



Winter musical pushes cast, crew members to learn new approaches

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# The Quill

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Robbinsdale Cooper High School

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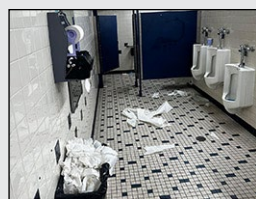


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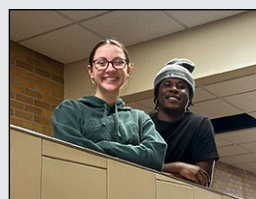


Artists show work in exhibition event

Each artist selected the classroom of a specific teacher to serve as the gallery for their personal show, which is part of an internal assessment

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Athena, Apollo winners named

Keira Snapko, Kameron Fox are the recipients of this year's awards in recognition of their excellence in sports, success in the classroom

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## STUDENTS WIN TOP SPOTS IN 2024 BESTPREP CONTEST



Photo by BROOKE SCHAFFER

Joy Flores-Hernandez, Erin Mathis and Cole Athias Finn celebrate their wins with teachers Mr. Darsow, Ms. Wineberg and Ms. Schaffer.

By MILO ATHIAS-FINN  
Quill staff writer

Cole Athias-Finn (10), Joy Flores-Hernandez (10) and Erin Mathis (10) placed in the top 20 in BestPrep's 2024 Student Spotlight Competition sponsored by Thomson Reuters. The trio were recognized along with the other winners at Best-

Prep's Educational Forum on February 8 at the Minneapolis Convention Center. The event boasted nearly 1,000 guests, including students, teachers and sponsors. During the event, the invited students enjoyed live entertainment, food and beverages.

The awards given during the forum stemmed

from projects the winning students made in response to a prompt. Every year, BestPrep releases a new prompt that students can respond to through an essay, video, sculpture or any other creative art form of their choosing.

For the 2024 competition, the prompt centered around a question designed

by entrepreneur John Hope Bryant, who was also the keynote speaker at the awards celebration. This year's prompt was: "Making your dreams come true is easy to say but hard to accomplish. In Bryant's book, *Up from Nothing*, he writes about the five pillars needed for success: education, financial literacy, self-esteem

Three sophomores in Cooper's AVID program finished in the top 20 in Minnesota

and confidence, family structure and role models. Through the use of essay, poetry, art, sculpture or video, please explain how these pillars will be key to your personal success. Why are they key?"

More than 200 projects were submitted to this year's contest. Those projects were then carefully analyzed by 40 judges who determined the top 20 winners. The students who placed in the top 20 were then invited to the forum along with their teachers and two family members. At the forum, the students were given various prizes ranging from a pair of Apple AirPods Max to Target gift cards depending on where they placed.

Cooper's highest-placed finisher was Athias-Finn, who took third place overall and received the Apple AirPods. He is taught by AVID instructor Ms. Schaffer. Meanwhile, Flores-Hernandez and Mathis, who are taught by AVID instructors Mr. Simpson and Ms. Wineberg, each won \$50 Target gift cards.

BestPrep's connection to the Cooper AVID program has led to this contest

**BESTPREP** continues on page 8

## Prom committee puts finishing touches on 2024 event

This year's celebration, which will take place at the Medina Ballroom on May 11 from 6-11 p.m., has been in the works for months

By DRIANA SANMARTIN  
Quill staff writer

This year's prom, "Lights, Camera, Prom," will be on May 11 at the Medina Ballroom from 6-11 p.m. Tickets for the event are \$60 per person and must be purchased before the dance itself.

The prom committee started its meetings in March and is currently in the process of making its final decisions for the 2024 event. One element of the dance students were able to voice their opinion about was the theme for the night. The choices were "Millennium Magic," "Lights, Camera, Prom" and "Viva la Prom." All of the choices had different color themes to go alongside the theme. The votes for the theme were counted after participating students selected them through a questionnaire posted on Schoology in March.

The staff members overseeing this year's prom are ABC Lab teacher Ms. Geise and English teacher Ms. Obranovich. Obranovich said prom planning and decision-making takes many months leading up to the actual event. She said this planning helps make sure students can expect good things from the event.

"Students can expect a fun night with friends, music, dancing and great memories," Obranovich said.

In addition to the planning done by the prom committee, students themselves are also planning for their night at the dance. Precious Garwoloquoi (12) said she is excited about prom and the possibilities of that night. She mentioned how this event is something to look forward to before graduation and the things that follow that milestone.

"I am extremely excited for prom this year and can't wait to see how it goes since it's my first time. I'm looking forward to having my last bit of high school fun before graduation and life happens. I'm hoping to have a lot of fun with my friends," Garwoloquoi said.

Another student who is working on her prom plans is Janicea Coney (12). Much like Garwoloquoi, she expressed her opinion that prom is a great way to celebrate the end of the year, especially for seniors who are approaching grad-



Photo by TARNUE DAVID

Last year's event saw a large number of students in attendance.

uation. She said she hopes that everyone who attends will have an enjoyable evening and there will be good vibes all around.

"I think prom is a great way to celebrate the ending of the year, especially for seniors being that it'll be the last dance we'll ever have for the rest of high school," Coney said. "It's a nice event overall."

A third student who is looking forward to prom is Aicha Square (12). Square is optimistic about the event and hopes for the best when it comes to the final dance.

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## Driver's education classes can be accessed at Cooper

The A+ Driving School uses the building as a teaching site for courses that take place over several weeks right after school

By DRIANA SANMARTIN  
Quill staff writer

A+ Driving School offers a comprehensive course that covers the necessary knowledge for taking the permit test and beginning to drive. These classes can be taken both online and in person. Cooper partners with A+ Driving School to provide after-school and evening classes in the building. The opportunity to take these classes is beneficial for individuals who are looking to pass the test to obtain their permit.

One Cooper student who has gone through the A+ program is Madisyn Pepper (12). Pepper said they appreciated the behind-the-wheel courses and found them to be beneficial. However, they also stated that it would have been useful to learn more about the contents of the driving manual,

particularly road signs and other related topics.

"I liked the videos, but they dragged on about crashes and distracted driving more than actual information. I also liked the instructors for behind-the-wheel driving. They taught me a lot and made me more comfortable with driving," Pepper said.

Another Cooper student, Gian Ventura (12), said he attended the A+ online classes before obtaining a permit and the in-person classes after obtaining a permit. He said he found the online classes to be "a bit boring" as they mainly involved attending lectures. Additionally, he said the in-person courses were nerve-racking for him as he was taught by strangers. However, he added that he had some kind instructors who helped boost his confidence and taught him a lot.

"If you're someone like me who needs to be in an environment that forces you to pay attention because you get distracted easily and get pretty anxious

about the huge test and want to feel a little more confident, I recommend it," Ventura said.

Another student who went through the A+ process is Amy Vue (12). She said she found the instructor's coaching, feedback and guidance to be helpful overall. However, she did mention that there is room for improvement in terms of making the classes more engaging, as the lessons can be quite long and lack interaction. Despite this, she recommends the driving school because it provides beneficial tips and the opportunity to start driving at the age of 16.

"Take your time and just practice. It might be a bit hard at first, but you'll get better in time," Vue said.

A+ Driving School is licensed and approved by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety. For class dates and registration, interested students can visit [aplusdrivingschool.net](http://aplusdrivingschool.net) or call them at 651-653-3959.

## Xello website helps students plan for future

Hawks can access the college and career resource through their grade-level page on Schoology

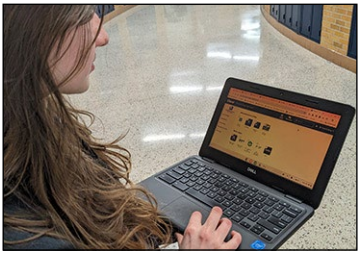


Photo by CHIMUAL VANG

Many students are working with Xello during lessons in their advisory classes this year.

By CHIMUAL VANG  
Quill staff writer

Xello is a new, future-planning and career exploration software product purchased by Robbinsdale School District in order to replace an older application called Naviance. Xello is intended to help Cooper students from all grades prepare for their future by developing their current academic goals.

In order to access Xello, students must enter into Clever.com and sign in through their school Google account. It is recommended that newcomers explore Clever as well before Xello in order to best understand the platform and how it works.

"For those who plan on enrolling into college, Xello can help you narrow down what your major is," College and Career Center Coordinator Mr. Rosenblum said.

Xello will not only help you narrow down your major, it can also help you write out your resume, determine what transcripts you require for colleges, decide which college is best for you and explain how to go through a job interview. The system also has many other built-in tutorials for making your own future inventory.

"It has only been two years since Xello was implemented into Cooper High School. If anything, it is our job as counselors to explain what Xello is to help students who don't really know what they want in the future," student counselor Ms. Walters, who works with 12th grade students this year, said.

Although Xello is still new for Cooper, it has been embraced by students thanks to the number of tools and resources it provides. Students going to the website for the first time are encouraged to start with the "Explore" section. Here, you are given a chance to simulate what your future would look like depending on your choices.

After choosing your career choice, you are given a job description. This job description will show you what you would do at that job on a day-to-day basis and what you should expect. You will also receive information about who you may talk to, how to talk to them, what interviews you may receive and how to respond to certain questions.

Next, the "Explore" area will show the working conditions for that job and the related majors required to get that position. This section will also show you where you may work depending on your career choice. For example, if you choose to major in aerospace dynamics, there is a chance you can work for NASA. Meanwhile, if you major in medicine, there is a chance you can work for the Mayo Clinic.

There is another section of the site that will display your potential earnings in a given field. This shows what your wages will be like, which is determined by whether it is an entry-level, trained-level or professional-level position. This shows how much experience those in your potential field of work get paid in return for their services.

After this section of the site, you will be shown the education and training necessary for a given career. This displays the requirements for the job, what levels of training are required, the acceptance rate and how to pass any necessary tests during training.

"Xello's purpose is to aid students in making up a game plan for their future," Walters said.

## Falcons top Hawks in Reading Olympics

Armstrong students logged 120 fiction books read and Cooper readers logged 113 during this year's installment of the annual contest



Photo by CHRISTIAN KING

Media Specialist Mr. King (right) said he hopes to better publicize the contest next year to reclaim the trophy.

By HEATHER HOLZERSMITH  
Quill staff writer

Cooper and Armstrong went head-to-head in a fiction Reading Olympics during the month of February. It was announced on March 8 that Armstrong came out victorious.

The Reading Olympics is held every February between Cooper and Armstrong. Cooper's Media Specialist Mr. King said Armstrong's victory will not stop Cooper from putting on their "A

game" next time around.

"My counterpart at Armstrong, Media Specialist Valerie Jefferey, and I decided to start having a Reading Olympics annually, because February is I Love To Read Month, and we want to promote reading," he said. "Reading is a crucial way to learn and to experience other people's lives, gaining empathy for others."

At the end of this year's competition, Armstrong won by a score of 120 total fiction books

read to 113 books for Cooper.

"We counted the number of fiction books read," King said. "Participants had to check out a book from Cooper, read it and fill out a short slip of paper explaining why they would recommend the book to other readers."

King said that, next year, he is going to more actively promote the competition to teachers. In fact, he said Armstrong won because they had a lot of teachers participate, while Cooper had very few teachers participate.

## Ms. Hough wins annual staff soup cook-off

Hough's Marry Me Chicken Soup took the top spot after staff members tasted and voted on the eight competing recipes

By LEO PEREZ  
Quill staff writer

The winner of the 11th annual Soup-er Cooper Cook-off, which took place on February 29, was student counselor Ms. Hough. Her winning dish was the Marry Me Chicken Soup.

