaust and other genocides, including the Rwandan and Armenian genocides.

The satellite location was opened to continue the museum's educational pursuit while the main site in Skokie undergoes renovations.

The modifications to the museum include a more accommodating lobby and a modernized structure.

Experience 360 features five exhibits, with a few alterations from the Skokie location, chosen for their quality and impact.

The first exhibit upon entrance, A Call to Action, details the story of how the people of Skokie decided to open the Illinois Holocaust Memorial Museum to educate people about the events of the Holocaust after a group of neo-Nazis planned to march through their town in the late 1970s.

The museum also showcases the Holocaust & World War II, through an exhibit that displays a timeline of the events surrounding the Holocaust's progression. Another gallery, Stories of Survival: Object. Image. Memory, features items kept from survivors of genocide with messages from them and their loved ones about the significance of the object.

The museum emphasizes hearing and seeing the full stories of survivors. Two of the exhibits that highlight this mission: a virtual reality theater, where visitors can walk through the story of a genocide survivor's experiences, and a holography theater, where visitors can hear the stories of survivors and ask questions.

Notably, the holography theater includes three new survivor stories, including Kizito Kalima, a survivor of the Rwandan Genocide, who is the first non-Holocaust survivor story in the holography experience.

> **"The most important way that people can learn about any part of history, but especially events like this, is to be able to talk directly to somebody who was an eyewitness.**
> — Mark Friedman, museum education docent

Mark Friedman, an education docent at the museum, noted the significance of having these interactive exhibits.

"The most important way that people can learn about any part of history, but especially events like this, is to be able to talk directly to somebody who was an eyewitness," Mr. Friedman said.

The museum is open seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. but will be closed for holidays. Admission is $8 for students, $12 for adults and $6 for children.

Pushing protein

Despite what influencers say, most people meet protein needs

by CAROLINE SKELLY
Sports Editor

From the shelves of grocery stores to social media feeds, when it comes to diet and health one word is being repeated over and over again: protein. When most people want to add more protein to their diet, they often turn to meat, eggs or dairy products. But foods like waffles and ice cream? Those are just recently being associated with protein, as they are now being enhanced and advertised as protein rich as a part of a rising trend of increased protein intake.

Similarly, gym and food influencers are constantly pushing unrealistic protein diets, meals and powders onto their viewers, insisting that the benefits will be immense, from muscle growth to increased energy.

This protein craze, perpetrated by food brands and social media influencers, has caused many people to consume far more protein than what experts say they need, under the assumption that more is better. Even at U-High, students are becoming more conscious of their protein intake, noting both the advantages and disadvantages of the trend.

Proteins are essential for bone growth and development and cell and tissue repair. It has many important benefits including muscle building, bone health and weight loss. It is most commonly found in eggs, meat, fish, dairy and nuts.

Senior Tyler Chang appreciates how the protein dietary craze has led people to be more conscious of their food intake, but he understands that, just like other macronutrients, eating too much protein can have adverse effects.

"I do think it's good that it's shedding light on trying to be healthier and focusing on what you eat, but too much protein and trying to overdo it definitely could be bad, so just being conscious of that," he said. "Overall, I think it's good that people are focusing more on what they put into their bodies."

Midway photo by Louis Letinsky Wight

PROTEIN POWER. Despite many influencers and companies perpetuating the idea that more protein is better, the recommended dietary allowance for protein for the average adult is 0.8 grams per kilogram of body weight.

The recommended dietary allowance, or RDA, for protein for the average adult is 0.8 grams per kilogram of body weight. For someone who weighs 150 pounds (68 kilograms), this means consuming around 54 grams of protein per day. Athletes and people focused on building muscle are

recommended to consume 1.2-1.7 grams per kilogram per day. One of the most common sources of protein, Greek yogurt, contains 12-18 grams of protein.

Some online diets push viewers to consume 130-200 grams of protein per day, far above the RDA, without addressing the possible risks of increased protein intake. While these ultra-protein diets may benefit body builders and strength trainers, it is excessive for the average adult. People who have very high protein diets are more likely to get kidney stones, elevated blood lipids and heart disease.

Junior Freddie Neater-Dubow believes increased focus on protein intake is beneficial for certain people, but not others

"I think it's good for certain types of people, like if you're an athlete or you want to build muscle, then it's good," she said, "but I don't think people should change their calorie intake by a lot to meet certain protein goals."

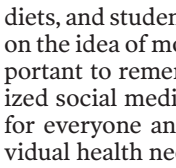
Tyler is mainly exposed to the protein trend on social media and has observed the correlation between protein and gym culture.

"I definitely think in the media and social media, it is portrayed that eating protein is a sign that you go to the gym and you care about your health and you want to look good," Tyler said. "I definitely think it is portrayed pretty highly on social media, like if you eat a bunch of protein, you will see massive results in the gym."

The social media protein craze may have made people more aware of their nutrition, but as influencers continue to advertise excessive diets, and students become hooked on the idea of more protein, it's important to remember that generalized social media diets don't work for everyone and can ignore individual health needs.

protein breakdown

According to the recommended dietary allowance, a person who weighs 150 pounds should consume 54 grams of protein. Here are some common protein-packed foods to help you reach your daily dose of protein.



A small, 5.3-ounce container of Fage yogurt contains 16 grams of protein, about 30% of the recommended dietary allowance.

One cup of chopped chicken breast contains 43 grams of protein, coming in at about 80% of the daily recommendation.

— compiled by Lucy Shirrell

Q&A: Skills, support to combat procrastination

Midway illustration by Tyra DeWeese

DELAY OR DO. Counselors, advisers and teachers are resources for students struggling with procrastination, learning coordinator Laura Doto said.

Short tasks, exact plans stop stalling

by SINZIANA LAZAR
Reporter

Although school has just begun, students are experiencing the stress from piles of homework, tests and quizzes. Procrastination is a common, yet daunting, struggle for many students, affecting their schoolwork and mental health. Laura Doto, a U-High learning coordinator, frequently works with students struggling with procrastination. Ms. Doto's responses have been lightly edited for clarity, style and length.

What are some common myths or misunderstandings about procrastination?

That it's a bad habit. Sometimes it's not a bad habit at all. It's just that you don't have a good habit to counteract the tendency to procrastinate. That's usually the biggest one, and that only students do it or only kids do it. That's not true either. We all do it. I think attending to it is like recognizing, "Oh gosh, I'm putting that off," and then exploring, "Why am I putting this off?" Whether it's a reflection tool or it's having a conversation with somebody just depends on your personality.

What are the best strategies for a student to use when they find themselves procrastinating?

One of the biggest strategies that I use repeatedly with students of all ages is a start task: identifying something that you can do in five minutes or less, or in 30 seconds or less. The less specific you are in your task plan, the less likely your brain is ready to dig in. So, you can identify a really specific start task that bypasses the sentiment of procrastination.

How should teachers approach students who are dealing with unmanaged procrastination?

Sometimes just helping a student to get started, instead of talking about what to do, to actually sit down with the student and help them get there. When a student comes in with multiple missing assignments, I'll say, "OK, let's start with one." And that's, like, the first thing we'll do is get something done so that you've established a little bit of traction. Because we can all talk a good game, but it's the action that matters.

How can parents best support their children who struggle with chronic procrastination without adding to their stress?

Very much the same way that teachers can do it: How can I help? Instead of you should be doing this, it's like, "How can I help you get to what I know you think is important?" or "How can I help you engage with this, even though it looks not so interesting?" But "How can I help" is always a good method for parents, because most kids have the answers.

What are the resources that students have access to if they need help with procrastination?

School counselors are always helpful. Teachers directly, as I said before, like, "I'm really struggling and I can't figure out how to get started, or I'm not getting started, let me go talk to my English teacher, my history teacher, my school counselor, my adviser."

Are procrastination and anxiety, about tests, homework projects, etc, correlated? Does one affect the other, and if so, what can students do to overcome it?

