



Performance classes help Hawks learn wide array of valuable life skills

Page 2

The Quill

Wed., Dec. 18, 2024

Vol. 61, No. 3

Skipping classes can result in negative impacts on one's life

Page 3



Robbinsdale Cooper High School

chs.rdale.org/families/the-quill

8230 47th Ave. N., New Hope, MN 55428

ALSO INSIDE

News

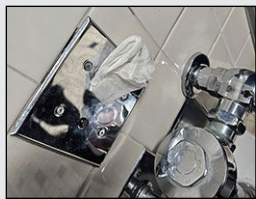


Open lunch brings rules, flexibility

The ability to leave school for an hour makes it necessary for students to be accountable about returning to the building on time

Page 2

Opinion



We share blame for dirty restrooms

Careless actions by some students threaten administrative efforts to keep all bathrooms open during the school day

Page 3

Variety

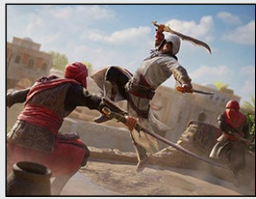


Patient viewers will enjoy *Paris*

Wim Wenders' much-heralded 1984 film *Paris, Texas* is a slow-developing but satisfying character study that features memorable performances

Page 4

Variety



Mirage has feel of old *Creed* games

The shortened playing time and concise narrative of *Mirage* will remind fans of earlier installments in the *Assassin's Creed* franchise

Page 6

Sports



New esports team starts at Cooper

The gaming squad has been climbing up the rankings in the Midwest division playing games like chess, *Valorant* and *Rocket League*

Page 7

ELECTION STATS SHOW IMPORTANCE OF VOTING



Photo by CHIMUAL VANG

The "I Voted" stickers that are given to people after they cast their ballots were a frequent sight on November 5.

By TESSA LENOCH
Quill staff writer

Unity has remained a theme in the country's history since the beginning of the United States of America. However, as evidenced by various historical skirmishes and today's political climate, the United States can seem to be anything but united.

The November 5 presidential election saw politicians fighting over contentious ground and this battle was reflected from one's home to one's school to one's place of work. After the election's results were released, whether they were celebrating or not, some people have begun to question America's level of unity.

That is where the issue of voting plays a role. According to the Associated Press, voter turnout rates in the United States hit record highs in 2020, reaching 158 million. In 2024, those numbers were not as high, reaching 153 million. Although both figures sound high, according to current data from the University of Florida

Election Lab, more than 90 million eligible Americans chose not to vote in 2024.

Why are people not voting? Dissatisfaction with the voting system and the candidates seem to be the two answers here. The idea that a popular vote could be superseded by the way the Electoral College falls has convinced millions of voters,

Several Cooper seniors were old enough to cast their first votes during the 2024 presidential election

especially in the young adult age range, that their vote is useless.

According to Cooper Media Specialist Mr. King, the idea that one's vote does not matter is a misconception that drives the voting decisions people make.

"Students should start thinking about elections in high school. There's a saying: elections have consequences. Students need to understand that elections will impact their lives, from how much they pay in taxes to how much freedom they have over their own bodies, their free speech, their freedom from gun violence, their freedom from pollution and the United States' standing in the world," he said.

The results of voting connects directly to the issue of who holds power in the government. Older people (specifically, older white men) tend to hold the most power in American political systems, which can lead to issues regarding representation or the lack of it.

However, this is not an indicator that voting is hopeless. In fact, King argues that it is the opposite. If young people want to be represented and make a change, it is a process that takes deter-

VOTING continues on page 5

Singers treat teachers with caroling performance

Members of Cooper's Chamber Singers group sang holiday songs at the homes of staff members on December 13

By TRISTAN JAY TOLENTINO
Quill staff writer

Members of Cooper's Chamber Singers group made good on their Christmas wish of singing at teachers' homes to celebrate the holidays on the evening of December 13. The singers had 12 songs prepared for the visits and spent the evening performing at the homes of each selected teacher in small groups. The annual caroling event is just one of the many performances Chambers Singers takes part in throughout the school year.