This event was hosted by Hough during the 5A and 5B lunch periods. The Soup-er Cooper Cook-off is a competition between Cooper staff members in which contestants present their homemade soups in an attempt to be named the winning dish. All staff members were invited to stop by the event in the staff lunchroom to taste and vote for their favorite soup.

According to Hough, who first introduced the cook-off in 2013, this yearly event came from one spontaneous decision.

"It's something we decided to start because: who doesn't love soup?" Hough said.

While the soup competition initially came out of just a gathering of people and their soup creations, it is now a larger competition that many staff members take part in. The actual event was



Photo by NOAH PLAHN

A tab with Hough's name will be added to the trophy for the yearly event.

small since only teachers and staff members took part, but the selection of soups at the event was large.

According to Hough, every soup was crafted expertly with care and love, which led to a successful event that got lots of staff members trying and voting on each submission. The different and unique selection of soups showed that the participating staff members wanted to try new things. The staff members

in attendance said they wanted to submit something that no one else had tried before, inventing new recipes or experimenting with their ingredients.

With the contestants each using different ingredients and trying to be unique in their food, there was a wide range of choices to vote for. For example, there was the Zesty Wild Rice soup, created by Ms. Olesen. Not only did this soup feature chicken, ham and duck, the duck itself was

freshly hunted for use in the soup.

Another contestant was Mr. King, who made the Curried Butternut soup. In contrast to the last soup, King put no meat in his dish. According to King, he had no intention of winning and simply cared only about the fun of the event.

"I like the idea that people get to try lots of soups and have a fun experience," King said.

In addition to King's Curried Butternut soup, Olesen's Zesty Wild Rice soup and Hough's Marry Me Chicken Soup, the other soups in the competition were Creamy Tuscan Tortellini by Mr. James, Vegetarian Black Bean Taco by Ms. Lieser, Chicken and Sausage Gumbo by Ms. Fair-Manke, Cheesy Wild Rice with Ham by Ms. Enselein and Sweet Red Pepper and Gouda by Ms. Kubista.

With the winner now decided, Hough's name will be added to the plaque that hangs in her office celebrating the annual event. According to Hough, the plaque is just a physical item that rewards the winner but, in reality, everyone who participated and entered their soup in the competition was a winner.

## School offers various supports for pregnant students

While there are many types of resources a pregnant teen may need depending on their situation, staff members do what they can to help

By AKEYA EASLEY  
Quill staff writer

Teenage pregnancy can present unique challenges for young mothers-to-be, but with the right support and resources, they can navigate this journey while continuing their education and pursuing their goals. When a Cooper student learns they are pregnant, there are staff members who understand the importance of providing support to ensure that student receives the care, education and emotional assistance they need during and after pregnancy.

"One of the primary challenges pregnant teenagers face is sharing their news, especially with their families. Fear of judgment and lack of support can make this a daunting task," Robbinsdale District Parent and Family Educator Ms. Murphy

said.

Pregnant teens are encouraged to explore all options available to them, including parenting, adoption and abortion. Murphy said counseling is available to help teens make informed decisions about their future and the future of their child, with support provided "regardless of their choice."

Additionally, Murphy said dealing with pregnancy symptoms such as fatigue, soreness and discomfort can be physically and emotionally taxing.

"At Cooper High School, pregnant students have access to a range of support services aimed at helping them navigate these challenges," Murphy said. "Maintaining physical and mental health is crucial for pregnant teens. Advocating for their needs, including adjusting prenatal vitamins if they

cause discomfort, is essential."

According to Murphy, Cooper's dedicated team of social workers, teachers, counselors and nurses is committed to providing assistance and guidance to pregnant students.

"We offer one-on-one sessions with a parent and family educator who can help students share their news with their families and connect them with resources," Murphy said. "Additionally, we encourage students to prioritize their health by eating well, staying hydrated and getting adequate rest."

By sharing information about available resources and fostering a supportive environment, communities can help reduce stigma and empower pregnant teenagers to seek the assistance they need.

"Communities play a vital

role in supporting pregnant teens," Murphy said. "Transportation to prenatal appointments, for example, can be arranged through community initiatives, ensuring that pregnant teens receive essential prenatal care."

Murphy said that the district also partners with outside programs that can help pregnant teens, including Helping Us Grow, which provides "universal short-term visiting services," and Teen Hope, which offers longer-term support for prenatal and parenting students.

"Pregnant teens have access to a variety of resources for prenatal care, education and emotional support," Murphy said. "Emotional support is also emphasized, with staff members committed to listen-

**PREGNANT**  
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## Bad state of restrooms is everyone's fault

Cooper students need to show more courtesy toward each other, care for the school when using the bathrooms



Photo by NOAH PLAHN

Trash on the floor and damaged equipment are all-too-common sights in the restrooms around Cooper.

### From the Editors

A newspaper staff member recently had to use the bathroom during class time. When they got to the second-floor bathroom, they opened the door to get in. The bathroom was a mess. It had an unpleasant smell, there was trash and toilet paper on the floor, hair was sitting in clumps on the tile, the mirror had finger stains on it mixed with what appeared to be makeup and food, and the sink was full of wet tissue paper, food wrappers and more hair. They decided to wait and go to bathroom at home after school instead.

Both boys and girls bathrooms can get like this during the school day, which is why they should be cleaned every day. Additionally, it is our duty as users to try and leave the

bathrooms clean for the people who are going to use them next. Unfortunately, some people are very selfish. They only use the bathroom to satisfy themselves and do not care if

dirty. Although it is a cliché that boys are messier in the bathrooms than girls, that is simply not the case. Both the boys and girls restrooms are equally dirty by the end

There are different levels of dirtiness in the bathrooms on any given day, but they definitely get dirty. Although it is a cliché that boys are messier in the bathrooms than girls, that is simply not the case. Both the boys and girls restrooms are equally dirty by the end of the day.

anyone is going to come in and use it after them.

There are different levels of dirtiness in the bathrooms on any given day, but they definitely get

of the day. This makes us wonder why and how students can be so inconsiderate. We students are just hurting ourselves when we cause or tolerate the bad condition of the

bathrooms.

In addition to its impact on students, the lack of bathroom cleanliness is not good for the school's guests. Cooper is a school at which outside guests, and even the school's staff, have to share the bathrooms with the students. This means that basic bathroom maintenance is an important task since everybody in the building uses those rooms.

One part of basic maintenance also falls on the school itself, which could do more to make sure bathrooms have enough soap, enough toilet paper and properly functioning toilets and hand dryers. Another item that would be great to have in the bathrooms would be air fresheners. In situations where the bathroom doors may be closed for a period of time, all of the odors of the bathrooms are trapped inside. We have all probably had the experience when you can already smell the bathroom from the hallway before you even enter the door.

There are many simple ways to address these bathroom problems. First, the school should buy air fresheners and put them in the bathrooms. As stated above, a simple addition like an air freshener may make the bathrooms a touch more welcoming for the students who need to use them.

Second, the administration needs to consider some consequences for students who abuse the bathrooms. While some of the bathrooms remain tolerable throughout the day because they are locked during class time, the remaining restrooms are in tough shape. The administration should create more rules that force students to look after themselves when they use the bathrooms.

Ultimately, the custodians can only do so much when the students do not take care of these community spaces. It is time for us students to clean up our acts by cleaning up our bathrooms.

## Caitlin Clark shows power of female athletes

University of Iowa basketball player is ushering in an exciting new era in college sports

By AKEYA EASLEY  
Quill staff writer

Women are often seen as the "weaker" gender in society. As a result, when they are on a field, on a court, or in an arena, the thought of taking women seriously goes out the window. Most women in sports, especially male-dominated ones like basketball, are not seen as being as good as their male counterparts. When congratulated for their accomplishments, they usually get the "she is good for a girl" remark, implying that women are not good at sports simply because they are women. Caitlin Clark challenges these stereotypes in basketball. Her skills and achievements show that gender does not equate to skill.

Clark started her journey when she was just five years old. From that early age, she took part in basketball, tennis, soccer, golf, softball and volleyball. At the time, there were not any girls in her age range to play against in some of these sports, which resulted in her competing in boys recreational leagues. Later, once she had been in these sports for a period of time, she then played against much older girls in the leagues available to her. This experience early on in diverse sports at such a young age laid the foundation for Clark's eventual success. By the time Clark made it to high school, everyone in Iowa knew her name.

During the 2022-2023 March Madness season, Clark started to gain a lot of national traction and attention in the college sports scene. With her skillset and competitive spirit, she led her team to impressive victories and earned accolades for her performance. Clark's ability to excel in a male-dominated sport challenges stereotypes about female athleticism and reinforces the notion that gender does not determine skill or potential.

Clark's journey from competing in boys recreational leagues to becoming a standout player in college basketball sends a powerful message about possibility and potential. Her story encourages girls to dream big, pursue their passions and defy societal expectations. Beyond her achievements on the court, Clark is a vocal advocate off the court for gender equality in sports. She uses her platform to speak out against inequalities in media coverage, sponsorship opportunities and compensation for female athletes.

By raising awareness and amplifying the voices of women in sports, Clark is driving positive change and pushing for greater inclusivity and equity. Her success opens doors and creates opportunities for other female athletes to thrive. As a trailblazer in women's basketball, Clark paves the way for future generations of athletes to pursue their athletic aspirations without limitations or barriers. In essence, Caitlin Clark's importance to women's sports lies not only in her exceptional talent and achievements but also in her ability to inspire, advocate and pave the way for a more inclusive future in sports.

## Schedule change still has many drawbacks

The repercussions of later start, end times to the school day are affecting students in multiple ways, some of which are negative

By CHIMUAL VANG  
Quill staff writer

A new start and end time was established last school year. Now, 8:35 a.m. marks the time when school officially starts and 3:25 p.m. is when school is officially over. This end time does not include the end times for school activities and extracurricular events, which are also pushed back accordingly. When the new start and end time came around last school year, students and staff had to make many adjustments so that they, and the school, could properly function. After more than a year under the new schedule, it is clear that some of the changes caused by the schedule are pros for some people and cons for others. Ultimately, the cons seem to slightly outweigh the pros for most groups of students.

An earlier start time to the school day correlates to a much later time for the school day to end. This has caused disruptions to students who have to leave school early due to the responsibilities that they may have outside of school, such as part-time jobs



Photo by CHIMUAL VANG

The morning and afternoon buses now run into more rush-hour traffic.

or taking care of relatives. For anyone who has extracurricular activities after school such as athletes or coaches, a new start time to the day and a later end time has meant not being able to attend the last few periods of class on competition days. This has resulted in many absences that can eventually lead to issues with grades or organizational issues within classes for students.

Issues with traffic during the drive to and from school

have also increased. With rush hour happening in the 7-8 a.m. and 4-5 p.m. range, the new start and end times are now aligned with other people's traveling and transportation schedules. This means people coming to Cooper and people going to other workspaces will be forced to travel at the same approximate time. Ever since a new start time has been implemented, a large percentage of students have been tardy to their first period due to the results

of rush hour traffic.

A new start and end time is also putting a burden on people outside of school. For example, at retail outlets that employ Cooper students, work schedules are now having to be re-written to match this new shift to the schooling schedule. There are also instances in which students have had to quit their existing part-time jobs are switch to new ones that better match the new schedule followed by the school.