I think not feeling ready is probably the most common, and being in touch with why am I not feeling ready is the solution. Is it because I haven't thought through enough? Is it because I haven't read the instructions in a while and I've blown it all out of proportion? Is it because I need to have a conversation to clarify what I'm doing, like all of that.

What is a good balance between relaxation and work in order to maintain a student's mental health?

That's the other reason people procrastinate, right? Their brain really needs to rest, and recognizing that the brain needs to rest or the body needs to rest, setting a timer is really helpful.

F1 fever

From early-morning watch parties to heated classroom debates, Formula One has sped into the lives of U-High students at who find themselves drawn not just to the racing but invested in the stories, rivalries and culture fueling the world's fastest-growing sport. That growth is reflected on campus, where more female-indentifying fans have started embracing Formula 1 and the school's racing club has found success in competitions around the world.

Midway illustration by Asher Dennis

F1 diversifies and appeals to expanding community

by ARI NOVAK
Features Editor

Sophomore Mila Bhatoey-Bertrand discovered Formula One through her mother. Her mother was born in Belgium not far from the city of Stravelot, where the Belgian Grand Prix is held, but hadn't tuned in to any races in years, according to Mila. But, while at home during the height of COVID-19, Mila's family began watching "Drive to Survive," a documentary following Formula One racing teams, which sparked Mila's interest in the sport.

"F1 was super popular in Europe, and the people in the U.S. just didn't clock that it was a thing," Mila said. "The Netflix documentary was getting good reviews and people thought, 'Woah this is cool. We should watch this more.'"

Mila isn't the only new fan. Since its start in the United Kingdom in 1950, Formula One has quickly become the most popular annual sporting series in the world, with millions tuning in to watch each race.

At U-High, the sport has found its own dedicated community of fans. In the 2021-22 school year, a group of U-High students established Aeros Racing, a Formula One in Schools team, which went on to be the only American team to compete in the 2024 World Finals in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, where they placed 13th overall.

> "I feel like we receive more judgement for liking F1, though. People think we only like it because of the drama and because the boys are attractive."
> Kayla Monterola, junior

The team's co-captain, senior Aran Malhotra, first got into Formula One after joining the Aeros Racing team. His admiration for the sport is rooted in his love for engineering and manufacturing.

"Formula One is noted as the pinnacle of motorsport because of how difficult it is for drivers to get in as well as the engineering of the cars," Aran said. "I'd say that is what really draws me to it."

The Formula One fandom surged in popularity after the release of "Drive to Survive" in the United States. From 2019 to 2022, there was a 10% viewership increase in the United States, according to a study from Nielsen. Junior Kayla Monterola discovered the sport through this series.

"They definitely over-dramatized it," Kayla said about the show, "but I think it gave me a very good basis of what the sport is about, and it helped me get into my favorite drivers."

Kayla said that there is a growing community of female-identifying fans in U-High, although this comes with its own stereotypes.

"I feel like we receive more judgement for liking F1, though. People think we only like it because of the drama and because the boys are attractive," Kayla said.

Drama is a legitimate reason Formula One captivates so many fans. Two famous drivers, Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton, were locked in an intense rivalry for years, but it culminated in 2021 as they fought for the World Championship title. Both Aran and Mila recognized that this drama was instrumental in boosting Formula One's popularity in the United States.

"People like the stories that come with Formula One," Aran said. "It's kind of something people find interest in and can connect to even if they're not pure motorsport enthusiasts. They can still follow their drivers, follow their favorite team."

Q&A: What do U-High students enjoy about F1

Six F1 fans at U-High were asked four questions about why they enjoy watching F1 and what started their F1 journey. They also offered some advice to new fans.

Why do you watch the sport?

"I like cars and I like watching them race. It's exhilarating."
— Adi Shukla, sophomore

"It combines the intense physical exertion of a regular sport with incredible engineering feats, so it's this really cool intersection in between engineering, math, and all these physics concepts, like who can build the fastest car as well as who's the fastest driver."
— Maya Livni, senior

"Just the overall competitive nature of it, I find it really interesting. Also, the fact that there's an engineering perspective, too, which I'm really interested in."
— Ronen Malani, junior

"I watch the sport because my brother and dad introduced it to me, and also because it's exciting."
— Myra Shetty, sophomore

"I watch F1 for the excitement, and I like supporting my team."
— Tanvir Singh, ninth grader

"I like cars a lot, and then racing is just an extra to it. I love the complexity behind them, and I love following the drama of the drivers."
— Aariz Omar, sophomore

What got you into watching the sport?

"I started racing at a racetrack in the suburbs of Chicago. I raced Mazda Miatas, and I raced two-cycle and four-cycle go karts. After picking up racing, I found a love for Formula One as well, as well as my F1 in Schools club contribution."
— Adi Shukla, sophomore

"I mean, Lewis Hamilton was at Mercedes at the time. My brother was a fan of them, and I love Lewis Hamilton, so I also became a Formula One fan, and we would watch races on the weekends."
— Maya Livni, senior

"Through the Netflix show, 'Drive to Survive.' I saw my friend was watching it, so I went and watched it, and I basically got hooked, and I got interested and started watching races."
— Ronen Malani, junior

"Mainly because my family likes watching F1 sometimes, so I just see it on the TV and they also talk about it."
— Myra Shetty, sophomore

"Friends and family."
— Tanvir Singh, ninth grader

"I just saw it on TikTok, and I realized that I should just wake up early one day and watch it, and I did that."
— Aariz Omar, sophomore

What is your favorite part of watching F1?

"The drama. Something can go wrong at any second."
— Adi Shukla, sophomore

"You get to see different drivers battle it out. It's super exciting when there's, like, an overtake or especially within a team, you see how the strategists might ask one driver to let another one pass them, and so for the benefit of the team, that one driver might have to pass."
— Maya Livni, senior

"Watching the on-track battles and seeing how close drivers are getting to each other and like $10 million cars going 200 miles an hour to fight for positions."
— Ronen Malani, junior

"Just watching the different events, I guess, and also just like the excitement of which team or person wins."
— Myra Shetty, sophomore

"Just like the excitement and how things can just change so quickly."
— Tanvir Singh, ninth grade

"Supporting my team, Ferrari, because I want them to win every time."
— Aariz Omar, sophomore

What is one piece of advice you would give to new fans?

"Watch the sport."
— Adi Shukla, sophomore

"Watch the race recaps because I think they cut out a lot of the more boring parts of Formula One."
— Maya Livni, senior

"Don't just be a fan of whatever the best team is."
Ronen Malani, junior

"Just keep watching it for a while because it gets more entertaining the more you watch it."
— Myra Shetty, sophomore

"Stay loyal to your team, and don't change teams."
— Tanvir Singh, ninth grader

"Wake up early — it's worth it — and then download the F1 app on your phone because then you can just follow the races if you forget to watch them."
— Aariz Omar, sophomore

where to watch

In the United States, ESPN remains one of the primary broadcasters of Grand Prix, showing most races on ESPN or ESPN2 on cable. Some select Grand Prix races are also shown on ABC. Fans who prefer a digital experience can subscribe to ESPN+, which allows fans to livestream races on any device.

Liberty Media, the media rights owner to Formula One, offers F1TV, where fans can watch in-depth coverage of races with access to tens of camera angles, team radios and live statistical breakdowns.

Globally, Skysports broadcasts all sessions, which provides dedicated coverage to most sessions and all races throughout the year.

For fans worldwide, F1 TV Pro is the most direct option. It's available in most countries globally with the most features for one of the lowest prices.

— Kabir Joshi

Grid to Hollywood: Formula One's expanding spotlight

'F1: The Movie' delivers thrills despite weak female representation

by SOHANA SCHNEIDER
Editor-in-Cheif

Dazzling displays of fireworks, a smooth racetrack, real-life Formula One drivers, and speeding cars light up the screen. These captivating shots are quintessential to the cinematography of "F1," a movie that turned blockbuster over the summer.