Students in Chamber Singers meet from 7:30-9:30 p.m. every Wednesday in the choir room to practice. At rehearsals, the singers focus on the music they are struggling with to strengthen their confidence in the songs and to work together as a group to overcome those struggles.

"Chambers has been a massive learning opportunity for me that has expanded my knowledge and skill in singing and helped me form bonds with my fellow singers," Joey Bristol (12), who sings bass with the group, said.

The Chamber Singers are always striving to be better as they perform in various contexts inside and outside of school. In addition to the annual holiday caroling visits to teachers' homes, the group has had a number of performances this fall and early winter. For example, the Chamber Singers were invited by Bethel University earlier this school year to take part in a performance. More recently, they performed on December 6 at the Landmark Center in St. Paul, a building that has a space designed for vocal acoustics.

The Chamber Singers group is designed to help its members become better and stronger singers. Chambers also works on the dynamics of becoming better as a group rather than just singing as an individual. According to Mr. Vidal, who helps lead the group, this has even helped Cooper's Concert Choir and other choirs the singers are involved in perform better.

"One of the most unique aspects of Chamber Singers is the need and expectation that we are working toward full independence, that a quartet could be as confident singing as the group as a whole. This results in a lot of individual growth in quite



Photo by TRISTAN JAY TOLENTINO

Auditions for the specialty choir group take place in the spring of each year.

a short time," Vidal said.

The time spent working together as a team is one aspect many current and former Chamber Singers cite as their favorite part of participating in this group.

"While I was in Chambers, it was a very interesting and lovely experience," 2024 graduate Kiana deWeever said. "Regardless of how busy we all were, Vidal made it fun. I'm so grateful for the time I spent in choir throughout the four years of high school."

Auditions for Chamber Singers are typically in the spring. The audition process involves preparing music in advance, singing with a group and eventually singing in small octets. Students who are currently in choir are encouraged by Vidal to consider joining Chamber Singers.

School supports Hawks with chemical health needs

While Cooper has processes in place to combat chemical use, they can also work with students who are trying to stop

By TESSA LENOCH
Quill staff writer

Drug use among eighth graders went up by 62 percent in the years between 2016 and 2020, according to the National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics. In fact, 2.08 million, or 8.33 percent, of 12- to 17-year-olds nationwide report using drugs in the last month. Many Cooper students can attest to the rising problem of drug abuse and how it affects those around them.

"A lot of people see it as an easy way to relieve stress, but they're misguided," River Johnston (11) said. "It's easier than ever to access it and people get pressured into it."

Cooper Assistant Principal Mr. Nelson has observed this phenomenon from an administrator perspective.

"Access to chemicals has become too easy for our student population. Nicotine and cannabis vapors are

prolific and easy for students to get. Changing how chemicals are sold, as well as how people purchase vapes, could have a positive effect on underage students using vapes," he said.

Mr. Rooney, a health teacher at Cooper, said there are many detrimental effects that come from abusing drugs.

"Teens who abuse drugs have lower grades, a higher rate of absence from school and other activities and an increased potential for dropping out of school," he said.

If a student is struggling with pressure to use chemicals or with an addiction to chemicals, Cooper takes action. Nelson said there is a protocol the school uses with students who are struggling with chemical abuse.

"Students that are in possession of chemicals are offered sessions with our Chemical Health Specialist, Ms. Stout. However, those meetings are not mandatory. Also, educating parents and community members about the signs that their students may be using chemicals is important too," Nelson said.

Stout said there are different pathways toward recovery for those students who are actively seeking it.

"Support staff like social workers, counselors, substance-use specialists and even outside services like mental health or substance use treatment [are available]. There are several great programs out there and it is hoped they will continue to be brought into the schools for education and prevention purposes. Anti-vaping signs are also posted around the school identifying the dangers of nicotine use, which have been helpful for visually identifying the financial burden and huge addiction risk of using that particular substance," she said.

School administrators agree it is important that students take initiative when it comes to chemical health, whether it be for themselves or out of concern for someone else. Without students looking out for themselves and their friends, it becomes harder to offer help to those in need.

