

Student Reporter

Students Bring Light to East Asian Culture at Uni High



Irene Kim
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High School



Students wear Korean hanbok in celebration of the Moon Festival held at University Laboratory High School. [Source: Hyelynn Lee]

On Friday, October 3, University Laboratory High School (Uni High) held its fifth Moon Festival in observance of the East Asian Mid-Autumn Festival. The annual event occurs during lunch in the green space outside, with a buffet

of East Asian foods locally catered and donated by parents to the school. Starting five minutes before the lunch bell, students get ready to race out and claim their spot at the front of what will soon become very long lines for food.

As students get their tteok kkochi (skewered sweet and spicy rice cakes) and mooncakes, the cultural performances by students, faculty, and community members begin. This year, the performances included a student's piano jazz cover of "Fly Me to the Moon," a dance cover by Uni's Dance Club of girl group Katseye's "Debut," and a local group's traditional Chinese group dance. Every year, many of the students and faculty wear traditional outfits like Chinese hanfu and Korean hanbok to shine light on the school's East Asian community.

Behind this loved school celebration is a student-led club: the Asian American Association (AAA). Cabinet member, junior Ruijing Tang, shared that preparing for the Moon Festival begins months in advance. Members are divided into two groups: one for the outreach to performers and event advertisement, and the other for managing food. The AAA works to secure funds and host activities leading up to the main event in October.

Before the Moon Festival this year, the AAA hosted a chalk mural event in collaboration with another club at Uni, the National

Art Honor Society (NAHS). The new activity served as an opportunity for students to express East Asian culture through chalk art while also providing a backdrop for the festival.

Tang shared that while planning for the festival this year, the AAA faced an unexpected challenge: funding. "In the past, we used [a grant] from the school, which granted us around 1,500 dollars for food." But this year, they were informed that the grant was no longer able to support their event. "Back and forth negotiations were made, and luckily, we came out with 1,000 dollars to buy food," Tang stated in relief. However, the uncertainty regarding funds for next year's Moon Festival remains. Tang shared that AAA plans to hold fundraisers throughout this year to help.

Despite the struggles, Tang expressed her determination to continue the yearly tradition. "[The Moon Festival is] a nice way to celebrate the cultural diversity our school offers," she said. She continues to hope that through food, art, and performances, the event will connect communities and honor the school's diverse cultures.

Student Reporter

Youth Presence at the 2025 LA Congress of Neighborhoods



Angel Song
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Los Angeles City Hall hosted the 2025 Los Angeles Congress of Neighborhoods on Saturday, Sept. 27th. As the founder and director of Civicate Youth, a youth-led organization dedicated to increasing youth civic awareness and participation, I attended the Congress meeting to host a workshop and booth with other members of the organization.

Official preparations for the 2025 Congress began as early as the previous January. Within the larger Planning Committee, several subcommittees met monthly. I served on the Workshop Subcommittee; along with a couple of other Planning Committee members, I helped make key decisions for the Congress. Individuals interested in hosting a workshop were required to submit an application detailing their topic and goals. With the other members of this subcommittee, I helped decide which workshops were going to present at the event; considering factors including space and content quality. I applied as well, and was able to secure a spot for Civicate Youth as one of the only youth



Civicate Youth members prepare to staff their booth at the 2025 LA Congress of Neighborhoods. [Source: Author, Angel Song]

organizations hosting a workshop.

Fast forward to September 2025, Civicate Youth members and I headed to LA City Hall for the 2025 Congress of Neighborhoods. We had prepared a brief presentation informing youth on how to engage civically by serving as youth representatives and voting in neighborhood council elections. Afterward, we transitioned into a Q&A session for the adults

in the room who wanted to hear more from the youth perspective. Attendees were able to leave the workshop with a sense of understanding about how more youth could get involved in local politics, as well as what the youth population wants to change in society.

During lunch, I was able to listen to a brief speech made by Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass. After this speech, Civicate Youth

members and I had a conversation with her, and I learned how she had also started becoming civically engaged when she was a student, just like us. Having that conversation helped me feel even more motivated to continue my journey, as well as help other passionate youth do the same. Our booth shift took place after lunch in the City Hall courtyard. There, we planned to help anyone 16+ to register for neighborhood council elections, and were successful in doing so.

At the end of the day, it felt rewarding to know that Civicate Youth members and I, as young leaders, made a real impact at an event where there were no other youth presenters. We accomplished a lot, as we presented to a group of both youth and adults, manned a booth helping constituents register for voting, and even had a chance to briefly converse with Mayor Bass. Given the success of the 2025 event, I'm now more energized than ever to help plan the 2026 Congress, hoping to make it even better by attracting more Angeleno youth leaders.