The film, directed by Joseph Kosinski, follows Formula One driver Sonny Hayes (Brad Pitt), who joins a struggling Formula One team, APXGP, 30 years after a career-ending crash.

Sonny and his rookie racing partner Joshua Pearce (Damson Idris) struggle to work as a team, as they both grapple with their reasons for racing.

Knowing little about Formula One prior to the movie, I was still thoroughly impressed. The cinematography was beautiful, the soundtrack catchy, and the commentary believable. During each race, I was on the edge of my seat, cheering for both Sonny and Joshua.

However, Kate McKenna (Kerry Condon), APXGP's car engineer, had a disappointing arc. Throughout the film, she mentions breaking barriers as a woman and becoming F1's first female director of tech, but halfway through the film, she and Sonny begin a relationship.

Their romance contradicts many of her lines, and it is ultimately unnecessary to the plot.

by the numbers

On release, "F1," the movie, broke box office records becoming Apple's and Brad Pitt's highest-grossing film. In addition, it became the highest-grossing sports movie ever.

$57 million
on domestic opening

Source: IMDb

While its representation of women is very surface-level, "F1" is an entertaining watch for everyone — Formula One fans or not.

Formula One

'Drive to Survive' entertains audiences but still leans on overdramatization

by KABIR JOSHI
Editor-in-Cheif

Netflix's latest season of 'Formula 1: Drive to Survive' once again delivers the high-octane finishes and the emotional drama fans have loved from previous seasons. It's as much about podiums as it is about personalities.

The 10-episode season captures everything from Charles Leclerc breaking his Monaco "curse" to McLaren's resurgence to the front of the grid with Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris. As always, the show thrives with driver drama, scenes and stories fans have not heard or seen. It slows down the drivers to highlight a more human side that fans rarely get to see.

Few moments are as emotional as watching driver Lewis Hamilton weigh the emotional stakes of his suprising move to Ferrari for the 2025 season.

The cinematography is amazing, pairing the sounds of roaring engines with sweeping drone shots that immerse you to the fullest.

That said, 'Drive to Survive' still leans into its old, overdramatizing habits.

Important topics such as Daniel Riccardo's departure from F1 feel rushed and rivalries between drivers like Max Verstappen and Lando Norris feel over exaggerated. It feels as if storylines are condensed and not every driver receives equal attention.

Still, the season succeeded in delivering a different view to a sport that can seem closed off to fans.

Formula One

'The Academy' highlights women's journeys and struggles past barriers onto the track

by LIGHT DOHRN
Editor-in-Chief

Many people, if asked, would have absolutely no idea that Formula One even had female drivers. It's not widely known — but the aim of Netflix's docuseries "F1: The Academy" is to change that. Following the inaugural series of the F1 Academy, the series places a spotlight on young female drivers fighting to prove themselves in a sport that has forever been not just dominated but completely monopolized by men. The show delivers high-speed thrills and rivalries much like those in "F1: Drive to Survive," but its real strength lies in the personal stories of the drivers like Lia Block, Bianca Bustamante and Doriane Pin, who navigate not only the racetrack but also the systemic barriers keeping women out of racing's highest levels. While at times the series leans far into familiar reality TV tropes, it ultimately succeeds in making the women's journeys feel urgent and inspiring. For casual viewers and hardcore F1 fans alike, "F1: The Academy" is an eye-opening and wild ride. For casual viewers and hardcore F1 fans alike, "F1: The Academy" is an eye-opening and wild ride.

> "While at times the series leans far into familiar reality TV tropes, it ultimately succeeds in making the women's journeys feel urgent and inspiring."

Netflix

From T-shirts to toys, merch drives passion

by GABRIEL WANG
Reporter

The roar of Formula One may be thousands of miles away, but its presence is unmistakable in the school hallway.

The Williams Racing logo is seen weaving through the crowd of students, carried not on a speeding car but on the T-shirt of senior Aran Malhotra.

From wearable gear to Lego sets and Hot Wheels, Formula One merchandise is fueling student passion for motorsport into their lives.

For Aran, the shirt is more than just a piece of everyday clothing. It represents not only his support for a specific team but also as a Formula One fan in general. A gift from a friend, the shirt also represents the bridge of support from his peers and his connection to a Formula One team.

"The shirt I wear was gifted to me by a friend, because I gained an affiliation with Williams Racing," Aran said. "Him supporting me, and then me supporting that team."

But the merchandise doesn't just stop at T-shirts. Formula One's partnerships with Lego and Hot Wheels have extended team support into collectibles and models.

Formula One and Lego's partnership began this year and includes "a focus on bringing fans closer to the world of innovation, technology and engineering through the fun of Lego building, with in-person activities at races, and products that celebrate the sport's engineering and technical heritage," according to a statement.

Formula One and Hot Wheels have extended their multiyear partnership to "bring together the adrenaline of motor racing and the excitement of toy cars and provide opportunities to see the fine details that go into an F1 car, all in the palm of your hand," Emily Prazer, Formula One chief commercial officer, said in a statement.

For students like Aran, the passion for F1 is simple: a shirt, a team name, a shared glance in the hallway.

But, in the end, it's not just about wearable merchandise or collectibles, it's about expressing passion and support for F1.

Midway photo by Kabir Joshi

SHOPPING SPREE. Senior Kiran Mullangi browses for F1 merch.

Alumni Artistry

Corvus Gallery to show art made by U-High graduates

by SINZIANA LAZAR
Reporter

Drawing from over 60 years of U-High graduating classes, Corvus Gallery is hosting a new exhibit featuring alumni artists during fall quarter.

The exhibit, curated by Gina Alicea, an art teacher, includes artworks in various mediums, from ceramics to video art.

Initially proposed by 2024 alumnus Reid Surmeier, the idea for the exhibit was met with enthusiastic reactions from the 20 alumni participating.

"Oh, they loved it. I mean, they were, they were so excited about this, you know, to have their work here. They're thrilled," Ms. Alicea said of the alumni participating. "Oh, I want to be a part of this. Oh, I want to come talk to the students. I want to visit."

Through this exhibit, Ms. Alicea wants to highlight stories of success in a time when the arts are often devalued, emphasizing how the arts have always been essential to John Dewey's philosophy of learning and to Lab's mission of encouraging creativity and innovation.

"For Dewey, the arts were very important because it expresses the spirit of the person, their creativity,"Ms. Alicea said. "At Lab, we've had art as part of our curriculum for over 100 years. I think it particularly represents the creativity and curiosity that's part of our mission here at Lab, because it's made such a huge difference."

Louise LeBourgeois, one of the alumni artists who graduated in 1981, recounted her time at U-High, saying that while she wasn't particularly artistic in high school, for her May Project, she interned at the university's Renaissance Society, which exposed her to the possibility of pursuing art in college.

"I had a spark of a feeling that I could be an artist," Ms. LeBourgeois said. "Sometimes you just have a thought that arrives in your brain, like, boom. But it was something about that May Project at Lab, really, that opened my eyes to art in a way they hadn't been opened before."

Midway photo by Lucy Byrnes

GIFTED GRADUATES. The painting "Medusa" by Emilie Varlet is a featured piece and can be seen at the exhibit's opening event Sept. 26, 4-6 p.m.

> **"There's something about commitment and persistence that I think is universally respected."**
> — Louise LeBourgeois, 1981 alumna artist

Ms. Alicea and Ms. LeBourgeois both emphasized that it is important for student artists to have successful role models who inspire them, even if the students themselves aren't yet certain about their own career paths.

"A lot of people at that age, no matter what school you're at, really don't know," Ms. LeBourgeois said. "It's like they kind of, you know, are meandering, they're exploring. Their lives will take unexpected turns, and they'll end up doing something. But I think it's really important to have a vision, at that age, of possibilities."