CHEMICAL HEALTH continues on page 5

The Graduate

Former *Quill* editor-in-chief and member of the Class of 2024 Noah Plahn shares his insights about life after high school in the third installment of an ongoing series

Challenges exist when balancing college with life

Responsibilities grow exponentially after one graduates from high school

By NOAH PLAHN
Quill staff writer

“Life is a constant balancing act, and keeping your balance is not always possible. The better you prepare yourself, the better your chances of regaining your balance when you lose it.” This quote from the great Walter C. Conner perfectly encapsulates the fight for balance you must strive for in college. As you reach adulthood, even the early stages of adulthood, things become increasingly more complicated, starting the moment the clock strikes midnight on your 18th birthday. Issues like school, work, housing arrangements and more are magnified by your new status as an adult.

As I entered my first year of college this fall, a mix of fear and excitement swept over me as all my newfound responsibilities made themselves apparent. As I mentioned previously, when you reach the ripe age of 18, everything, in every way, becomes considerably more serious. My most demanding immediate issue was finances. Despite working a part-time job since my sophomore year of high school, and having a large quantity of money saved up, I quickly realized how expensive being an adult is. When you turn 18, your parents are no longer legally obligated to support you. Additionally, in my experience, child support also runs dry. This means that my mom’s financial support for me became minimal.

Immediately, I had to form a budget revolving around a long list of both previous and brand-new finances. Things such as rent and groceries present themselves as very strenuous areas of concern. On top of that, most people are forced to work if they want to keep up with the constant outpouring of cash exiting your bank account. This means that, even while being a full-time student, work was something I could not ignore without major consequences. After, factoring in on-campus classes and homework, plus a part-time work schedule, the necessities pile up further.

This journey has proven to be increasingly difficult for me. At times, I question myself about whether I am doing too little or too much of school and work. However, as a consequence of this tension, you will grow into a more stable and comfortable state. First, you will begin to learn the value of money even further. Additionally, you will learn life skills like budget-

CHALLENGES
continues on page 6

Open lunch gives freedom, requires responsibility

The ability to leave school for an hour makes it necessary for students to be accountable about returning to the building on time



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

The checkout process in the main foyer is one open lunch requirements that Hawks need to plan for.

By LESLY TIPANQUIZA ESCOBAR
Quill staff writer

Many Cooper students apply for open lunch, which gives them permission to have an hour during fifth period to eat outside of school. Along with that privilege, these students know that it is their responsibility to return to school on time after open lunch so they can attend their sixth period classes.

Juniors and seniors who signed up for open lunch during the first week of school typically do different activities during fifth

period. Students can use this time to get food or relax with their friends.

The open lunch system is designed for juniors and seniors who are on track to graduate. Third-year students need 22 credits and seniors need 33 credits to exit the building during fifth period.

The process begins after fourth period, when students must check out through the school’s main lobby. The line to leave can be long because everyone wants to take advantage of the free time outside of school.

One thing that makes the checkout process difficult is the time it takes to scan the student IDs.

Students who have the open lunch privilege must first register using flex.securly.com/login and select open lunch. They must also remember that Wednesdays are advisory days, which means they can only leave for half of fifth period.

The freedom to leave the building is one way open lunch encourages student independence. Guidance counselor Ms. Bivona said it is important that “students can have a beautiful

time outside the building.” Of course, hallway security staff member Mr. O’Toole added that whoever wants to go out “has to be ready with their ID” to enjoy their time away from the school.

There are many different things students like about having an open lunch period.

“Things that I like about having open lunch is that I have freedom to anywhere I want for lunch. I can spend more time with my friends while eating,” Domenica Amangandi (11) said.

Meanwhile, Naydeling Montenegro (12) said she likes having open lunch because she can go to different places to eat and spend more time with her friends.

“My friend and I agreed the day before to go out to the open lunch and we met at the main doors to go eat. I love that so much because I like to enjoy going with her to eat and try new things,” she said.

Students tend to go to different places to take advantage of their open lunch.