Student Reporter

The Positive Impact of Smiling at School



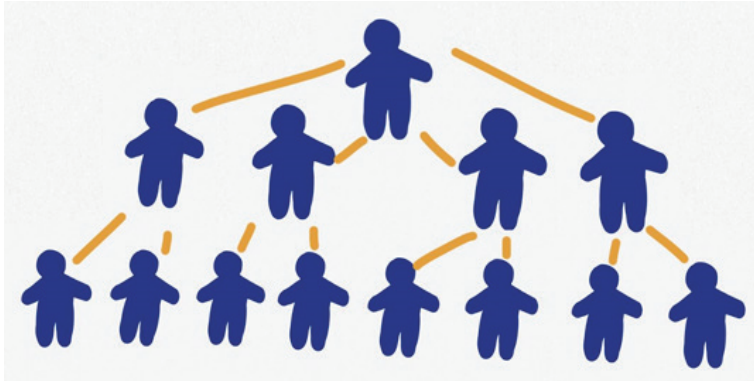
Ava Je
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I have read many articles on how smiling impacts others around you. It has been tested in social experiments where someone goes around their community smiling at random strangers to see how many give one back. Countless social studies, such as the one led by Stanford University research scientist Nicholas Coles and an international collaboration of researchers, have discussed how smiling at strangers can have a ripple effect—when one person's smile inspires others to smile too. Grinning can make people feel happier and more confident, while also building trust. This simple action motivates strangers to smile at others, too. Ultimately, it is a simple and positive gesture that anyone is capable of easily giving and receiving. Overall, results show that at least over half of strangers smile at experimenters, if not more.

These ideas made me curious about what would happen if I tried the same thing at my school. So I decided to do a short experiment for a week.

First, I walked around campus at my school, Orange County School of the Arts (OCSA), smiling at random students and documenting the number of people who returned it to me. During my experiment, I noticed that at certain parts of campus and during the day, it seemed harder to make eye contact with other students. Many were either preoccupied talking with their friends or working on some assignment. But the main cause was due to the fact that the majority of my classmates were on their phones. It was much easier to make eye contact and share smiles with students during relaxed times, such as lunch or before and after school, rather than busy times like passing periods when everybody is in a hurry to get to their next class. Still, I was surprised by how many people smiled back at me.

Next, I kept track of my data. I counted the total number of people I smiled at and another category for the number of times the other person also smiled back at



As shown, even if one person shares a smile with just a few others, it can spread quickly and make a big difference in a community, and connect everyone. [Source: Author, Ava Je]

me. Then, to get the average percentage, I divided the number of times I got a grin back by the total number of times I gave a smile. Then, I turned the decimal into a percentage.

In the end, an average of 70% of students returned a smile back at me, most of this happening at lunchtime. In addition to getting to connect with my school's community, I educated myself on

the benefits of smiling at others while also experiencing it myself at OCSA. Through this experiment, I learned that smiling at others benefits everyone in the interaction, even if they are strangers. This experiment also motivated me to keep on sharing smiles, even outside of school, and to encourage others to do the same. After all, it is a special gift that is easily shareable with no loss but infinite benefits.

Student Reporter

American Red Cross: Youths Making An Impact



Katie Lee
Grade 10
The Science Academy
STEM Magnet



Red Cross Club meeting at The Science Academy STEM Magnet, starting off with the Red Cross tradition, ice breakers. [Source: Author, Katie Lee]

Founded by Clara Barton, the American Red Cross has been providing emergency relief, disaster response, and first aid education to people across the world since 1581, whether it's from aiding soldiers during the war, to helping communities recover from natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes. Continuing this mission, the American Red Cross started involving youth in its mission in 1884 to engage them as volunteers

in hands-on community work. Through this opportunity, I was able to experience many new, valuable lessons, including teamwork, leadership, and learned the importance of giving back to my community.

As a part of the Youth Corps, I participated in a variety of activities that allowed me to give back to my community. Some examples are being a club officer at my school's Red Cross

club teaching the members Hands On CPR or supporting local blood drives. In addition, not only did this show me how important first aid skills can be, but also how useful they can be. For example, it is critical that you know hands-only CPR, so that in any life-threatening situation, you can help in some way.

There are five distinct territories in the American Red Cross: Northern Valleys, San Gabriel Pomona Valley, West LA, Long Beach South Bay, and Metro Southeast LA. I am currently in the San Gabriel Pomona Valley as a part of the youth executive board, in the position of 'Communications Officer.' As the communications officer, my responsibilities include sending out biweekly emails sharing upcoming volunteer opportunities and monthly emails reminding youths about my territory's District General Meetings (DGM).

DGMs are meetings that are held monthly at their respective territory Red Cross office. For

these meetings, the youth executive board members from their own territory come together to plan what the DGM topic and presentations should be about, and what activities we should do. At these meetings, more than 30 youths show up and are eager to learn more about the American Red Cross and how we are hoping to educate others.

Now, you may be wondering how teens can actually make an impact; youths can donate blood during a blood drive, to help save one's life. One bag of blood can help save up to three people's lives. Learning about this, I became more passionate about spreading the word of blood drives. The American Red Cross also has an app where you can track where your blood is going and who it has been donated to. The American Red Cross has many volunteer opportunities, from hands-on experience to virtual experience. Become a volunteer now to learn how you can help your community even in the smallest way possible!