Overall, there have been many pros and cons to last year's change, but the cons seem to outweigh the pros. A new start time has caused a collision with the work start times of other people outside of Cooper. It also has caused disruptions to the way our school is organized. With more complicated scheduling, some students have become less productive as they try to make their old schedule mesh with the new one, which has led to more stress. While students and staff members may be better rested and prepared for the day thanks to an extra hour of sleep, that may not be worth the negative trade-offs the new start time has brought.

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## Live-action take on *Avatar* anime has so-so results

*Last Airbender* has good special effects but is lacking in the acting department

By LEO PEREZ  
Quill staff writer

*Avatar: The Last Airbender* is a brand new Netflix show that is a live-action remake of the older cartoon that aired on Nickelodeon. This new show is the latest product of the *Avatar* franchise, with its predecessor being *The Legend Of Korra*. The new story follows Avatar Aang on a journey to complete his training in all four elements and stop the Fire Nation from ruling the world. While this show is well-made with respect to its use of CGI, the acting and some directorial choices make me question if this truly lives up to the high standards of the original animated series.

*Avatar* is set in a war-torn world called Asiatic where gifted people can “bend” one of the four elements: water, earth, fire or air. Aang is the Avatar, the only person able to bend all the elements. It is Aang’s destiny to bring peace to the world and save it from the Fire Nation. Aang is joined in his journey by two companions, Katara and Sokka, who help him as he struggles against an exiled Fire Nation prince named Zuko, who seeks to regain his honor by capturing Aang.

The story is somewhat close to the animated show with some scenes and dialogue that have been taken out. There also are character changes in the new show that sometimes work and sometimes should have been left alone.

One example of a change is that the bounty hunter, June, flirts with Uncle Iroh instead of him flirting with her, which was the case in the original series. This is a small change, but it effectively keeps Uncle Iroh as a wise and reformed old man instead of some pervert that flirts with younger women. I like this change because it keeps Uncle Iroh’s personality the same as it was in the animated show when it comes to meeting new people. He is an old soldier who has seen the worst of humanity and has come out of it set on being better.

At the same time, this live-action show takes some shortcuts by removing some important scenes from the animated show. For example, they omit Aang and Bumi’s flashback scene during which they talk about the Earth City mail system and its carts, which is something I liked about the original show. Fortunately, the new show keeps the final scene from the original series, in which Aang and King Bumi ride in stone carts. It is great seeing this sequence in a live-action context.

Another important aspect of the new series is the acting. The performers in *Avatar* are giving their all but, of course, many of them are young, and child actors are always the toughest to like when it comes to talent. We have all seen movies and shows in which our favorite actors are doing incredible work, but the second a kid is introduced, everything goes bad. When it comes to child actors, I usually do not expect much more than them acting like a robot, which is exactly what happens in *Avatar*.

Aang, who is played by Gordon Cormier, is supposed to be the main character of the show, yet the way Cormier acts is completely off. I do not know if that is intentional or if Cormier has the expressional range of an earthbender’s rock.

You can especially see this

**AVATAR**  
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## IB artists display their works in exhibition

Each artist selected the classroom of a specific teacher to serve as the gallery for their personal show, which is part of an internal assessment



Photo by NOAH PLAHN

The works of Ryan Guillen Barrera (12) were displayed in room 241 during the exhibition process.

By HEATHER HOLZERSMITH  
Quill staff writer

Self-expression is arguably one of the most important aspects of being human. This year, Cooper students in the International Baccalaureate (IB) Art class put art exhibits in various classrooms and in the display cases along the school hallways in March as part of their internal assessment for that class.

The IB Art class is taught by Ms. Mielke, an art teacher at Cooper. She has been working closely with students and staff members to turn classrooms into mini art museums to display collections of student-created pieces.

Mielke said the internal assessment process supports the importance of self-expression by letting students have free range with their displays. She said she is proud of how her students approached this assessment.

“Most students have now finished their exhibitions and they have been hanging for the past two weeks. Students were nervous at first to have their work on display although we’re very

proud to hang their work in the end. Staff members have given such great feedback to all of my artists. I couldn’t be more proud of how they have grown and the confidence they have built in their abilities,” Mielke said.

The 16 students in the IB Art class who displayed their work around the school were: Janelly Castillo (12), Evelyn Coombs (12), Blake Everhardt (12), Hyp-

**Ryan Guillen Barrera**

Guillen Barrera said his attention to detail makes his art unique.

“When it comes to crafts, I have to make sure all the pieces stay in place. In one of my vases, it was no easy task to keep the pieces straight,” he said.

Guillen Barrera wants the viewer to see the complexity of video games and his profound

**Ms. Mielke said the internal assessment process supports the importance of self-expression by letting students have free range with their displays.**

nos Gorder (11), Ryan Guillen Barrera (12), Favour Ikechukwu (12), Robin Jarman (11), Mia Korstad (12), JV Page (11), Lillian Peterson (11), Anna Smith (11), Nicholas Thao (12), Nikolas Thao (11), Keithan Vang (11), Matthew Vang (12) and Jenny Wong (11). Three of these artists spoke to *The Quill* about how they express themselves and the messages they are sharing with their work.

passion for them.

“My primary message is to just appreciate the vast world of video games that changed and shaped the world today. From simple pixels to hyper-realism, video games have a special place in all our hearts. Video games have brought us joy, anger and even sadness, yet we continue to play because we love to feel the emotions of the beloved charac-

## One-act play attracts new, veteran performers

The annual one-act show gives participants a chance to compete against students from other area high schools

By LEO PEREZ  
Quill staff writer

Cooper’s 2023-2024 competition one act show was *The Astonishing & Dangerous History of Maze-fied the Frog*. The 30-minute play was performed at Cooper on January 19 in the school auditorium at 7 p.m. before it was performed at the section competition. Although the Cooper production did not advance to the state tournament, the students involved in the show said they enjoyed the process of putting together the one act.

The competition one act is an annual Minnesota State High School League-sanctioned event in which participating schools choose a show to perform against other schools in their state-established section. Official judges rate each show and the winners from each section then advance to a state competition typically held at the start of February. Cooper theater teacher Ms. Wurzer said this year’s competition saw Cooper go up against six other schools in their section.

“There were seven shows total performed, one from us and the rest from other schools. Each one is about 30 minutes long and it was four comedies and three dramas,” Wurzer said.

Members of the Cooper cast said they enjoyed the process of putting on



Photo by GRETCHEN WURZER

The cast and crew of the one-act is smaller than that of a mainstage show.

a show that went in front of judges as opposed to just audiences.

“It was fun,” Sammy Momanyi (11) said. “It doesn’t take long, you get to meet new people and you get to compete with other schools.”

According to Momanyi, the winning schools not only get to compete at the state level, they also have the chance to qualify for a national competition.

“If you can make it to nationals, you’re really good,” he said. “I am already excited for next year’s show and all the fun it is going to bring.”

Also performing in this year’s show was Malik Williams (11). Williams said he liked the preparation process for the play.

“I really enjoyed learning how to connect with a character as well as bouncing ideas off of my peers,” Williams said.

Williams said he hopes to be involved with the one act again next year and encouraged other students to take part as well.

“I’d encourage it because acting is a great way to connect with your peers and people from other schools, and the

ters,” he said.

Scott Cawthon is Guillen Barrera’s personal inspiration.

“His career started out as just being a retail worker; now, he’s a multi-million dollar entrepreneur. His work will forever inspire me because his story fuels me with ambition to improve my art and potentially build a career in the video game industry,” Guillen Barrera said.

For Guillen Barrera, he really enjoys seeing what other people who are also in the IB Art class create.

“My favorite part of the IB art program is seeing what people create with just a single area of artistic focus. Through the years, I’ve seen paintings, models and even performances done by fellow students. Art isn’t just about drawings and colors; art is what you love and want to appreciate by expressing it to the world. All our work is leading up to students leaving their mark on the school. The IB art program allows us to make that mark,” he said.

Guillen Barrera said his love for making art will remain as consistent as the coding in the games he plays.

**Evelyn Coombs**

Coombs said she finds video games and the things she interacts with in her day-to-day life to be her main sources of inspiration.

“The games I play and the characters from the stories I write, especially *Five Nights at Freddie’s*, inspire me the most,” she said.

The IB art class opens up the opportunity for Coombs to explore her favorite artistic techniques.

“My favorite work is my rougher-sketched line art or hatched shading, or the vibrant colors I use in my digital pieces,” she said.

Her favorite part of the IB Art class is the creative freedom she has.

“The possibilities are endless with few restrictions. Students get to do so many fun projects that

**IB ARTISTS**  
continues on page 8

## SCHOOL OFFERS VARIOUS SUPPORTS FOR PREGNANT STUDENTS continued from page 2

ing to and understanding the needs of pregnant students.”

Pregnant teens are also shown how to access county resources, such as MFIP, WIC and child support. Murphy said these programs can provide “financial assistance and support for both the mother and baby.”

Despite the challenges of pregnancy, pregnant teens can continue their post-high school education and pursue their goals with the right support. Murphy said Cooper provides guidance on accessing student-parent centers at other schools and college scholarships specifically tailored to parenting

students. For instance, programs like The Jeremiah Program offer “housing and childcare support for single mothers pursuing higher education.”

Murphy said that by providing a supportive environment, access to resources and guidance, communities and schools can “em-

power pregnant teens to thrive during this transformative period in their lives.”

“Pregnant teenagers require comprehensive support and resources to navigate the challenges of pregnancy while continuing their education and pursuing their goals,” Murphy said.

## Across the Universe is a treat for Beatles fans

The 2007 Julie Taymor film uses the lyrics from multiple Beatles classics as the blueprint for the characters and plot



Photo by COLUMBIA PICTURES

*Across the Universe* is set during the tumultuous times of the late 1960s and early 1970s as the central characters deal with multiple social and cultural upheavals.

By ZIYA MORRIS  
Quill staff writer

*Across the Universe* is a film directed by Julie Taymor that came out on September 14, 2007. I think this is an entertaining film because of its use of music and the engaging story that it tells. One unique aspect of the film is that the music and the story come from famous Beatles songs. Using those songs as a starting point, the film deals with people fighting for equality after the globe-altering events of World War II. Overall, this Julie Taymor movie uses music to help the audience connect to the characters in the film and communicate the movie's many messages.

*Across the Universe* tells the story of Jude Feeney (Jim Sturgess) and Lucy Carrigan (Evan Rachel Wood), both of whom are coming of age in the 1960s. Jude is a young shipyard worker in Liverpool who heads to America to find his father, an American soldier who was briefly with his mother during World War II. Meanwhile, in New Jersey, Lucy is a high school student who is

worried about her boyfriend, Daniel, who is headed for service in the Vietnam War.

After arriving in America, Jude eventually finds his father, who is now a janitor at Princeton University. Although Jude does not find a positive connection with his father, Jude does meet and befriend a Princeton student Max, who brings him home for Thanksgiving. It is there that Max introduces Jude to his family, including Lucy, his younger sister. The movie then follows the developing relationship between Jude and Lucy, in addition to a collection of interconnected, secondary characters.

As mentioned earlier, the movie revolves around the use of songs by the Beatles. As a result, one of the key filmmaking elements at play in *Across the Universe* is music. In one scene in the movie, the characters are singing "Strawberry Fields Forever." As the song is playing, the viewer sees images of each character's struggles along with images of the destruction and death caused by the Vietnam War. This sequence is important because it shows how

the characters feel about what they are going through during this time period. At one moment, the lyrics "Strawberry Fields, nothing is real" can be heard as a visual of a character fighting in the war can be seen. This indicates to the audience that this character is going through a lot of stress and is coming to grips with the fact that he may not make it out of the war alive.