“Normally, during open lunch, I spend time with my friends. I go to the front part of the school and eat under the trees,” Amangandi said.

Fast food restaurants are another popular open lunch location.

“Sometimes I go with my friends walking to McDonald’s and we usually eat there,” Vidal Lopez (11) said. “When I go with one of my friends who has a car

OPEN LUNCH
continues on page 4

Performance electives teach Hawks new skills

Courses taught by Ms. Wurzer help students learn more about importance of teamwork, communication, problem-solving

By ROBIN JARMAN
Quill staff writer

Students who are interested in taking an elective class for second semester are encouraged to think about picking a performance-based course like those taught by Ms. Wurzer. Currently, the classes she teaches are Dance, International Baccalaureate (IB) Dance, Introduction to Theater, IB Theater, Acting and Speech.

“We do very few formatives in a performance class, only because a final performance is a summative by definition,” Wurzer said.

The Dance class is open to anyone of any experience level, whether they are used to getting on stage or they have never danced a day in their lives. During the class, students go through the structure of different dances, the creativity involved and the multitude of genres in dance. Meanwhile, the IB Dance class has three main topics: Composition and Analysis, an Internal Assessment and World.

“A formative in [a dance class] may look like me teaching some steps in a given genre with the summative being a final performance of students dancing their own choreography using the steps prescribed, or indicative of, the genre,” Wurzer said.

Along with the dance-related options, students can take

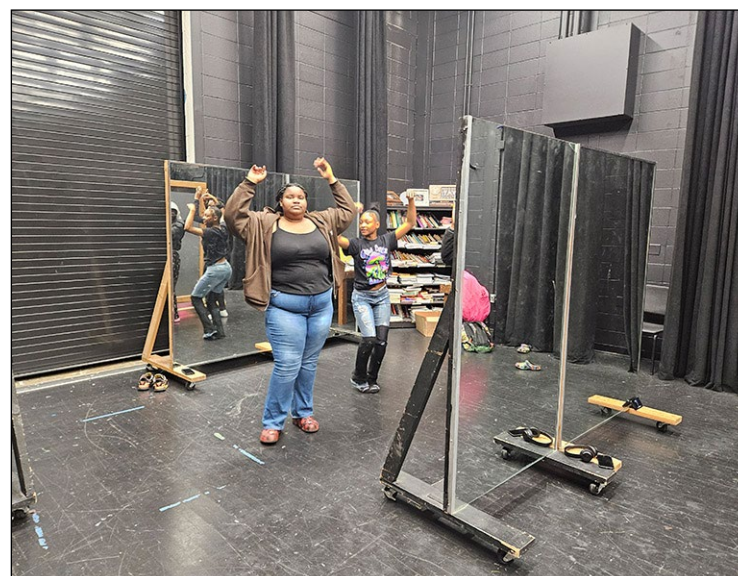


Photo by ROBIN JARMAN

Students in Ms. Wurzer’s dance class practice a routine on November 26.

Wurzer’s Acting class, which is focused on performing. Wurzer said the formatives in this class include small attempts at practicing character work, voice work and scene work, while the summatives consist of memorized scene performances.

For students who would like to learn more about theater, there is an Introduction to Theater class.

“Introduction to Theater formatives dip a student’s toe into different areas of the world of theater. Small projects in the basics of theater as they relate to the idea of storytelling, technical theater, lighting and sound design culminate in larger final projects

that are performance-based to showcase the creativity of the individual and the group,” Wurzer said.

Finally, there is Wurzer’s Speech class. During this course, time is spent breaking down the areas and importance of communication.

“We work on the basics of public speaking [for the] formatives,” she said. “Summatives are the group presentations and formal speeches written and given by students.”

Wurzer said that a typical day in each class can vary greatly, with Dance students watching dance moves on YouTube and rehearsing in front of mir-

rors; Acting students rehearsing monologues, practicing different voices as they do commercials or rehearsing scenes with partners; Introduction to Theater students setting light cues, writing and rehearsing podcasts, painting their sets or designing costumes; and Speech students working on a group presentation, a solo speech or basic communication skills.