Student Reporter

The Best Month for Me: Visiting My Best Friend



Sarah Li
Grade 11
Crean Lutheran High School

October is the best month: not because Thanksgiving is coming, but because it means my favorite day of the year. Every year, this is the moment I've been waiting for: visiting Lisa's, my best friend's, house in LA. Even though it already feels like home, the night before meeting her is pure "torture" to me because I'm so excited that I can barely fall asleep.

I've known the drive to Lisa's by heart because I've been through it sixteen times, once for every year of my life. Yet, these streets never felt ordinary to me. They feel like a second home, welcoming and comforting, and a place where I can truly be myself. The palms lean lazily over the sidewalks like they have kept some secrets. The familiar street corner's bakery is always glowing with the warm orange light inside, reflecting off its windows. On this year's October drive, I rolled down the window, trying to breathe in the scent of roasted coffee beans and sweet caramel syrup that I knew so well. Along the road, trees with orange bark captured the sunlight, their leaves rustling in the breeze.

Moments later, the house



My sister, my best friend, and I sat in a circle, snacking and laughing at what popped up on the phone. [Source: Author, Sarah Li]

came into view. I saw the soft beige walls glow under the warm light of sunset, and wooden porches creak under the weight of hanging pots. White blinds on the windows were sun-bleached and peeling. In front, there's a garden where a sea of purple and yellow flowers blooms. A deep blue mailbox is

slightly tilted to one side, and the chipped paint shows the metal underneath. Both edges of the path leading to the front door are filled with smooth stones. As I stepped closer, the scent of her mom's freshly baked chocolate chip cookies, my beloved treat, lingered in the air through the half-opened windows. Thrilled,

I rushed to the door, rubbing my slightly sweaty hands together. Simultaneously, it was pulled open, and there she was - Lisa, with her radiant smile that allows you to leave all troubles behind. Her ponytail was as messy as usual. "You finally made it!" she exclaimed, hugging me tight and looking at me with her sparkling eyes. I laughed and stepped inside.

The sound of the wooden floor creaking reminded me of countless times I'd raced down this hallway for hide and seek. The navy blue walls were filled with framed photos that captured our childhood memories. The gray couch in the living room was soft and sagged at the parts we always sat on. Treats like marshmallows, caramel popcorn, and gummies are laid out on the kitchen counter. The handmade cookies were baking in the oven. Upstairs, the queen-sized bed had been neatly made with three fluffy pillows and soft quilts that carried a faint lavender smell. Being there, surrounded by people who love and care about me so much, I felt a sense of belonging and was grateful for every previous moment we've shared.

Student Reporter

School Fundraising: The Pros and Cons



Amber Lee
Grade 10
La Mirada High School

Financial issues always come up within any team or club, and my varsity tennis team was no exception. You might wonder, "Why does a tennis team need money?" I have also thought of this before, until I learned how many essentials we had to pay for, from water and ball machines to canopies and other equipment.

For the past two years, our coach, Coach Al, has asked us to sell \$15 tickets for a pancake breakfast fundraiser at Applebee's. During the event, students serve the customers who bought their tickets by bringing out freshly made plates of pancakes and breakfast sides. I was excited to do the fundraising again, as it was very fun and memorable last year. However, to my surprise, our coach told us we had to sell more tickets this year, 9 tickets compared to 5 tickets each, totaling \$135. His reason was for us to combine the fundraising that took place in both fall and spring

into one event.

At first, I didn't really have a problem with this, as I thought of it as donating to the team. During practices, though, the players started questioning where all the money went. A sum of \$135 from both the girls' and boys' teams was a huge amount, after all. The ball machine we had bought with the money from last year's fundraiser had already broken down, dying within 30 minutes of using it.

The end-of-the-year tennis banquet was another thing we questioned. Even though our coach kept ranting about how expensive it was, our family members still had to pay for the food, and we borrowed our school's assembly room for the location instead of renting out an actual banquet hall. With two fundraisers last year, why couldn't we have a better banquet or have gotten a better ball machine?



The fundraising flyer was posted on the official La Mirada High School Girls Tennis Instagram account to help promote the fundraiser for the tennis team. [Source: lmhs.girls.tennis]

We all agreed on the fact that we can't each recruit a total of

9 people to buy our tickets, so suddenly, and thus we just had to make donations to the team. The quality of the breakfast meal at Applebee's was not the best, especially for \$15. Our major questions were why we couldn't change the location of our fundraiser to somewhere more fun and accessible, like Yogurtland or Raising Cane's, where people actually want to go.

The actual day of the fundraising was normal and fun, with a quiet tension of everyone realizing that we need more clarification of where our money goes. A fundraising event that was supposed to unite the team has now turned into a turmoil of division in opinions, and a shared thought of wanting clarification. Are fundraisers without transparency and compromise actually effective? Our team would say no. Students also deserve to take part in actually knowing how their money is being used.