Another scene during which the music plays a big role involves the song "Hey Jude." In this scene, the Lucy character is hiding in a closet. When the door to the closet is opened, the audience sees Lucy surrounded by her friends against the backdrop of clouds and sky. As this image is shown, we hear the characters singing the song "Hey Jude." By combing the music and the visuals, the film creates a feeling of freedom for the characters. They seem for a moment to be escaping all the sadness they have been experiencing.

One lesson this film teaches is that everyone in a society pays a price when it comes to war and inequality. Over the course of the

movie, there are many scenes that show the viewer the horrors of the Vietnam War. In addition to witnessing the death of soldiers on both sides of the conflict, we also see images of people back home protesting the war and America's actions during it. Additionally, we see protests unfolding related to the Civil Rights movement in the United States and the fight against racism. Specifically, there is a sequence during which a young African American boy is singing "Let it Be" as he participates in a march for equality. Unfortunately, a police force pushes back against the protesters, resulting in injuries and deaths among the protesters. It is through scenes such as these that the film serves as a warning against the costs of war and prejudice.

Ultimately, the Julie Taymor movie *Across the Universe* uses music to help the audience connect to the film and its central messages. Not only is this one of my favorite movies of all time, it is a film that gets better with repeat viewings as you get older. I give *Across the Universe* five out of five stars.

## Viewers seeking a fun family film will like *Mike*

*Like Mike* is about an orphan who gets magical powers from a pair of old basketball shoes

By SARIONNA EDWARDS  
Quill staff writer

*Like Mike* was directed by John Schultz and released in theaters on July 3, 2002. I chose to review this film because it tells an energetic and funny story. The characters in this film carry the story along until the fun finally finishes during the closing credits. *Like Mike* uses sound effects and lighting to help teach the audience a lesson about the importance of family.

*Like Mike* is about Calvin Cambridge (Bow Wow), who lives in an orphanage with his two best friends, Murph (Jonathan Lipnicki) and Reg Stevens (Brenda Song). This trio is forced by the director of the orphanage, Stan Bittleman (Crispin Glover), to sell chocolate after each home game of the fictional NBA team the Los Angeles Knights. One night, Calvin meets the team's coach, who is impressed by Calvin's knowledge of basketball and decides to give Calvin tickets for the next game.

Prior to the game, Calvin finds a pair of old sneakers with the initials "MJ" (as is Michael Jordan) written on them. A jealous bully named Ox (Jesse Plemons) steals the sneakers and throws them onto an overhead power line. When Calvin tries to retrieve them that night during a rainstorm, he is shocked by a lightning bolt and given special powers. When those powers are then revealed during his visit to the next Knights basketball game, Calvin begins a journey as the youngest pro basketball star ever.

Synchronous sounds play a big part in the scene when Ox steals the sneakers and throws them onto an overhead power line. When Calvin tries to retrieve them that night during a rainstorm, he gets shocked by a lightning bolt. The use of synchronous sound during the lightning strike is great because the sound of the strike matches up with the corresponding visual component of the lightning bolt hitting. The makes the sequence more believable to the audience despite the exaggerated situation that the Calvin character finds himself in. Even though something like this would not happen in the same way in the real world, the filmmaking techniques help the sequence feel more plausible to the viewer.

The filmmaking technique of lighting is also important to the film thanks to its ability to dictate the visual mood and aesthetic for every scene. One scene that shows how lighting can help communicate information in this film is when Calvin and his friends go to the Knights game and Calvin gets picked to compete in a halftime contest after he has been given his special powers. As Calvin plays at halftime, he is made to stand out through the use of bright lighting. The lighting helps make Calvin the focus of each camera shot and lets the audience know that he is the character to pay attention to. It also reinforces the idea that he was hit by lightning, which makes him look brighter than everyone else.

One main theme in *Like Mike* is the importance of fatherhood and family. After Calvin becomes a player with the Knights thanks to his magical basketball abilities, he develops a father-son-style relationship with his teammate Tracy Reynolds (Morris Chestnut). As they work together to win games, the pair become closer than just teammates, they become like a family. Knowing that Calvin and his friends are in an orphanage, Tracy decides to adopt Calvin and Murph. Meanwhile,

**LIKE MIKE**  
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## Gran Turismo brings real story to big screen

The film focuses on the story of an exceptional video game player who gets a chance to learn to drive actual race cars

By BRISEIDA VELAZQUEZ  
Quill staff writer

*Gran Turismo* is a biographical, sports drama directed by Neil Blomkamp, it was released on July 16, 2023. I chose to review this film because I am into films based on real stories. I enjoyed *Gran Turismo* even though I am not a fan of car racing or things related to it. What I found fascinating was seeing how they handled all the special effects, the makeup, the directing and the story itself, which gives viewers a lot to think about. Neil Blomkamp's *Gran Turismo* uses effective editing, special effects and makeup to teach the audience about the importance of overcoming all adversities to pursue your dreams and to not be afraid of taking risks.

As the movie begins, viewers meet Kazunori Yamauchi (Takehiro Hira), the creator of *Gran Turismo*, the most accurate racing simulator of all time. Following a pitch by marketing executive Danny Moore (Orlando Bloom), Nismo, the motor-sport division of Nissan, establishes the GT Academy to recruit skilled players of the racing simulator *Gran Turismo* and turn them into real racing drivers. Given the fact that 80 million young people have played *Gran Turismo*, Danny believes he can convert one of them into a racing champion, which would open up a whole new category for their physical cars.

Eventually, Danny recruits a former driver who has become a



Photo by COLUMBIA PICTURES

The performances of Archie Madekwe and David Harbour help elevate the film.

mechanic, Jack Salter (David Harbour), to train the players. Jack believes that putting a kid into a car going 200 miles an hour is dangerous, but Danny is convinced that the kids have more virtual track time than most professional racers.

It is at this point that the viewer meets Jann Mardenborough (Archie Madekwe), a clothing store employee and gamer from Cardiff, Wales, who is an avid player of the simulator. Despite the disapproval of his father Steve Mardenborough (Djimon Hounsou), Jann decides to try to join Danny's program because racing, even if it is virtual, is what he loves to do. As the movie progresses, we see Jann and Danny pursue their lofty dream.

One scene in which makeup plays a key role is when Jann wins the number one position in a

race that qualifies him for the GT Academy. In this scene, we can see many elements of makeup that work together to make the movie more realistic. For instance, we can see the sweat on Jann's forehead, which shows us all the tension and pressure of the moments during which he is racing. We know that his dream depends on him winning the race, and the sweat on Jann's forehead helps us understand the important of the moment. The makeup makes this scene more realistic and more suspenseful.

A second scene in which makeup works along with special effects to create a memorable moment is when Jann is racing at the most-feared circuit on the planet: the Nurburgring. Jann is about to win first place but he suffers a freak accident during which his car

flips over several times at a high speed, which leaves him unconscious and full of injuries. Thanks to the special effects, we can clearly see the pieces of his car shatter and fly away due to the impact of the crash. Additionally, the use of makeup helps depict the severe injuries that Jann receives during the accident. Thanks to special effects and makeup, the movie can look realistic without putting the lives of the actors at risk through filming actual crashes.

I believe the message that the director is trying to teach the audience in this film is to not be afraid of taking risks. At the beginning of the film, Danny flies to Japan to meet with the leaders of Nissan to sell them on his innovative and risky idea. In this scene, we can see the film's message about taking risks is front and center. Danny's short speech to the executives presents his risky idea and convinces them to take a chance. Based on how the movie eventually concludes, the lesson the film teaches about taking risks has an impact on the viewer.

Through effective makeup and special effects, Neil Blomkamp's movie *Gran Turismo* teaches the audience about the importance of taking risks. Blomkamp does an excellent job of developing each scene so that the movie is consistently entertaining to viewers. Thanks to the exciting story and the skilled use of filmmaking techniques, I give *Gran Turismo* five out of five stars.

## Premier Performers

The story of the musicians and artists who bring their talents to Cooper

### Stephanie Stavnes

By EMILY CARRILLO ACEVEDO  
Quill staff writer

Stephanie Stavnes (12) is a band member who also takes clay and drawing classes. Stavnes has been in the band ever since fifth grade and has been doing Marching Band since 11th grade.

"I wanted to be like my sister, who was also in band and played clarinet," she said.

Meanwhile, Stavnes started clay in 11th grade because she wanted to learn something new and "fell in love with it." As for drawing, she has been doing it for a longer time. She said it takes time to draw, but the result is always worthwhile.

Stavnes said her favorite memories from band are meeting and making new friends as well as going out



Photo by C. VANG

to eat Mexican food after Marching Band practice. When it comes to clay, she loves talking and working on projects with her friends. Finally, she said drawing makes her lose track of time.

Being part of these activities can come with leadership roles, which is the case for Stavnes.

"Currently, I am a clay TA and spend time trying to keep the room clean," she said.

Stavnes said clay is one of her favorite classes because her teacher, Mr. Molitor, makes the classroom feel comfortable and he cares for his students.

Outside of school, Stavnes draws on her Wacom tablet and figure skates, which she has done for 15 years.

After this school year ends, Stavnes will attend the University of Minnesota to major in MIS or microbiology.

### Kailey Jackson

By EMILY CARRILLO ACEVEDO  
Quill staff writer

Kailey Jackson (12) takes part in multiple choirs and theater. Jackson has been in theater since 11th grade and choir since sixth grade.

"I joined theater because my mom recommended it as I loved singing and dressing up. I loved the community so much that I stayed," she said. "[As for choir,] I always loved singing and I grew up singing. I just knew I wanted to have it in my everyday life continuously."

Jackson said her favorite memories in theater are the mistakes because "you will not find anything funnier than the mistakes." Meanwhile, for choir, it is going to Orchestra Hall.

When it comes to her arts in-



Photo by C. VANG

volvement for the rest of the year, Jackson will be part of the one-act festival in the spring and performing as part of Bella Voce and Concert Choir in a variety of spring shows.

Jackson says her current favorite classes are IB Theater, IB Chemistry, Concert Choir and AVID.

"I love the subjects, community, teachers and the class setting itself," she said.

Jackson said that she loves arts and crafts such as drawing, painting, building things, sewing and creating outside of school. She also loves watching horror movies, listening to music and going on walks.

Next fall, Jackson will start college.

"I'll attend college for four-to-six years to become a nurse or have a career in psychology. I don't know where I'm going to college, but I plan to stay in state," she said.

### Brenda Nyabicha

By BETHZY ARIAS-PLIEGO  
Quill staff writer

Brenda Nyabicha (12) is in orchestra, theater, cheerleading and various dance groups.

During the fall and winter, Nyabicha has taken part in Cooper's dance teams. Additionally, in the fall, she was a cheerleader for the football team.

"I did it because I wanted to show more of my stump skills. They weren't shown much in dance and I always wanted to cheer and show my loud school spirit," she said.

As for her work in theater, she said she got involved "to get a larger perspective on the acting industry." Meanwhile, her involvement in orchestra has given Nyabicha a chance "to play all types and genres of music."

Another performance group she is



Photo by B. ARIAS

part of is the Pan-African Dance squad.

"I love being able to show off African culture in a dance with all of our techniques and being able to unite all our countries together," she said.

Given her broad range of experience, Nyabicha was named captain for her competitive dance and Pan-African Dance teams.

"I love how my friends trust me in this role," Nyabicha said.