“I’d like to think that my classes are a break from regular core classes,” Wurzer said. “This is a time that students can burn off some energy, be creative, be exposed to an art form they may have never thought they could be involved in, learn to collaborate with peers and have some fun.”

Agreeing with Wurzer is Dance student Shyanne Bankhead (11), who said she is enjoying the different activities she gets to do in the class.

“Even though I do have her first hour, it is still fun to get up and move around for once,” she said. “I recommend the class for anyone who wants to get out of their comfort zone and have fun.”

Meanwhile Acting student Noah Heap (11) said he enjoys the environment of class.

“I take IB Theater with Ms. Wurzer because I like acting,” he said. “I like the class because it has a good environment and Wurzer is a good teacher. She helps push us to get our work done and focus.”

The Quill

Leadership Staff

Editor-in-Chief	Rose Vang-Lohnes
News Editor	Mariah Washington
Features Editor	Mariah Washington
Opinion Editor	L.Tipanquiza Escobar
Variety Editor	Robin Jarman
Sports Editor	Tristan Jay Tolentino
Copy Editors	Tessa Lenocho
	Rose Vang-Lohnes
Advertising	Rose Vang-Lohnes
Circulation	Tristan Jay Tolentino
	L.Tipanquiza Escobar

Staff Writers

Robin Jarman	L.Tipanquiza Escobar
Tessa Lenocho	Tristan Jay Tolentino
Noah Plahn	Rose Vang-Lohnes
Isabelle Ross	Erendida Vital Garcia
Mandelina Thao	Mariah Washington

Support Staff

Photographers	Robin Jarman
	Rose Vang-Lohnes
	Mariah Washington
Illustrator	John Papenfuss
Advisor	Eric Zuccola
Principal	Shaunece Smith

Letters to the Editor

The Quill welcomes Letters to the Editor. If you would like to send *The Quill* your thoughts about a story that ran in the paper, or your thoughts about an issue affecting our school or community, please word process and email your letter to eric_zuccola@rdale.org as a text-only file. *The Quill* reserves the right to edit all Letters to the Editor for space.

Advertising

To advertise, please write to *The Quill*, Robbinsdale Cooper High School, 8230 47th Avenue North, New Hope, MN 55428; call at 763-504-8500; or email eric_zuccola@rdale.org.

Editorial Policy

The Quill is an open and public forum for the thoughts and opinions of all students at Robbinsdale Cooper High School. Editorials contained in the Opinion section of the newspaper are the views of their respective authors alone. They do not necessarily represent the views of Cooper High School or Robbinsdale School District 281.

Robbinsdale Cooper High School's *The Quill* is a member of the National Scholastic Press Association.



Skipping class has real consequences

While it seems like missing a period or day of school is no big deal, those absences can add up to issues with grades, truancy policies

By LESLY TIPANQUIZA ESCOBAR
Quill staff writer

One issue that has caused concern among the staff at Cooper is the growing tendency of students to skip class. While occasional absences due to illness or personal reasons are understandable, skipping class has become a chronic issue and is increasingly common in Cooper and other high schools. This behavior, which seems to have increased after the pandemic and distance learning, has significant consequences on the academic performance and personal development of the students who are skipping.

There is no single reason why students skip class, which makes the problem tougher to solve. For some students, skipping class is a way to resist what they think is an uninspiring educational system. These students may feel disconnected from the material being taught or disengaged from the teaching style of the staff members. Meanwhile, for other students, external factors such as stress, anxiety or personal issues may contribute to their decision to skip class.

Social pressures can also play a role in skipping class. If a student has friends who decide to skip class, that student may feel compelled to join in. This decision may be in an effort to fit in or avoid feeling left out.

Another contributing factor to students skipping class is digital in nature. With smartphones and social media offering constant entertainment and connection to other people, students may find it more appealing to stay home and use their phones rather than go to class.