While many see the arts as a difficult career path, Ms. LeBourgeois stressed that with hard work and perseverance, opportunities will emerge. She noted that artists will receive a variety of advice from parents, friends, and professors, but ultimately, their path should be guided by what they personally value most.

"There's years of such exponential growth and sort of self knowledge and self questioning, and, you know, wrestling with moral values and and who are you, and what do you care about the most?" Ms. LeBourgeois said. "But, there's something about commitment and persistence that I think is universally respected. If you demonstrate that in a community, in an arts community, people notice, yeah, and opportunities open up for you."

Movie 'Him' explores the horror of football

by ABHAY CHANDRAN
City Life Editor

Jets fly over a stadium, leaving trails of red, white and blue. Announcers and audience members yell uproariously as the Saviors take the football game at the cost of an injury to their quarterback. The camera moves back to a room adorned in memorabilia as a father tells his concerned son, "See, Cam, that's what real men do. They sacrifice."

At first, Justin Tipping's "Him" seems like an average sports film. A quarterback, Cameron Cade (Tyriq Withers), has always wanted to be the GOAT, but suffers a career-ending brain injury right before the event that could get him drafted into the NFL.

But a typical sports flick doesn't have our main character's childhood idol coming to save him from his plight and show him what football is really about through one-on-one training. It sounds ideal at first, but as Cam soon comes to learn, "In this game, violence is rewarded."

Throughout the torturous trials that follow, "Him" delivers a poignant message about the real sacrifices it takes to succeed in America's bloodiest Sunday night pastime and establishes Mr. Tipping as a promising and extremely stylistic new voice in the horror genre.

The film's greatest strength is its symbolism. As the viewer watches Isaiah "train" Cam to sacrifice everything by coercing him into brutally killing his teammates, they are not left with the fear traditional horror promises, but with a simple message: The GOAT is not a person. They are a symbol, both for those who worship them and for the industrymen who profit off of them.

While the film delivers its many messages very sharply, its methods of doing so can be hard to follow. The film's pacing feels unrealistic and steep.

For example, the idea of selling your soul for success very quickly goes from choosing to deprioritize your family to signing a contract given to you by a council of team managers donning devil horns and pigskin cloaks.

Ultimately, the film expands beyond psychological horror elements. The visuals go beyond blood, and use X-ray video to make brutality feel impactful. The sound captures the overwhelming nature of a stadium using live samples. The actors' use of their own previous experiences in professional football provide more than a simple structure could.

Overall, what "Him" lacks in conventional merits is made up by the message it leaves to aspiring athletic stars and their viewers by proxy: "Don't kill yourself for this job."

Universal Pictures

FOOTBALL FANATICS. Justin Tipping's movie "Him," while occasionally confusing, deftly illustrates the violence at the core of American football.

5 faves.

The Midway is regularly featuring five recommendations from a staff member, highlighting their interests. Caroline Skelly is a junior and the sports editor.

Paramount

MOVIE
"She's the Man"

"She's the Man" is one of the most quintessential 2000s rom-coms. It follows Violet, who joins the boys soccer team disguised as her twin brother. Loosely inspired by William Shakespeare's play "Twelfth Night," its witty humor and talented cast make this one of my favorite rom-coms to watch whenever I need something light and funny. It is available to stream on Tubi for free.

Spotify

SONG
"26" by Caamp

The band Caamp has gained popularity for its signature folky and raspy sound. "26" is one of the band's more popular songs and my favorite; the banjo opening reminds me of classic bluegrass and folk music that I love so much, and its lyrics about imagining a joyful future are catchy and moving. It is available on Spotify and Apple Music.

Macmillan Publishers

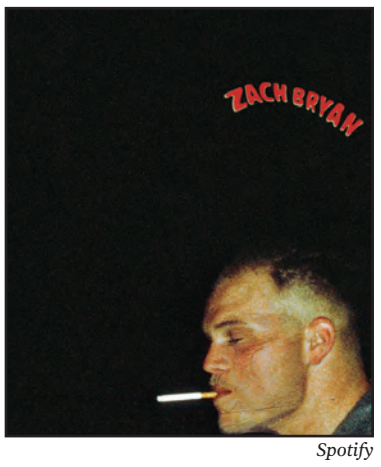
BOOK
"Nightingale" by Kristen Hannah

"The Nightingale" by Kristen Hannah tells the story of two sisters in France during World War II and their individual ways of resisting the German occupation. It is an incredibly well written and emotional story about the resilience of women that made it impossible to put down. It is available on Amazon.

CBS

TV SHOW
"The Amazing Race"

"The Amazing Race" is a fast-paced competition show where 13 teams of two race around the world and complete various tasks to try and win $1 million. Since its debut in 2001, there have been 37 seasons filled with memorable challenges, destinations and teams. This is my favorite show to watch with my family, as it's entertaining for all ages. It is available on CBS.



Spotify

ALBUM
"Zach Bryan" by Zach Bryan

Zach Bryan's self-titled album is lyrically-rich and emotional. It blends folk and country to produce a raw, heartfelt sound. The poetic lyrics are meaningful, touching on themes of love, loss or personal reflection. My favorite song from the album is "East Side of Sorrow" because of its moving lyrics, and hearing it in concert made me love the album even more. It is available on Spotify and Apple Music.

Jokey Journalism

'The Office' spinoff 'The Paper' uses comedy to explore the value of local newspaper publications, journalists

By ELLIE ROSENBERG
Reporter

"Enervate sells products made out of paper. That might be office supplies, that might be janitorial paper — which is toilet tissue, toilet seat protectors — and local newspapers. And that is in order of quality," explains an exasperated Ken Davies, Enervate executive, to the documentary crew before leading them on a tour of Truth Teller Tower.

For sitcom fans, the fake company "Dunder Mifflin" is a well known name from the 2005 comedy "The Office."

A new "mockumentary" style spinoff, "The Paper," set in a newsroom, engages viewers with awkward, ironic moments, and then captivates them by asking the question, "Why should we care about newspapers?" In doing so, "The Paper" tackles head-on the dilemma of dwindling local newspapers.

"The Paper" was released on Sept. 4 and is available to stream on Peacock.

While "The Paper" offers laughable moments and fast-paced storylines, a closer look shows it reflects the steep decline of the perceived importance of journalism.

In the first episode, Dunder Mifflin has been bought by Enervate, which also owns a newspaper in Ohio, the Toledo Truth Teller.

The documentary crew from "The Office" has now decided against following Dunder Mifflin on its new adventure under Enervate, instead following the Truth Teller and how one man plans to reform it.

"The Paper" centers in-over-his-head protagonist Ned Sampson (Domhnall Gleeson), who has been hired as the Truth Teller's new editor-in-chief.

Upon arrival, Sampson is promptly trapped in an office by his new employees and soon realizes he's bitten off slightly more than he can chew — but nothing excites the preppy editor-in-chief like a journalistic challenge.

The Truth Teller, while having a history of success, had declined to nothing more than a wire agency.

IMDb

SCRAPPY SCRIBBLERS. "The Paper," a new mockumentary spinoff of "The Office," follows a struggling local news publication called the Toledo Truth Teller. Through humor, the show works to defend the value of journalism.

But when Sampson takes over he recruits the employees — from an accountant to the toilet paper sales person — to volunteer their time to become journalists, investigating stories in their town, and creating original work.

In the intro of "The Paper," newspapers are used for everything but their intended purpose, demonstrating how the newspaper industry is on the decline. By pushing to promote newspapers, "The Paper" advocates for the importance and power that newspapers hold.

By focusing on local journalism rather than national, or even global, coverage, "The Paper" humanizes journalists.

Using humor and stories of citizens reporting truths to their community, "The Paper" strives to be an advocate for the value of journalism.

Whether you're a sitcom enthusiast or returning fan of "The Office," "The Paper" offers a comedic spin on a slice of life.