During the school day, Nyabicha's favorite classes are IB English HL2 and Health Careers Investigation.

"I am going to go into pediatric nursing and I like

to get a glimpse of what I will like to do in the future," she said.

Nyabicha is planning on going to a four-year college or university to major in nursing. She also plans to be a professional dancer or model in the future.

### Sadeeq Widboom

By BETHZY ARIAS-PLIEGO  
Quill staff writer

Sadeeq Widboom (12) plays saxophone in band and has taken multiple semesters of clay.

"I started band because I thought it would be fun to learn an instrument," he said. "For clay, I joined because it seemed like such a cool class."

Widboom cited community as one element of his time in band that he has enjoyed.

"I also like hearing the music we play get better and better every day," he added.

Meanwhile, the highlight of clay for Widboom is the creation process "from brainstorming to designing to throwing on the wheel."

"I also really enjoy the tri-



Photo by B. ARIAS

al-and-error learning process," Widboom said.

Widboom's interest in that learning process led to his decision this year to become a teacher assistant for a section of Mr. Molitor's clay class.

"I help around when things need cleaning or people need help," Widboom said.

Not surprisingly, Widboom pointed to band and clay as his two favorite classes. However, he also said English is another course he likes.

Outside of school, Widboom enjoys working with technology, especially CRT televisions, which he said are "great for retro gaming."

After graduating this spring, Widboom plans on going to a two-year college to get his general classes done. Eventually, he wants to do something related to civil engineering.

## Winter musical relied on hard work

The performances, which ran from February 21-March 1, required the sustained focus of cast, crew



Photo by ANNA NIEMANN

Work on the musical, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, started before winter break.

By EMILY CARRILLO ACEVEDO  
Quill staff writer

This year's winter musical, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, was directed by theater, dance and acting teacher Ms. Wurzer and choir teacher Ms. Rowan. The musical, which ran from February 21-March 1, required the performers and the technical crew to try many new things that resulted in a successful show.

The musical follows the main character, J. Pierpont Finch, as he tries to rise to the top of the business world with his book *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. He eventually gets a job in the World Wide Wicket Market Company as a mailroom clerk and, using his book, starts soaring to the top. Meanwhile, other characters try to stop Finch from reaching the top.

Wurzer picked this musical because it has a large ensemble, it works with gender-blind casting and it features a good number of leading roles. Auditions were held before winter break and the cast started rehearsing the week before winter break. The set was made by the cast and other volunteers.

"The set wasn't completed until three days before the show opened. The cast and helpers would build mainly on Saturdays. This started the second weekend of January," Wurzer said.

Although the set was not complete, the rehearsals took place in January and February. Wurzer said the hardest part of the rehearsal process was sharing actors with the one act competition show.

"They missed a lot of musical rehearsals because they were rehearsing their show, which happened before the musical," she said.

Rehearsals were also made challenging by cast members needing to learn their lines, blocking and choreography.

"This was a huge piece. Some actors had pages and pages of dialogue that had to be memorized. Bringing the cast together with the orchestra and adding live musicians is always a challenge as well," she said.

Wurzer said she experienced many highlights during the show.

"During the shows where everything clicks, the energy is high, the cast is working together and the dance numbers are clean and sharp. It's fun to see and to see the excitement on the cast members' faces when they know they've really nailed it," she said.

Wurzer said that she watches the shows from the audience perspective. Wurzer thought that the opening show and the last show were the best ones.

"Our first show on Thursday was good because everyone was so nervous. Things were really together and focused. The last Saturday show was also good. The cast and orchestra were more relaxed and having fun. I don't think anyone was necessarily scared anymore. The audience was very responsive. It was a great way to end," she said.

Working alongside Wurzer on the musical was Rowan, one of the choir teachers at Cooper who helps with the

production of the musical. One thing Rowan helps Wurzer do is choose the musical for the year. She and Wurzer choose based on the strengths and experience of returning and new cast members. This show in particular needed strong singers and dancers, as well as talented character actors. Rowan said she tests a person's singing capabilities to help with callbacks.

"The vocal auditions were so much fun. It allows us the opportunity to hear students as solo singers and to hear new singers. Students were well prepared and were not afraid to sing out and/or try singing something new or in a different way on the spot," she said.

After the cast members were chosen, rehearsals began. Rowan said the one difficult part was working on the harmonies for the musical number "Coffee Break."

"For the most part, students learned the music pretty quickly. Memorizing and combining singing with dancing were the most difficult parts of the rehearsal journey," she said.

While the musical was performed, Rowan watched along with Wurzer from the audience. She said this process led to her having many favorite musical numbers as the show progressed. However, she added that the highlight of the musical was being a part of the overall experi-

encing to the very last rehearsal," he said.

Yang said he also helped with the building of the set, which was one of his highlights from the musical. Another highlight came from the first show.

"During the opening show, I, and I'm sure everyone else, felt the energy on the first night and that gave us the confidence to keep going," he said.

Julius Muriuki (12) was another member of the cast. He played the character Bud Frump.

"He's very mean, a 'nyeh' type of person. Because his uncle is the boss of the company, he thinks he is also the boss, so he tries to be mean and he doesn't like Finch," he said.

According to Muriuki, the audition process was similar to the fall play while also having its differences.

"We had to act, dance and sing. When acting, you had to create a character getting hired into a company. We had to sing a part of the song 'Brotherhood of Man' and dance a part of 'A Secretary is Not A Toy.' During the callbacks, we just sang and read lines from the script," he said.

After being cast as Bud Frump, Muriuki had to learn his cues, lines and songs.

"It took me a while, I'd say a week before the actual show compared to the fall play, where I got it two weeks before opening night. The hardest part was that I had to get everything down right after I got back from the one acts because we had to take up time to do that as competition one acts was right after school," he said.

There were many parts that Muriuki enjoyed from the process of putting on the musical.

"I enjoyed working with Sammy [Momanyi (11)]; he did a really great job as Bratt. I also enjoyed working with Kindric as he does fit Finch. Honestly, it was fun and I got sad when it ended," he said.

As just mentioned, Momanyi was cast in the musical as the character Bert Bratt.

"Bert Bratt is the personnel manager in charge of hiring and firing. He is the voice of J.B. Biggley when he isn't there," he said.

The auditioning process was interesting to Momanyi as it was the first show he was a part of.

"We sang a part of 'Brotherhood of Man,' learned the choreography from 'A Secretary is Not A Toy' and made a character who is getting into the company," he said.

Momanyi explained that the hardest part of the rehearsal process was memorization, specifically memorizing cues. He said he learned his songs in a few weeks and it took him a week to learn his lines.

The highlights of the show for Momanyi were opening night, the musical number "Rosemary," the boardroom and washroom scenes, and dancing.

"My favorite scene in the boardroom would be the back and forth be-

"Sharing the musical theater experience with cast and crew members new and old is one of my favorite experiences each year. Seeing each actor or crew member truly grow into their role allowed them to shine. Our final performance truly locked in and will be remembered," co-director Ms. Rowan said.

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# Zenless Zone Zero is destined to be great

Although there were some issues in the beta version of the game, fixing those problems will lead *Zero* to success when it is released

By CHIMUAL VANG  
Quill staff writer

*Zenless Zone Zero* officially premiered its trailer on May 12, 2022. This game is produced by gaming corporation Mihoyo, which is located in Shanghai. While the official version of *Zenless Zone Zero* is set to be released in 2024, I was fortunate enough to have the experience of being chosen as a beta tester for the American server during one of the closed beta tests. I believe this game is going to be the progenitor of the next generation of hack and slash games. The game will be accessible on three platforms: Playstation, PC and Mobile/iOS.

Set in a futuristic fantasy world, *Zenless Zone Zero* starts off in the city of New Eridu. This is the last remnant of civilization left standing after an apocalypse of catastrophic natural disasters called "the hollows." New Eridu is a city filled with a diverse collection of outlaws, raiders, gangs and conspirators.

The natural disasters, or hollows, cause mutations. When a hollow occurs, it forms a black dome that sends fog into the air and creates its own ecosystem in the interior. Contained inside these hollows are monsters called ethereals. Ethereals are territorial and lethal monsters formed by mutated humans, animals and organisms within the contaminated zones. It is said that humans can only survive the conditions of a hollow for an hour, which means they are required to evacuate the area immediately when a hollow occurs.

In order to maintain the security of New Eridu, proxies across the city are hired to deal with hollows and related threats. In the game, we follow Wise and Belle, a sibling pair who are left on their own after their parents' disappearance during a hollow incident. Wise is a sharp and calm older brother, while Belle is an energetic and hectic younger sister. They run a small Blockbuster that sells movies and electronic appliances. Although they sometimes struggle to maintain it as a viable business, they are given the opportunity to work as proxies on the side.

A proxy's job is to act as a supervisor in rescuing those people trapped in hollows. They do so by virtually linking their nervous system to a drone device called the Bangboo. The Bangboo are intelligent devices unique to New Eridu, having been originally created to help assist the city with infrastructure maintenance. Now, these devices are being utilized to evacuate citizens from contaminated hollow zones.

These machines are roughly a half-foot tall and resemble an android-like bunny that walks on its hind legs. A Bangboo's uniform and attire will depend on what they are programmed to accomplish. The Bangboo that the player pilots is named The Pantheon, a Bangboo specifically designed for proxies.

In the version of the game I played during the beta test, I followed the adventures of the odd jobs agency Gentle House Cunning Hares. The members of Gentle House Cunning Hares are Nicole Demara, a sly but cautious business woman; Anby Demara, a mysterious young lass with an unknown background; Billy Kid, a rambunctious and carefree cowboy cyborg; and Nekomiya Mana, a quick-witted, cyber-genetically engineered, half-human feline.

Facing the critical issue of bankruptcy, the group's leader, Nicole Demara, reluctantly sends her guild out on a dangerous and desperate mission issued by a mysterious client that will keep them in

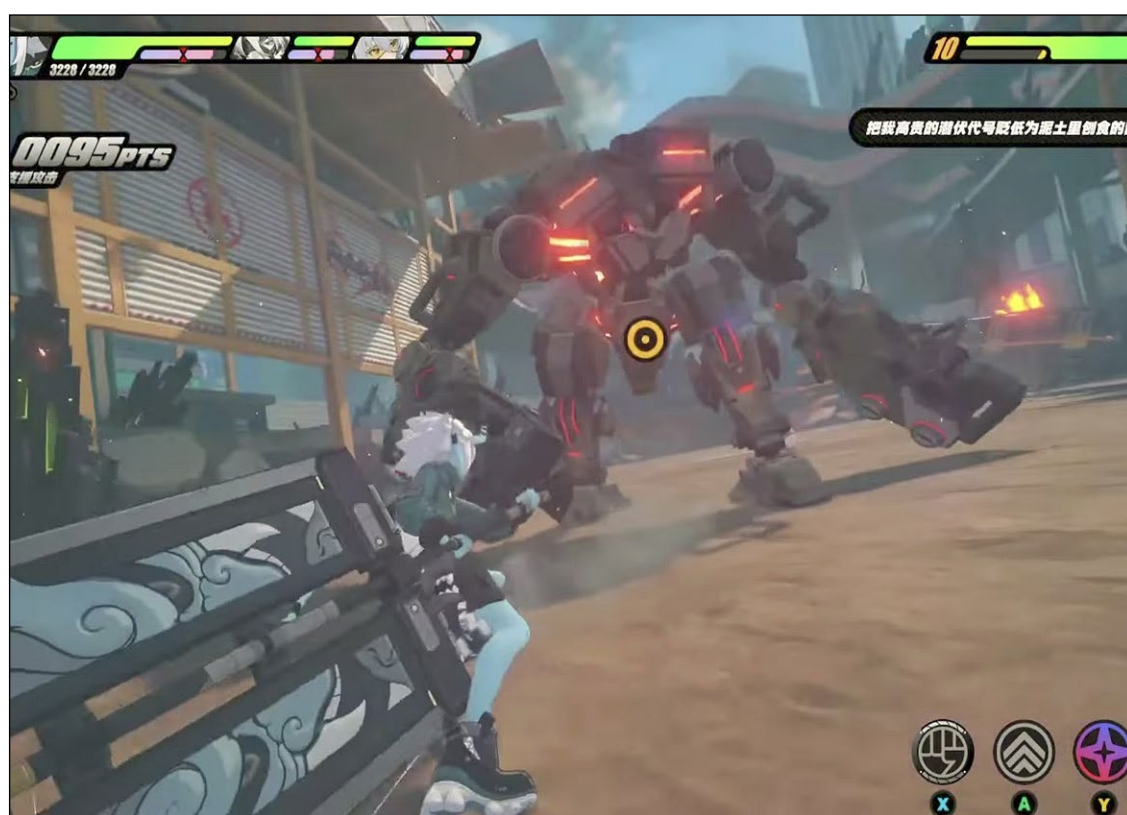


Photo by MIHOYO

The mechanics of the beta version of *Zenless Zone Zero* indicate that the game's designers are on the right track.

business. Their mission is to steal back and return a strongbox. Little are they aware that the people in possession of that strongbox are part of a Mafia organization.