Unfortunately, the consequences of missing class can be detrimental to a student's academic success and person-

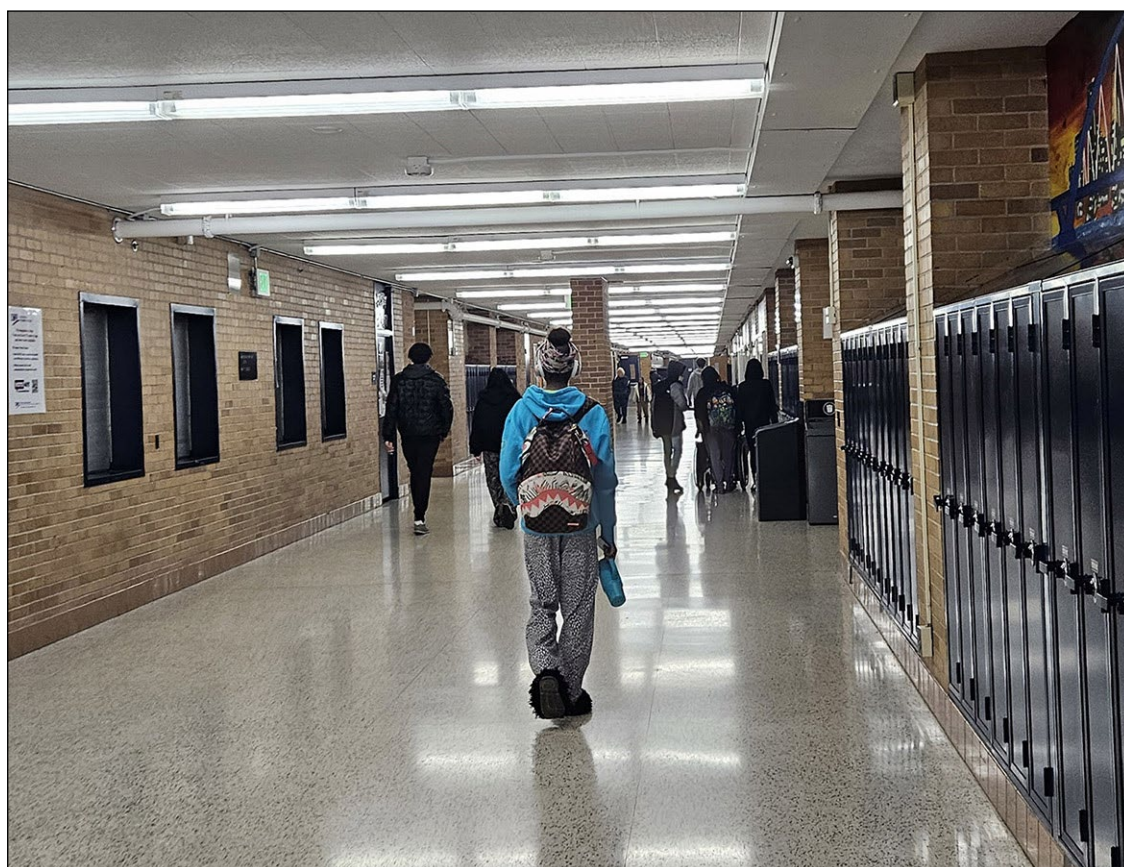


Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Seeing students wander through the hallways during class time is not an unusual occurrence at Cooper.

al growth. In terms of academic performance, missing class leads to missed lessons and unfinished assignments. Even the smartest students may struggle to catch up if they skip too many classes. Over time, these gaps in learning can accumulate, resulting in lower grades and a lack of preparation for future classes and the future in general.

Beyond academics, missing class can have social and emotional consequences. Students who miss school regularly may feel disconnected from their peers and teachers, leading to feelings of isolation. This sense of detachment may eliminate their motivation to attend school and participate in extracurricular activities. In some cases, it can also lead to depression or anxiety.

To fight the trend of students

skipping class, Cooper staff, parents and students need to work together to identify what is causing the behavior. On the staff end of things, teachers need to make sure their lessons are engaging and relevant to students' lives. By making learning more interactive and connected to real-world issues, students may find more value in attending class.