While still poking fun at journalism — "The Paper" shows the value of reporting the truth, and defends journalism in one of its darkest hours.

more sitcoms

"Community": Created by Dan Harmon — of "Rick and Morty" fame — "Community" focuses on a group of students at Greendale Community College who form a study group to cope with their insane teacher, Ben Chang (Ken Jeong). As the show goes on, it produces stranger and stranger episodes, including a "Star Wars" themed paintball tournament, a Christmas episode in stop motion animation and an episode featuring six different timelines. It's available to stream on Hulu.

"Arrested Development": The ultimate dysfunctional family, "Arrested Development" follows the Bluths, specifically Michael Bluth. After his affluent father is sent to prison for white collar crime, Michael tries to keep his selfish, materialistic, but ultimately lovable family together. The show is available to stream on Netflix.

"Will & Grace": "Will & Grace" is a sit-com centered on the relationship between roommates and best friends, Will Truman, a gay lawyer, and Grace Adler, a straight interior designer. When it premiered in 1998, viewers were hard-pressed to find sympathetic portrayals of queer characters. "Will & Grace" is available to stream on Hulu.

"Abbott Elementary": "Abbott Elementary" focuses on an underfunded elementary school in West Philadelphia, where teachers often quit after their second year.

Sunny second-grade teacher Janine Teagues (Quinta Brunson) is determined to connect with her students no matter what, whether the challenge comes in the form of a lack of school supplies, broken hallway lights or socially impaired colleagues.

— Lila Coyne

Musical 'Hell's Kitchen' deftly balances cliché and heart

Coming-of-age story arrives in Chicago this fall

By LIGHT DOHRN
Editor-in-Chief

Hell's Kitchen — not Gordon Ramsay's cooking show, but the Manhattan neighborhood sandwiched between 34th and 59th Streets and 8th Avenue and the Hudson River — used to be notorious for gangs, poverty and crumbling tenements.

In a certain sense, it still is — but nowadays, it's gentrified enough to have theaters, restaurants and the kind of New York buzz that moves tourists to tears.

And now, "Hell's Kitchen" isn't just a place but a musical. Built with the music and lyrics of pop star Alicia Keys and a "semi-autobiographical" plot about her upbringing in 1990s Manhattan, the musical has been on Broadway since opening on Oct. 24, 2023, and its national tour will be in Chicago at the Nederlander Theatre Nov. 11-30.

The play's light-fare storyline follows 17-year-old Ali, a spunky (or slightly grating — you decide) young girl growing up in Hell's Kitchen with her mother, Jersey, with whom she has a standardly tumultuous relationship.

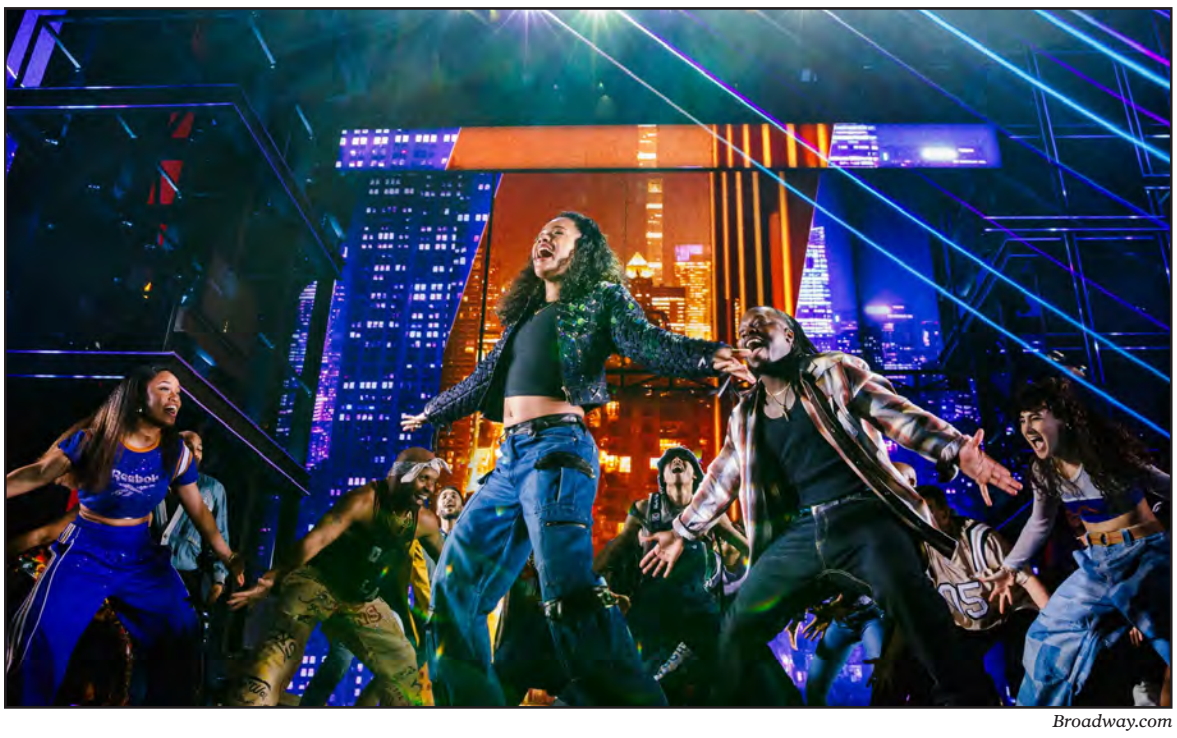
Being 17, Ali is interested in virtually two things: boys and some abstract concept of freedom that's never truly defined.

> **"If nothing else, 'Hell's Kitchen' is a chance to hear Keys' songs reimagined in a Broadway setting and to watch an accessible story about growing up in New York."**

The play routinely returns to a metaphor of Ali as Rapunzel, trapped in a stone tower by the malevolent presence that is her mother.

The comparison is amusing at times but breaks down quickly when you remember that the worst thing Jersey has done is ask Ali not to sleep with Knuck, a bucket drummer who busks outside of their apartment building and is implied to be too-many-years older than Ali. The humor also fades once you recognize that the stakes here are far lower and more mundane than the metaphor suggests, grounded less in moral transgression and more in the awkward realities of messy relationships.

It seems like a reasonable request but one that Ali responds to with tantrums and the classic "You never let me do anything" tirade. It's an entertaining and perhaps somewhat relatable arc for a teenage audience but begs that you look no further, lest you see some of the holes in the narrative and clichés in the writing.



Broadway.com

CONCRETE JUNGLE. The jukebox musical "Hells Kitchen" uses Alicia Keys' music catalogue to tell the story of her adolescence growing up in New York City. It is coming to Chicago at the Nederlander Theatre Nov. 11-30.

While the plot might lean heavily on familiar coming-of-age tropes, the ending manages to land on a slightly more genuine note.

Ali begins to see her mother not as a villain but as a person who has been fighting her own battles to keep them both safe, and the two women reconnect at the expense of Ali's flaky and largely absent father Davis. It finally gives the audience a glimpse of the play's emotional core — and telling young girls to stay close with their mothers is an endlessly worthwhile message.

If nothing else, "Hell's Kitchen" is a chance to hear Keys' songs reimagined in a Broadway setting and to watch an accessible story about growing up in New York. The sheer liveliness of the production makes it a fun night out, especially if you're around Ali's age — and teenagers might roll their eyes at some of the clichés (and maybe even at Ali herself), but they'll likely see bits of their own coming-of-age reflected onstage.

Balancing Act

Senior performer Satya Dominguez-Hultgren adds whimsy to aerial dancing through clowning

Midway photo by Delaney Connell

by LILA COYNE
Arts & Entertainment Editor

Some of the most famous circus acts have been about escape: a straitjacket, handcuffs, a sealed box. Senior Satya Dominguez-Hultgren chooses silk. Concentric circles bind her stomach, her legs, her left shoulder. Then she unravels. In doing so, she falls. This act unfolds more than 10 feet in the air.