Although successful in their mission, the Cunning Hares run into adversity when they are mistaken to be part of the Mafia gang. Fleeing from the pursuit of federal officials, the members of the group are separated from one another. During this process, Anby and Billy fall into a hollow contaminated zone. In order to rescue their allies, Nicole and Nekomiya request aid from the proxies Wise and Belle, who are now tasked with reuniting the group.

After this mission, the player is then asked to solve the troubles of an industrial company called Belobog Heavy Industries. This organization consists of the leader Koleda Belobog, a hot-headed boss and the daughter of the former leader of Belobog Heavy Industries; Anton Ivanov, a fierce and durable engineer who is the main brawn of the team; Grace Howard, a sharp and concise mechanic who is dexterous with her machinery skills; and Ben Bigger, an intelligent and gentle anthropomorphic grizzly bear, who, despite his tough look and scars across his fur, prefers to work as an accountant. This company is perplexed about the strange malfunctions that are causing the intelligent machinery they work with to become violent. It is for this reason that the company requests the aid of the proxies Wise and Belle.

Although the storyline has its complexities, *Zenless Zone Zero* is simply a hack and slash game. Much like other hack and slash games, juggling combos and ending a fight as fast as you can are important elements. During *Zenless Zone Zero*, you will control an agent in a party of three and fight against opponents. All agents will come from a faction. As of right now, *Zenless Zone Zero* features six factions from which the player can pick their agents. You also have the choice of picking either Wise or Belle as your support proxy to guide these factions in clearing up the hollow contaminated zones.

The six factions in the game are Gentle House Cunning Hares, Belobog Heavy Industries, Victoria Housekeeping Co., Hollow Special Operations Section 6, Obols Squad and New Eridu Public Security. Players have the choice of choosing only three agents in their party, so they must choose wisely.

With respect to attacks, the game features three types: basic attacks, dash attacks and dodge attacks. Basic attacks refer to simply clicking the attack button to perform a chain of attacks that branches out to combos. This attack will be differentiated depending on the device on which you are playing.

Next, dash attacks are attacks that are performed after the dash control. These types of attacks allow you to juggle combos as well as close the gap between player and opponent.

Finally, dodge attacks are attacks performed right after dodging an attack. These attacks are used for countering enemy attacks and also activating sub attacks.

Sub attacks are not universal; they are extensions and modifications to characters. Certain characters in the game have abilities unique to themselves which they can perform after a certain condition is met.

Another important gameplay component is skills. Each character has their own dedicated skill that they can activate once their gauge is full. Ether energy is the energy used in *Zenless Zone Zero*. This energy is manifested from the hollows. Once the character's ether energy gauge is full, they can activate their skill, which can also activate other party members' QTEs. QTE stands for quick time event.

This mechanic activates when a party member juggles their combo and tosses it to another party member to continue in order for them to switch out to another player. This also allows the player to juggle combos as well as swap out an agent when they are in a weakened state or inefficient against a certain opponent.

Stagger is another combat mechanic. Every enemy you fight will have a stagger bar below their health bar. Attacking the enemy will increase this bar, and once this bar is full, the enemy will fall into a stunned state in which they are vulnerable. This gives the player a chance to turn the tables of the battle if needed.

Party is also a combat mechanic. If you can not dodge an attack, you should consider parrying. This allows the player to block an attack and increase the enemy's stagger bar. However, keep in mind that certain enemies will have attacks that cannot be parried. This forces the player to learn how to be versatile during combat.

One game mechanic unique to *Zenless Zone Zero* is the decibel rating. These ratings range from weakest to

strongest, and are named uproar, blasting and maximum. Simply attacking enemies will increase your decibel rating, and once it reaches maximum, you can cast an ultimate combination of skills for one of your agents in the party. This combination of skills can also be linked back to the QTE mechanic.

There are three damage types that agents are categorized in: slashes, strikes and pierce. Agents that utilize bladed weapons will be considered slash attackers, blunt or heavy attacks are considered strikes, and gunslingers or sharp stabbing attacks will be considered pierce attackers. Each attack type will be more efficient against certain types of enemies that will increase the stagger bar faster. Slashes are efficient against biological monsters, strikes against mechanical monsters and pierces against humanoid monsters.

Next up, there are three types of damage attributes: ice, fire and lighting. Ice can freeze enemies, fire can burn enemies and lighting can paralyze enemies. These attributes are unique to specific agents and can be enabled in real time during combat.

Aside from gameplay, the aesthetic of *Zenless Zone Zero* add a touch of charm to the diversity of the game. The music, for one, is a mix of '90s hip hop mixed with modern electronica, which perfectly represents the feeling of the city New Eridu.

Some of the electronic appliances used within the game are remnants of the '90s as well. The appearance of tape recorders and VCRs helps reinforce the way in which the city is a mix of modern and past times. New Eridu also has cyborgs, anthropomorphic citizens and humans working together to preserve the city.

Ultimately, I do not know if I can rate *Zenless Zone Zero* on a scale of one to five. Since my personal experience playing it is based on a beta version, I know that I played a lesser version of *Zenless Zone Zero* and that the game was not yet at its full potential. I guarantee that some things from the beta version will be changed and other things in the beta version may not even make the final version of the game. Perhaps one day I will be able to rate *Zenless Zone Zero* when it finally comes out. Although not confirmed, many pre-registered proxies believe that it will be released in late spring or summer of 2024. All we can do is wait and prepare.

# Superhero fans should revisit *Spider-Man 2*

The second of the Andrew Garfield *Spider-Man* films is better than you may remember

By HENRY WILLIAMS  
Quill staff writer

An older movie that deserves another look is *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*. This entry in the Spider-Man universe was released in 2014 and directed by Marc Webb. I chose to revisit this film because I have always loved the Spider-Man movies, such as the recent *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* animated film. Additionally, the re-appearance of the Andrew Garfield version of Spider-Man in 2021's *Spider-Man: No Way Home* was a great reminder that his two Spider-Man movies were pretty strong. Thanks to the movie's effective use of editing and lighting, *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* holds up well a decade later and manages to entertain the viewer with its action, character development and messages.

The plot of *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* picks up one year after the events of the previous Spider-Man film. As the movie begins, Peter (Andrew Garfield) is still fighting crime as Spider-Man but he has broken off his relationship with Gwen Stacy (Emma Stone) after making a promise to her father (Dennis Leary) that he would stay away from her. Meanwhile, Peter's childhood friend, Harry Osborn (Dane DeHaan), returns home to help his father, Norman Osborn (Chris Cooper), the terminally ill CEO of Oscorp. Norman reveals that his disease is genetic and that Harry is reaching the age when he, too, may start suffering from the disease. Complicating this even further is an accident suffered by Oscorp employee Max Dillon (Jamie Foxx), which turns him into Electro. Before long, Peter and his alter ego Spider-Man are on a collision course with all of these characters as he tries to figure out how to keep the people he loves safe and keep the bad guys at bay.

One filmmaking technique that stands out in this movie is editing. A scene that makes especially effective use of editing is the first fight scene between Spider-Man and Electro. At first, Electro does not want to fight Spider-Man, but a police officer accidentally shoots Electro, causing the situation to escalate and Spider-Man to get more involved. In the scene, Electro tries to use his powers to hit Spider-Man but ends up hitting a cop car instead. As this unfolds, we cut between shots of Electro using his powers, shots of the car being hit and shots of Spider-Man trying to keep everyone safe. The quick pace of the edits makes the scene intense and underscores how rapidly Spider-Man must make decisions to keep the situation in some control.

Another filmmaking technique that is important to the movie is lighting. Given the fact that the villain is Electro, whose power revolves around emitting lightning-like blasts of energy, lighting is always central to the scenes in which that character appears. There is a later scene in the movie that features another confrontation between Spider-Man and Electro during which lighting is key. As Spider-Man swings his way toward Electro, a lightning storm breaks out, which causes flickers of light. Additionally, once the battle begins, Electro begins launching bolts of power at Spider-Man, which causes additional bright lights in the scene. These various uses of lighting make the fight look more intense, which helps the viewer get more involved in the action on screen.

Central to *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* is the message that one can never take things for granted because you never know when someone you love might be gone. Right from the beginning, Peter is dealing with his promise to stay away from Gwen even though he still has feelings for her. Eventually, Peter must also deal with the animosity of Electro, even though he has nothing against him personally. Then there are the prob-

**SPIDER-MAN 2**  
continues on page 9

## WINTER MUSICAL RELIED ON HARD WORK continued from page 6

tween Biggley and Finch when they were saying, "But if it could," he said.

The next cast member was Jamvon Rush-Resse (11), who played the character Twimble. Rush-Resse described his character as a "stubborn old man who will do anything for the company who is also fearful of unemployment."

Rush-Resse explained that during the audition process, he had to sing, deliver a monologue and dance. He said that students who got callbacks were given roles that Wurzer and Rowan thought would fit them well.

During the rehearsal process, cast members had to learn their cues, lines and songs, which Rush-Resse said were not very hard to learn.

"It depended on how often you would review," he said. "The hardest part was memorization and getting the dance numbers down, along with scenes and schedule conflicts."

The highlights of the show for

Rush-Resse were opening night, the musical numbers "Company Way" and "Brotherhood of Man," and hanging out and learning with friends.

Leyton Unzicker (11) was another key cast member. He played the character J.B. Biggley.

"He's the president of the company. He's an old guy who can be silly," Unzicker said.

During the rehearsal process, Unzicker said that the songs and cues were the easier parts of the musical as they took him two weeks to memorize. However, lines took three months for him to memorize.

"The memorization of lines was the hardest part. You just need to know the flow, and once it locks in, it's pretty easy," he said.

Unzicker said he did try to take part in some behind-the-scenes work as well. One thing he did was help build the set on Saturdays. He said he painted, construct-

ed and moved the set pieces.

All of this work paid off for Unzicker once the performances finally took place. He said the way the shows unfolded was a personal highlight.

"The whole thing coming together in the end and us getting an 'A' rating for our final show were highlights," he said.

Charlie Rush-Resse (12) was another one of the key cast members. He played Wally Womper, who Rush-Resse described as the charismatic head of the board.

"He's down to Earth with humble beginnings as he was also a window washer. He is upset at the end of the musical as everything he worked hard for was crumbling down," he said.

Rush-Resse said that the rehearsal process for the musical was interesting.

"We first had to come in and sing as a group. Wurzer taught us a dance and then we made a 60-to-90-second sketch monologue of a character we made," he

said. "I was not able to make it to callbacks and told [Wurzer and Rowan] to give me any character."

After he learned he was cast as Wally Womper, he had many parts to learn. Lines were the easiest to learn, taking Rush-Resse just a few days.

"Performing the music with the pit was hard, but the hardest part would be song cues. I would hear people start too early or late and it would throw me off," he said.

There were many highlights for Rush-Resse during the process of putting on the musical.

"The highlights for me were seeing the new batch of actors and performers. For a lot of people, this show was their first show, and they went through what I have before, so some people did come to me asking for advice. It was refreshing working in an environment where people were just having fun and going for it," he said.

## BESTPREP

continued from page 1

becoming a yearly staple in the sophomore AVID curriculum. Schaffer said the BestPrep contest is an annual highlight of the AVID class.

"It was cool to see the kids in my classroom take ownership of what they wanted to do for their project, whether it was to create a sculpture, write a poem or do a painting. To see the kids getting excited about dissecting the prompt and coming up with what aspect of success they wanted to portray was cool for me. It was also nice to see it come into fruition when the students presented their projects. BestPrep works with us on many different things, but this particular student spotlight competition gives the students the opportunity to use their own brains to take it whatever direction they want. It teaches them how to compete in a statewide competition and how they could benefit from that," Schaffer said.

From the student perspective, the three Cooper participants said they enjoyed various aspects of the BestPrep competition. Flores-Hernandez said she enjoyed having her project seen by other people.

"One of my favorite moments was probably getting to show my work in front of all of the contestants. I really didn't plan anything; it was honestly spur of the moment," Flores-Hernandez said.

Meanwhile, Mathis said she enjoyed going to the forum and hearing the speakers.

"I think one of my favorite parts of the Student Spotlight Competition process was seeing mentors and guest speakers, which allowed us to share our ideas in a different way," Mathis said.

For his part, Athias-Finn said he enjoyed the chance to think about the prompt in the context of his project.

"My favorite moments from the BestPrep event was probably receiving knowledge and information about success that children and youth can relate to. I liked the awards and the ceremony, but it was also nice to receive recognition for my project," he said.

Despite Athias-Finn's enjoyment of the event, he said he wishes it was a bit shorter.

"The event was definitely way longer than it needed to be, but it was still fun regardless," Athias-Finn said.

BestPrep is a nonprofit organization that prepares students with business, career and financial literacy skills through hands-on experiences that inspire success in work and life. According to its promotional materials, BestPrep offers six programs, including Classroom Plus, Cloud Coach, eMentors, Financial Matters, Minnesota Business Venture and The Stock Market Game. The organization has served more than 1.8 million students and teachers since its creation in 1976.

## AVATAR

continued from page 4

when it comes to the continuity in Cormier's acting from one scene to the next. For example, there will be one moment in which Aang is supposed to be under stress and straining, then in the very next moment, he will talk and act like he was not just lifting giant boulders while air-bending. It is a jarring inconsistency that is noticeable to the viewer. While the other actors in the show are believable and convincing enough to resemble their animated counterparts, that is not the case for the main character.

While the live-action *Avatar* has its ups and downs, it is solid enough to make me excited to see what they will do with the show in the future, if they even have one. If you are a long-time fan of the series, I am not sure if you will or will not enjoy the new show. For newcomers to *Avatar*, there are some things you may enjoy about the series. This new show gets 3.5 out of five stars.

## Sophomore wrestler takes fifth at state meet

Folake Olusesi achieved great success over the course of her first season as a member of the Hawks wrestling team



Photo by NED NELSON

Folake Olusesi receives her medal for finishing in fifth place at the state tournament on March 2.

By NOAH PLAHN  
Quill staff writer

Folake Olusesi (10) competed at the state wrestling meet on March 1-2 and placed fifth for the girls wrestling division.

"Overall, it was a beautiful experience," she said.

Olusesi's ability to compete at state in just her first year of wrestling shows that she is off to a hot start in the sport. She said she joined the team following a recommendation from her friend Anab Sharif-Abdullahi (11).

Although there are not separate girls wrestling teams at most Minnesota high schools, the sport is rapidly gaining popularity among female athletes.

"There has been no creation of a separate team for females. In my time at Cooper, this is only the third time that a female has completed a wrestling season," wrestling assistant coach Mr. Allen said. "However, statewide, female wrestling has doubled in participation over the last four years. During the '23-'24 season, there were over 1,000 females participating in wrestling."

Allen has an extensive history in this sport, having now coached at Cooper for a decade. He said he enjoyed the chance to work with Olusesi.

"Over the years, I've done a variety of different roles while coaching, but the most consistent is drilling [and] wrestling with the athletes. It takes some level of persuading to get people out for wrestling. The benefits of the sport should sell themselves, but there continues to be a stigma about wrestling. Anyone that joins wrestling is typically self-motivated, doesn't mind being physical and enjoys the process of building something from nothing," he said.

Meanwhile, Cooper head wrestling coach Mr. Wong also talked about the difficulties of getting students of every gender to join.

"[It] has been a struggle to get students interested in joining wrestling. The girls this season joined on their own accord, which was great to see. Anna Delaney (11) and Folake Olusesi both had tremendous success in their first year wrestling with both winning

over 20 matches and being ranked in the top 10 of their weight classes all season," he said.

Due to the lack of female opponents on the Cooper and other wrestling teams, the Hawk girls wrestlers have to wrestle boys at times.

"Most of the time, I wrestle girls. For example, [during] all my tournaments, I never wrestled a guy, but at duals and tris, there weren't always girls for me to wrestle. I had a choice not to wrestle the guys, but I usually chose to and I wrestled at least three times throughout the season," Olusesi said.

On top of the lack of girls to

and matches. They also yell out the moves you can use depending on the scenarios of your matches when you seem lost or confused," Olusesi said.

This season was also Delaney's first year wrestling for Cooper.

"I wanted to join the wrestling team since the end of my ninth grade year when I did a three-day clinic for wrestling," Delaney said. "I enjoyed it so much and I was heavily considering it. Once I transferred schools to Cooper, I wanted to see if I still wanted to do Nordic ski because that's what I did my freshman year and I wanted to see if



Photo by NOAH PLAHN

Olusesi led the way during a marching band celebration of her state appearance.

face, Olusesi also had to manage joining a new sport at the same time.

"Some tribulations I faced were having to wrestle against wrestlers who are very much [more] well established in wrestling than I am and facing people from schools who have a huge wrestling team is nerve-wracking," she said.

Although these struggles were prominent, Olusesi did not let them restrict her and that allowed her to prosper. Olusesi also attributed her success to her teammates and the bond she had with Delaney.

"[One] triumph is that I have Anna with me on the team because, if I had been the only girl, I would have probably quit. [My teammates] were always supportive no matter the outcome at the end of the day. They all push each other to do better during practices

I still enjoyed it. I ended up not enjoying it as much as I did the previous years I skied, so I was interested in wrestling again. I realized there were no girls on the team, which was nerve-wracking to me because I didn't want to be the only one. I realized that, even though there were no girls, why not be the first, and I've loved the sport ever since," she said.

Delaney said she is glad her decision to join the team gave her the chance to work with Olusesi.

"Folake and I were practice partners the first few weeks and we helped each other out a bunch. Even if one of us didn't have a match during a meet, we would still be there to cheer each other on. We have given each other many motivational speeches and just been there for each other," she said.

Another vital part of Oluse-

si's wrestling success was the coaching she received.

"Another triumph was the coaches I had are so supportive of me being a wrestler and the progress I am making in my first year," she said.

From a coaching perspective, Allen said he and Olusesi benefited from working together before her time on the wrestling mat.

"Folake and I have a working relationship back to her freshman year, when she joined the track team. Like many athletes that I work with, she knew the expectations of myself as a coach and what it means to be a Hawk. Through sweat, jokes, visualizations, tears, drilling and conversations as a staff, we kept Folake focused on what she needed to do so she could peak as an athlete at the right time," Allen said.

Before making it to state, Olusesi first had to perform well at sections.

"I think what I had to do at sections to qualify for state was to stay consistent with what I had done before because two out of the three girls I wrestled at sections I had wrestled before in the season, so I kept it the same as I have previously and it worked," Olusesi said.

Qualifying for state takes a tremendous amount of work, which is especially the case in wrestling, a sport in which an athlete's technique is vital.

"I didn't expect to make state, so I wouldn't say I prepared throughout the season. But [from] sections to qualifying for state and me barely getting any matches before sections, I would say I practiced more on my takedown, plans on a mat and did six-minute matches to go through scenarios. The same goes for state. I practiced for scenarios I thought my opponents might put me in and six-minute matches to review," Olusesi said.

After a season of hard work, Olusesi said her experience at state was positive.

"Individually for me, I would say state went well, because when I think about it, I don't think about the wrestling. I think of the moments made in those two days. I think of the fun I had watching other matches, walking around downtown St. Paul to pass time, seeing my family be proud of me and encouraging me to continue next year, [and] seeing one of my coaches tear up. I also think about losing my first match for stalling by one point, but, overall, it was a beautiful experience," she said.

As she looks forward to next season, Olusesi hopes other girls will join the wrestling team.

"If you are ever thinking of trying wrestling as a girl, do it. Wrestling is about planning for several scenarios and positions to use, and a big part of it is your mat I.Q., and your ability to keep going for the full six minutes. I also saw an article that girls wrestling is becoming a fast-growing sport, so don't worry, there will be girls for you to wrestle. You don't have to wrestle a guy if you don't want to and there are tournaments for just girls. If we form an official girls team for Cooper High School, we get more tournaments to go to," Olusesi said.

## IB ARTISTS DISPLAY THEIR WORKS IN EXHIBITION continued from page 4

are out of the ordinary," Coombs said.

Coombs got the opportunity last year to paint a mural above the school lockers as well. She said painting the mural was one of the many freedoms she gets to partake in as a student in the IB Art class. Even though Coombs is in her last year at Cooper, her paintings will remain long after she graduates.

## Blake Everhardt

What makes Everhardt's art unique is his lack of color. He said he enjoys making elusive artwork that provokes people's curiosity.

"My artwork isn't colored and it's dull, but it leaves a lot of room for the mind to wonder what it means," he said.

Messages conveyed in his art include feelings and expressions.

"My artwork stands for the

personal feelings that we all have but don't get to express," he said.

Friends and family inspire Everhardt the most. Meanwhile, he said his favorite techniques derive from line work.

"I like to use depth and perception in my work so there's more to look at," he said.

Everhardt said his favorite part of the IB Art class is the friendly teachers he gets to work

with.

"I like spending time with the teachers that are always willing to listen, as well as the creative freedom we have in the class," Everhardt said.

While Everhardt is graduating this year, that does not mean his involvement with art will stop. He said he will continue to take creative avenues long after he moves on from the IB Art class.

## VIEWERS SEEKING A FUN FAMILY FILM WILL LIKE MIKE continued from page 5

Reg gets adopted by a different family. This happy ending for the three main characters in the film helps support the theme that being in a family is important. Also, we see that the three newly adopted

characters will continue to stay in touch because they are like a family as well. The movie shows us that working together like a family can make a lot of dreams come true.