Satya catches herself and flips into a sitting position. She looks out into the audience and flexes her feet in the air in a child-like manner, staring blankly at her viewers while the audience laughs at her bewilderment. In the middle of her performance, Satya has switched acts. She has gone from an aerial dancer to a clown.

Satya has trained in circus arts for 10 years. As she developed her performance style, she began to combine clowning with her skills as a trapeze artist, pushing the boundaries of grace and physical comedy.

Satya aims for nuance in her performances. In her experience, women are often encouraged to be controlled, delicate, agile. She wants to expand what her movements can convey.

"It's having a complex character that's communicable," she said. "How does physical theater communicate an emotion besides just grace or beauty? Can it be a little bit funny?"

Satya knows that most people associate clowning with elaborate wigs or costumes. Instead of a clown wig, she wears pigtails. Her red nose is accomplished through copious amounts of blush.

The drama of her performance lies in disrupting people's expectations. She will begin a movement as if to strike a classic ballet pose and then interrupt herself. Instead of pointing her toe, she flexes her foot.

"For clowning, I'm trying to be silly," Satya said. "In ballet, you would talk about a line from your fingers to your toes. So you break that line. That's all of your movements."

Satya has been training at her studio Aloft Circus Arts in the Logan Square neighborhood for six years. Her coach, Kristi Taff, is the Director of the Aloft Youth Ensemble. This year Satya was nominated as the Student Leader for Youth Ensemble.

"The way she's stepped up has been awesome," Ms. Taff said. "She has been such an exemplary figure to our new students and our current students. She's been very motivating."

Satya developed her clown by satirizing parts of herself: clumsiness, forgetfulness, distraction. One time she filmed herself walking to figure out how to exaggerate her own movements.

"With clowning, as opposed to theater, I think you have one character, and then you bring that to different scenes" she said. "The character might shift, but it doesn't change. It's like your clown is an exaggerated version of you."

In Ms. Taff's experience, students are often hesitant to incorporate clowning or theater into their performance, for fear of embarrassing themselves.

"Trying to get our teens more interested in clowning or theater is a very uncomfortable place, and they're really nervous about it," Ms. Taff said. "Satya has really embraced it and stepped really boldly into it."

When she graduates, Satya doesn't intend to leave circus arts behind. After majoring in biology for her undergraduate degree, Satya's dream is to go to a circus arts training program and perform at a professional level.

When those around her question why she would spend time as a performer, rather than pursuing her other goal of becoming a doctor, Satya insists that nothing is more timely or relevant than performance art.

"Circus offers an avenue where anything is allowed in a way that is actively being barred in our society," she said. "Even more so than dance, even more so than theater, circus is open to experimentation, open to questioning."

Ultimately, that's Satya's goal: to ask questions with her art.

"I can," she said. "And if I could, why wouldn't I?"

International Labubu dolls mark new craze in the U.S.

With social media attention, toys' popularity booms

by MAYA GAUHAR
Reporter

As students weave among the hallways at the beginning of the school day, the same keychain dangles from several backpacks: a wide-eyed smiling toy that comes in varying colors, instantly recognizable to most. Labubus – fuzzy monster toys that range from keychains to large plushies – have gained rapid popularity due to social media recognition.

Labubus were originally introduced in 2015 by Kasing Lung, an artist from Hong Kong. They began gaining popularity in 2024 when BLACKPINK singer Lisa posted about the toys via social media, and later, in 2025, Lizzo referred to them in a single she released.

Sophomore Ella Nyugen, one of the many U-High students with Labubus, had received her Labubu as a gift, and agrees that the Labubu trend is largely attributed to social media. In particular, this is true on platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

Midway photo by Layla Flowers

SURPLUS OF SMILES. Labubus, which were created by Hong Kong artist Kasing Lung, have surged in popularity due to their uniqe design.

"They're a cool accessory, but I don't have any particular attachment," Ella said. "They're just kind of fun to have."

Senior Bayaan El-Bawab, another student with a Labubu, similarly had been given a Labubu from her sister, but doubts she'd have purchased one herself.

"I wouldn't have bought them for myself but receiving [Labubus] as gifts, I would put them on a purse," she said.

Bayaan explained that part of her reasoning for not buying a Labubu for herself is the price – while it varies depending on the location, many Labubus cost $30 to $40, with the most expensive ones costing over $200. However, this largely depends on the specific store and on whether the Labubu is a real version. For instance, Labubus' dupe, Lafufus, are considered lower quality and are typically cheaper, although they often have asymmetrical features and less precise stitching.

The rise of Labubus' popularity follows a wider craze Bayaan has noticed.

"I think it's a continuation of the trend of having cute chunky accessories; it's like the same vein as the calico critters," she said. "I guess I don't understand how they're so popular but I think they're really cute."

Students like Bayaan find that Labubus are not just fun toys, but a way to participate in an ongoing trend that continues to grow in popularity. For certain, Labubus will appear more and more throughout U-High – hanging from students' backpacks, vibrant streaks of color against the hallway.

labubu locations

Thinking of getting your hands on one of these menacing toys? Here are some ways you can purchase your own Labubu:

- **Pop Mart**, located at 540 N. Michigan Ave., sells a variety of toys from Labubus to accessories, plush toys and blind boxes. Orders can be placed in-store and online.
- **Amazon** also offers a wide selection of this original toy, spanning a price range of $20 toys to items as expensive as $239.88.
- **Etsy** has a selection of Labubu-related items, including custom T-shirts, blankets and tumblers.
- **Walmart** sells Labubus both in-store and on their website, which you can find online at walmart.com.

– Compiled by Ari Novak

Going from TikTok to table

Viral videos by celebrities inspire everyday meals

by CECILY BENSMAIA
Reporter

Satisfying sounds of chocolate melting and snapping, pistachio cream being spread and the finished chocolate bar being bitten into play through a phone speaker.

These sounds fill the ears of sophomore Skylar Murphy as she watches famous singer Billie Eilish's TikTok tutorial for her own vegan recipe of the viral Dubai chocolate.

This video was posted on Aug. 23, and it has since amassed over 60 million views and 7 million likes.

Other videos of celebrities creating their own recipes have gone equally viral.

A reason these videos may do so well is people's natural interest in celebrities, due to their widespread familiarity.

"A lot of people are fascinated by what famous people do and eat, and so when someone that big makes something and posts it on the internet, it gains a lot of attention," Skylar said.

In particular, Ms. Eilish's video gained a lot of attention due to its intersection of two already trending topics: Dubai chocolate and Ms. Eilish herself.

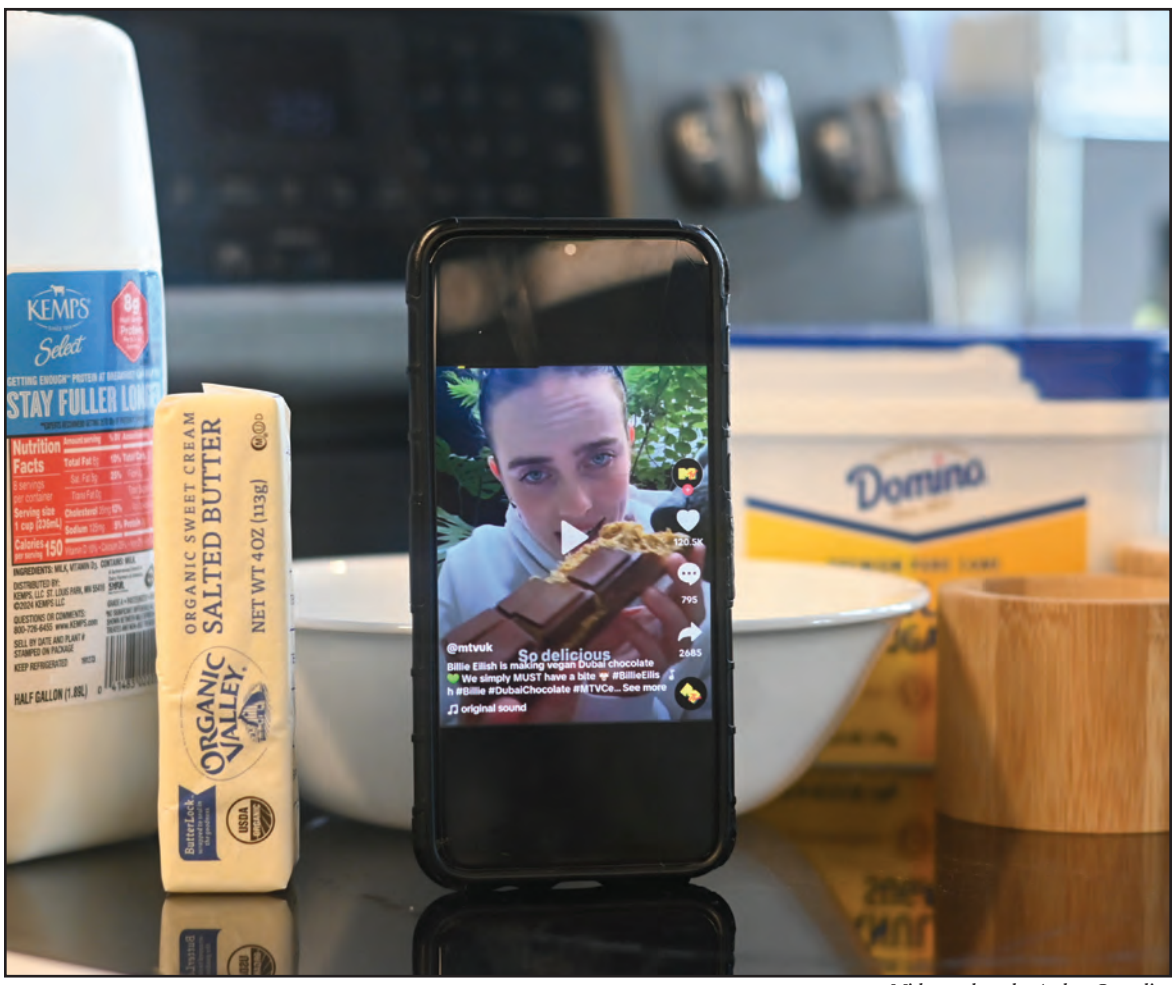
"Dubai chocolate was really trending, and Billie Eilish was a really big artist at the moment, so people who like Dubai chocolate, and people who like Billie Eilish all saw the video," Skylar said.

Other influencer-created recipes nclude a Spicy Vodka Pasta recipe by American model Gigi Hadid and influencer Hailey Bieber's signature Erewhon drink: the Strawberry Glaze Skin Smoothie.

These recipes have elicited similar reactions online, amassing millions of likes and views.

In these cases, seemingly basic recipes reached such levels of attention due to the name connected to them.

"With Gigi, the dish wouldn't get as much attention if it wasn't connected to the name," Skylar said, "but Dubai chocolate was already a thing before Billie Eilish."



Midway photo by Arthur Cornelius

CELEBRITY CUISINE. A student bakes alongside a Tiktok video of Billie Eilish recreating a vegan version of the viral Dubai chocolate. Celebrity videos like hers have amassed millions of views and inspire watchers to recreate.

Viewers are also more inclined to try these recipes, than those of everyday people.

"People are more easily influenced by someone famous than by someone they don't know, because of their online presence," Skylar said.

Additionally, in these videos, viewers are able to interact with their favorite celebrities by trying the recipe themselves.

"I think these videos have gained more popularity due to viewers being able to interact," Skylar said. "Because if someone makes it themself, they can tell a friend, and it can spread outside of social media."

As Skylar watches Ms. Eilish take her final bite of her homemade chocolate bar, Skylar and millions of other fans like and scroll past the video onto the next viral recipe.

Dubai chocolate recipe

1. Defrost 8 ounces of kataifi pastry for an hour. In a pan over medium heat, melt 3 tablespoons of vegan butter or coconut oil. Chop kataifi and combine with butter. Toast for 8-10 minutes. Transfer to a bowl.
2. Melt vegan milk or dark chocolate bars in the microwave in 30 second intervals, until smooth, stirring between intervals.
3. Add 7-8 ounces of pistachio cream, and 2-3 tablespoons of tahini to cooled kataifi pastry. Mix until all is well combined.
4. Place chocolate mold in the freezer for 10 minutes to set.
5. Pour a light layer of chocolate into the mold. Tilt the mold to cover the bottom and all sides evenly. Pour any excess back into the mold.
6. Spoon the pistachio-and-kataifi mixture into the set chocolate shell, pressing down lightly with a spatula to evenly distribute.
7. Pour the remaining chocolate mixture over the filling to cover it completely. Smooth and distribute evenly with a spatula.
8. Chill for 30 minutes, or until completely set, and enjoy!

Source: Khaleej Times

Fan fiction provides freedom, creativity

by LILA COYNE
Arts & Entertainment Editor

"Peppa Pig: Escapee" — the title of the first fanfiction senior Daniel Wu ever wrote. Published on Wattpad, this story chronicled a jaded teenage Peppa Pig's attempts to flee to London.

Fanfiction (conversationally known as "fanfic" or "fic") are stories written by fans about copyrighted characters from existing works.

Because the characters and worlds are protected under copyright law, fanfiction cannot be for profit. Instead, fanfiction is created and consumed solely for the enjoyment of readers.

At U-High, students are extending their favorite stories through reading and writing fanfiction,

finding a space of experimentation and play through this unconventional medium.

Daniel was in middle school when he discovered his love for creative writing. Without many avenues for disseminating his work to a larger audience, Daniel began writing on Wattpad, a popular site for reading fanfiction.

"I think that was probably my thought process back then: it gets people's attention," he said. "It was still a way for me to express my love for creative writing."

Midway illustration by Tyra DeWeese

FAN FAVORITES. U-High students have taken to writing and reading fan fiction to explore more of their favorite fandoms and write creatively.

Instead of choosing a piece of media that he loved, Daniel picked a TV show that would let him pretend his attempts to write were unserious: "Peppa Pig." He believes that it was slightly "insane." However, in his mind, that was the point of writing fanfiction.

"I felt like if I had a blog or a Substack or those kinds of things maybe I was taking myself too seriously," he said. "I felt like, with the Peppa Pig, that it was kind of silly, and it gets people's attention.

For junior Valkyrie Laurence, the appeal was not a creative outlet, but a community of other readers and writers of fanfiction.

She feels that fanfiction is a more intimate reading experience, in many ways, because the author isn't limited by concerns about monetization or marketing.

"Fanfiction has this personalized element that you don't get to see in books, because in books, there's a pressure to be able to sell," she said. "And so in fanfiction, that means that you get to explore more niche topics and themes."

For Daniel, that freedom to write without concern about popularity or reception, gave him the courage to explore serious topics, even if it was filtered through a silly setup.

He said, "I realized that creative writing was the way to get serious things on paper."

After around 10 chapters, Daniel abandoned Peppa Pig's odyssey. However, the story is still available, standing as a digital testament to Daniel's first foray into prose and to the creative independence fanfiction allows for.

LinkedIn offers career insight, fun

by NOLA BALDASSARE
Reporter

For many, "career-building" is a phrase associated with stern salary workers in sleek skyscrapers with decades of experience in their polished resumes. That is why it is surprising to find high school students like senior Vedika Dangi and junior Austen Wu actively networking on Linkedin—and just as surprising to see how differently they use it.

"It's a good way of getting some practice on the platform itself," Vedika said. "And how to network and reach out to different individuals and professionals."

While some users like Vedika use the app in a more professional manner, others like Austen see it as a social opportunity.

"I'm not doing it for the professional aspect," Austen said. "I'm just doing it for fun with my friends."