In *Like Mike*, synchronous sound and lighting help communicate the theme that family is important. This movie shows audiences the importance of relationships and teamwork in get-

ting what you want in life. Overall, this movie is an enjoyable one that has an energetic pace and lots of heart. *Like Mike* is a classic family film that earns four out of five stars.

## Athena, Apollo winners named

Keira Snapko, Kameron Fox are the recipients of this year's recognition of sports excellence



Photo by NOAH PLAHN

Keira Snapko and Kameron Fox were awarded due to their commitment to athletics and success in academics.

By NOAH PLAHN  
Quill staff writer

Keira Snapko (12) and Kameron Fox (12) have been named the 2024 winners of the Athena and Apollo awards, respectively.

The Athena and Apollo awards are given annually to two outstanding senior athletes by participating high schools in the Twin Cities metro area. The Athena Award, which recognizes female athletes, has been given for more than 50 years. Meanwhile, the Apollo Award, which recognizes male athletes, is going to its first Cooper recipient this year.

Senior athletes nominate themselves at Cooper and other participating schools by completing a full biographical profile form. Following this, Cooper's administrative staff and counselors voted on the winners.

When the time came to pick nominees for the Athena Award, Cooper honored four female athletes: Somah Kamara (12), Atoria McDonald (12), Anastasia Xiong (12) and Snapko. Meanwhile, Lowell Grosslein (12), Nick Johnson (12), Jose Leon Estrada (12) and Fox were honored on the men's side.

Cooper will hold a celebration in early May for all Cooper athletes who will be going on to play sports at the collegiate level. At that same event, Cooper will recognize the Athena and Apollo award winners.

Fox is a captain of the Hawks football and baseball teams. In football, he is the team's quarterback, while in baseball, he plays at the outfield, pitcher and shortstop positions. Fox has played both sports since the first grade, starting with flag football and tee-ball.

Fox said his experience in athletics has been a positive one.

"I love that the sports [I] play [allow] me to connect with others and build relationships and develop lifelong skills that translate to everyday life. Also, [I benefit from] the mentorship I receive and a chance to take my mind away from school and even distractions," he said.

Fox acknowledged the impact of the people with whom he works in sports.

"All of my coaches have been instrumental in my success, but coming to Cooper, I had to learn fast. I was surrounded [by] great teammates [who] were able to make plays and make everything easier on me, as well as coaches like my offensive coordinator, [Mr.

Patterson], [who took] extra time with me in calls to make sure I was understanding concepts to [perform] at a higher level," he said.

Fox is an athlete with a resume filled with awards, having earned three varsity letters, three years of being a captain, one offensive MVP award for football, two all-conference awards, three district and all-state awards, and a 2023 Mr. Football nomination.

Also key to his Apollo Award was Fox's work off the field. With things under his belt like pursuing the full International Baccalaureate diploma, playing in Pep Band, completing service hours, serving on the Robbinsdale Cooper High School Leadership Group and making the Honor Roll, Cooper administrators had many reasons to vote for him.

"I was blessed to have received the award. It showed me that all the time I have put in and dedication has [paid] off. Also, my mother was an Athena Award winner when she was in high school, so I got the opportunity to keep the family tradition going," Fox said.

Fox plans to continue with sports at the collegiate level but is unsure of where due to the numerous offers he has received. Before moving away from high school competition, Fox had advice for any future athletes pursuing the Apollo Award.

"My advice for those striving for the award [their] senior year is to be dedicated and determined. The work you put in developing your craft and instilling it in yourself [allows] it to translate in your everyday life," Fox said.

Much like Fox, Snapko's many athletic accomplishments have led to her Athena Award win. She has played soccer for more than 12 years and lacrosse for four years. She plays defensive midfielder in soccer and midfielder in lacrosse.

"I believe that what led to my eventual nomination was how I have played three sports for Cooper, one in each season, and that I have been one of the top students in our grade. I also think that my eventual nomination was seen by how I am very involved with our Cooper community through club participation in National Honor Society, Relay for Life, Bella Voce [and] Chamber Singers," she said.

Snapko said she felt proud when she was named 2024's Athena Award recipient.

"When I won the Athena Award, I was very happy. This award is something that I have always wanted because it recognizes that I appreciate the sport I love and shows how hard I have worked both academically and physically to get where I am today," she said.

A witness to Snapko's success is head girls soccer coach Mr. Wetherall.

"Keira is very well deserving of the Athena Award. Off the top of my head, I believe she was two time all-conference, two time captain, team MVP and an all-state nominee. That all said, equally important is that Keira has been a participant in our program since the seventh grade. As such, she has been a terrific representative of not only Cooper girls soccer and our cooperative program, but of the greater Robbinsdale community. She has consistently led by example both on and off the field," he said.

Wetherall added that his relationship with Snapko goes all the way back to her days in elementary school.

"I actually first met Keira when she was in elementary school and came to our varsity games to watch her older sisters play, so she has actually been part of the program even longer than her varsity career. The last of the Snapkos, Keira, much like her sisters, always showed up ready to play, lead and encourage. It has been great coaching her. No doubt she will have continued success," Wetherall said.

Snapko's career will not end at the high school level. In college, she plans on continuing to play soccer at a club level while she majors in biochemistry.

"[My major] will take a lot of my time. However, I don't think I could stop playing altogether, so I am playing at a club level to continue playing while also being able to manage my academics," she said.

Before Snapko proceeds to the next level, she offered advice for future Athena Award candidates.

"My advice for those who are striving for this award is to not focus so much on the award itself. Focus on the sport or sports you play and love, and try to work hard during school. Although this award is something big, what's more important is the love you have for the sport itself," Snapko said.

## Cooper Competitors

The story of the athletes who strive for success in Cooper sports

### Leonel Morales

By SAMARIA'H SHABAZZ  
Quill staff writer

Leonel Morales (12) is a Cooper athlete who plays lacrosse in the spring.

"I have been playing lacrosse since the spring of last year. My friend Zack convinced me to play the sport because he said they needed more people. I am glad I took his advice and joined the team," Morales said.

Among the many things Morales said he enjoys about playing lacrosse, two that stand out are the fact that it is a physical sport and that he gets to play with friends. As for his favorite lacrosse memory, Morales selected a moment from his junior year.

"My favorite memory is

when I scored my first goal," Morales said.

When it comes to school, Morales said his favorite subject is math.

"It is honestly fun when you know what you are doing," Morales said



Photo by C. VANG

When he is not at school or on the lacrosse field, Morales said he spends his free time playing video games and reading books.

Once he graduates from Cooper this spring, Morales intends on going to a trade school for college.

"I would like to work in an electrical field," Morales said.

Although he is not sure if he will play lacrosse after high school, Morales said he will still participate in athletics.

### Blake Everhardt

By SAMARIA'H SHABAZZ  
Quill staff writer

Blake Everhardt (12) is a spring athlete who plays Hawks baseball.

"I chose this sport because it has been my favorite since I was a child," he said.

One aspect of baseball Everhardt enjoys is the rich history of the game and the legends of the sport. As for his favorite baseball memories, Everhardt said the first win of each season is always a highlight.

"That is usually when we first come together as a family," he said.

As a senior player, Everhardt said he tries to serve as a role model for the younger players.

"I try to be helpful to the coaches and the younger players on the team," he said.

When it comes to school, Everhardt said his current favorite classes are IB Art and Recreation and Leisure. Outside of school, Everhardt said he enjoys playing baseball.

"I also enjoy listening to music," he added.

After graduating, Everhardt will attend college.

"I intend on going to college to try and get a degree in some sort of statistics-related area. My hope is to eventually use this to do some work with sports," he said.

In addition to working in a field related to sports, Everhardt hopes to continue playing sports.

"I would like to continue with my athletics after high school because it is one of the things that is always on my mind. It is also a good way to build strength," he said.



Photo by C. VANG

### Blake Hansen

By BETHZY ARIAS-PLIEGO  
Quill staff writer

Blake Hansen (12) plays baseball in the spring and takes part in the Hawks bowling team in the fall.

Hansen has played baseball for all of his life but started with Cooper's team during sophomore year because his freshman season was canceled because of COVID.

"I started when I was probably four or five and I started it because my family has played baseball every generation and I continued to play it because I love the team aspect of it," he said.

Something that he has enjoyed the most about baseball is the team because "it's more of a family than it is a team." He added that they have been through many lows together, and that no matter what, they still have a winning mentality.

Hansen is a team captain for baseball. In fact, he served the same role during his fall sport.

"I was a captain on the Cooper-Armstrong bowling team," he said. "We ended as regular season champions, and at the conference level, we swept the playoffs and were the conference champions also."

Alongside his sports activities, Hansen also likes music. His favorite class in school is choir.

"There is so much opportunity within the choir and the small ensembles offered through choir become a stress reliever in a way," he said.

After graduating, Hansen will attend Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where he plans to major in marketing and management. Additionally, he will be competing on their bowling and baseball teams.



Photo by N. PLAHN

### Sinthia Reilly

By BETHZY ARIAS-PLIEGO  
Quill staff writer

Sinthia Reilly (12) plays softball in the spring. She also plays the sport outside of school during the fall and winter to get ready for the spring season.

"I have been playing softball for about eight years or so," Reilly said. "Something that prompted me to play softball was, when I was younger, my dad used to soft toss to me in the backyard. That was a core memory for me and it just made me love softball"

During her time playing the sport, Reilly said she has enjoyed the chance to meet new people and build bonds with her teammates. As for her favorite softball memories, Reilly said they involve the extra time that she works on her sport to get better and improve each year she plays.

As a veteran player on the team, Reilly tries to act as a leader. Last year, she said she was one of the team's captains. This year, she said she is trying to set a good example for the younger players as a senior "who has been around for a few years."

When she is not playing softball, Reilly is focused on school. She said her favorite subject in school is science.

"It's the kind of subject you never stop learning," Reilly said. "There's always something new to learn."

Outside of school, Reilly likes spending time with friends and family and working at her part-time job.

Next fall, Reilly will go to Winona State University.

"I plan on majoring in medical laboratory science. I'm not 100 percent sure what career path I want to follow yet," Reilly said.

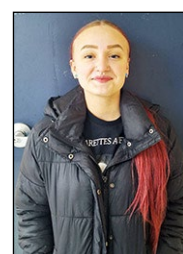


Photo by B. ARIAS

## SUPERHERO FANS SHOULD REVISIT SPIDER-MAN 2 continued from page 7

lems that emerge between Peter and his best friend Harry, whose own personal problems lead to conflicts with Peter. In each case, Peter finds himself becoming disconnected from people he cares for. This demonstrates to the viewer how important it is to let the

people around you know how you feel because situations can change so quickly in life.

After re-watching *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*, I can say that I still enjoy everything about the movie. Its effective use of editing and light-

ing helps make *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* more engaging. While it is a shame they were never able to make a third *Amazing Spider-Man* movie, the first two have withstood the test of time. *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* earns four out of five stars.

## PROM COMMITTEE PUTS FINISHING TOUCHES ON EVENT continued from page 1

"I'm feeling a mix of emotions right now. I'm excited, but also a bit unsure of how things will turn out. I hope everything goes

well, but I'm feeling a bit indifferent about it too. I'm currently excited at the end of this year and finishing up classes and graduation, but

in terms of prom, taking pictures and hanging with friends is something I look forward to enjoying," Souare said.