28.7% of LinkedIn users are aged under 24 as of Feb. 2025, including many U-High students. They use the platform in various ways, from a foundation in skills like professional networking and building a resume to a mature form of social media.

Vedika sees several benefits from the platform, but her main intentions are to stay connected and informed within fields she's interested in.

"My primary goal was to meet leaders and individuals in different industries," she said. "It's also a great way for me to stay updated on what's going on in the global market."

Vedika also uses LinkedIn as an opportunity to keep a record of her achievements and skills, which is especially handy for applications.

"Some resumes ask you for your LinkedIn account," she said. "There are times where I've had to update my account to make sure that my applications for different programs are strengthened."

Austen sees connecting with friends on LinkedIn, a platform with a more formal tone than most other social media, as practice leaning into the professional interactions necessary for future networking.

"We're teenagers, but it's just fun to be professional in a way," Austen said. "I guess it's a good professional outlook. If, like, Instagram was super informal, then LinkedIn is a more formal way."

Even if the average highschooler might not have the experience or prestige of an older user, Vedika still believes that a LinkedIn account is a strong start in developing a professional identity.

"It's a great way to practice and get it prepared, especially when there's going to be a lot of new changes coming up in your life," she said. "Having a solid LinkedIn account will always be helpful."

by the numbers

What does the data say about LinkedIn?

28.7%
of users are ages 18-24

260
million users in North America

7
people hired every minute

— Compiled by Sohana Schneider

Baseline bonding

Tennis co-captains share enthusiasm to motivate team

by **CHLOÉ TYNDALL**
Reporter

After a long day of tests and lectures at school, most student athletes want to get their matches over with. However on a recent Wednesday afternoon, as lineups against the Fenwick High School girls tennis team was called, the atmosphere of the U-High girls tennis team was anything but worn out.

As each U-High player's name was called and cheers of support rippled throughout the team. At the center of the cheering were co-captains Xia Nesbitt and Zoe Alphonse. Their voices rise with the rest to support their teammates. After shaking hands with their opponents, Xia and Zoe immediately go into strategizing about their match.

Now seniors, doubles partners Zoe and Xia are also two of three co-captains for the varsity girls tennis team. At the core of their leadership, Zoe and Xia value the connections that their sport can bring, much like the one they fostered. They understand that after long days, tennis can sometimes feel isolating.

"Tennis can feel very solitary if you let it, but just cheering each other on, like telling your girl, 'Yeah, you got it', getting loud," Zoe said. "That's always something that we appreciate, just supporting one another because we all know it's hot, it's late, sometimes we are ready to go home because we have homework."

Xia and Zoe have been playing tennis throughout their lives, but their doubles partnership began something they tried their sophomore year. It quickly blossomed into a strong, dynamic bond. Zoe's fiery energy and Xia's level-headedness balance each other out. They are also drawn together by similar strategic work ethics on the court.

"I remember we went to conference together in sophomore year, our first year playing together. And during all of the vague, high-pressure moments, I was the cool one, and she had that fire and had that power," Xia said. "I can't name a specific instance, but we started to click early and sort of realized that it's our personalities together that make us such a great team, and our ability to understand each other has only grown since that initial realization."

Midway photo by Peyton Palmer

BACKHAND BUDDIES. Girls tennis co-captains Zoe Alphonse and Xia Nesbitt began playing together as sophomores. Now, as seniors, they bring energy, strategy and community to the team, using their strong partnership to foster a supportive and connected team culture.

Their balance of sportsmanship and seriousness sets the tone for the rest of the team. For their co-captain, senior Sara Park, their enthusiastic approach to tennis shows how an individually competitive sport still has room for connection.

"I feel like the stigma is that everyone else is each other's competition to be placed better on the team. It is never like that with them, they've always been so fun," Sara said. "Like, yeah, there's a lot of competition, but they always know when to be themselves and when to put their competition faces on."

Xia and Zoe's emphasis on support and encouragement extends beyond just cheering during matches. It's also about creating a team where everyone has a voice. Zoe said this approach has shaped this year's team dynamic.

"I think this year, more than any year, we've done a great job at making sure that the people on the team, not just the captains, have a say on what's going on," Zoe said. "I think that it's been a really great time to see even freshmen, all the grades really, get involved and have a voice on the team... We're kind of all one unit, one dream, and that's really nice."

Xia and Zoe's advice

As co-captains, Xia and Zoe have worked to make a supportive and inclusive team environment. Here is a list of their advice for future captains who want to create a similar environment.

Xia's list
- Try not to be too intimidating to younger players.
- Don't act like you don't make mistakes too.
- Be transparent with your teammates.
- Be vulnerable and open up when you make a mistake.
- Be willing to put yourself out there.

Zoe's list
- Try to be honest with your teammates about how you feel.
- Communicate with your team about anything that is not working.
- Make your team a safe space for people.
- Be enthusiastic and bring the energy and excitement.

— Chloé Tyndall

For Kylie Carter, KT tape and practice are essential

Midway photo by Alex Diamond

LET, SET, NET. During varsity volleyball practice on Sept. 16 in Upper Kovler, junior captain Kylie Carter bumps the ball to her partner. Before a game, Kylie prepares by getting a pink drink from Starbucks and listening to showtunes.

athletic essentials.

The Midway is featuring athletes, selected at random, from school teams for informal interviews about their sports. Kylie Carter is a junior on the volleyball team. Kylie's responses have been lightly edited for clarity, style and length.

What's one thing in your gear bag you can't live without?

"I can't live without my KT tape because I'm always injured and my teammates are always injured."

Who is the one artist you have to listen to as you get ready for a game, and why?

"I really like showtunes and music from musicals because I love a good story and I feel like musicals always have a good story. I also like Kali Uchis because her voice is very calming."

If you could design your own jersey, what would it look like?

"I would do a sleeveless jersey with the attachable sleeves that would be pink and white and have cool designs on the sides and the sleeves.

What's your favorite pregame snack or drink?

"My favorite pregame drink is a pink drink from Starbucks with vanilla cold foam, which probably isn't that healthy, but I don't care. My favorite snack is probably the Made Good granola bars or GoGo squeeZ."

If you could meet one professional athlete, who would it be and why?

"Definitely Madisen Skinner, who's a volleyball player on Austin's professional volleyball team, because she makes little to no errors and also because her mental game is so impressive and inspiring."

What's one piece of advice you always remember before a game?

"Be aggressive, and it's OK if you make a mistake, just don't make the same one twice."

What's the weirdest or funniest game superstition you've seen someone do?

"A team that barked — I had never seen anything like that. They would bark before each serve, and I just thought that was wild."

What's a skill you learned off the court that has actually helped you on the court?

"I think staying emotionally even and not letting my emotions get the best of me on the court. I learned how to stay calm in the classroom, and that's transferred to when I'm playing volleyball."

If you could have any sports brand sponsor you, which one would it be and why?

"Nike because all of the Nike gear is so cool, and probably Under Armour for the same reason."

Who is your favorite volleyball of all time and why?

"Harper Murray in Nebraska just because she is such an aggressive and thoughtful player."

What number do you wear and is there a story behind it?

"I'm number 25 because, first, I felt like it was my lucky number and, second, I saw a documentary on this really talented basketball player who unfortunately lost his life to gun violence. He grew up in Chicago and was predicted to go to the NBA and stuff like that. His number was 25, and I saw that after I chose my number and I saw it like it was a sign."

If you could give advice to someone just starting out playing volleyball, what would you say?

"Practice constantly because volleyball is an easy sport to learn but a hard sport to perfect. So if you're aiming to be really good at it, you have to work every day and don't get complacent."

What has been your biggest setback in your volleyball career?

"Last year I had this really big mental block. I wanted to be so good at everything and I would become so frustrated with myself when I would make a mistake. Only after I had realized that 'You know, this is hard, but it's OK to make a mistake,' I calmed myself down and became less emotional on the court.

— Chloé Tyndall