On the school side of things, support systems need to be in place for students whose class skipping is related to mental health issues or personal challenges. Counseling services, peer support groups and open lines of communication with trusted adults can help students feel more comfortable seeking help before resorting to skipping class.

When it comes to parents, they need to make sure to com-

municate with students and teachers to make a timely intervention when patterns of skipping emerge. By encouraging a routine at home that prioritizes school attendance, and by emphasizing the importance of education, parents can help students develop a sense of responsibility about going to school.

In conclusion, skipping classes has consequences that can ultimately affect a student's ability to graduate and be prepared for life after high school. To help fix this problem, it is important for Cooper to foster an interesting learning environment to reduce the frequency of students skipping classes. Most importantly, students need to take ownership over their own behavior and realize that skipping school can have a real, negative impact on their lives.

Election results cause concerns about freedoms

Abortion rights, status of immigrants are two areas of uncertainty as 2025 approaches

By ROSE VANG-LOHNES
Quill staff writer

I was not at all surprised by how the 2024 presidential election went. I knew for a fact that Donald Trump was going to win this election. I mean, we live in a country where men have always ruled over America, so why would we change our ways now?

Of course, I do have my concerns about what Trump is planning to do. I have family members and acquaintances that will be affected by the new policies that Trump and his team are planning. Project 2025 is one conservative plan that may be coming into action under Trump. It is this plan and related issues that Trump brought up on the campaign trail that I want to talk about in this editorial because people will be affected by the new plans that are brewing.

First of all, the plans put forth in Project 2025 are just flat out awful and inhumane. Project 2025 was overseen by the Heritage Foundation, "one of Washington's most prominent right-wing think tanks," according to BBC News. Some of the topics that are brought up in the plan are massive changes to our existing system of government, an abortion ban, the deportation of immigrants, raising tariffs, getting rid of "woke" ideology and more. None of these ideas seem good for the people.

One obvious problem with these proposals is how they are negatively directed toward certain groups in the U.S., ranging from women to immigrants to LGBTQIA+ people. Why in the world would we vote for someone who may follow this plan for the American people? Why are we okay with this? When did we start to not care about others? I keep asking questions because I truly do not understand why people voted for a candidate whose plan for the presidency is clearly adversarial. To each their own, I guess, but do we really want to demonize our fellow citizens based on these kinds of issues?

While there is plenty to dislike about Project 2025 and Trump's proposed policies, the one issue I am most concerned about relates to abortion. I am a girl, so the potential abortion ban will affect me. It seems like people do not know just how much of an impact pregnancy has on women. According to Maternal Infant Health, anemia, anxiety, depression, diabetes, heart conditions, high blood pressure, hyperemesis gravidarum and infections are side effects and complications of being pregnant, and any one of those things has the potential to be fatal to a woman.

We also need to look at the things that can contribute to a high-risk pregnancy. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "several factors can make a pregnancy high risk, including existing health conditions, the mother's age, lifestyle and health issues that happen before or during pregnancy." There are too many complications and risks that women face while pregnant to have a complete ban on abortions, especially in those cases when it might save a mother's life. Why would we make getting an abortion illegal when there are situations when the continuation of a pregnancy can mean the life or death of a woman?

All and all, I am upset and confused. I still can't wrap my head around the idea of electing Trump when these are the plans he is considering for his presidency. While I knew Trump was going to win, I still had a sliver of hope that Kamala Harris had the chance to win given how negative Trump's policies seem to be for our country. Now, we all have to deal with the potential impact of Project 2025, and women

Trashed bathrooms reflect poorly on us all

Student actions threaten administrative efforts to keep all bathrooms open to students during the school day

From the Editors

Bathroom cleanliness is a big issue for schools. Having a dirty bathroom is not a very good look for any school, especially when guests come to attend school events or sports games. Bathrooms at Cooper are mostly clean when the school day starts and this lasts until students decide to vandalize them or throw trash around. This type of treatment is not good and students need to do a better job of not treating the bathrooms this way.

One issue that can lead to bad treatment of the bathrooms is when the bathroom is used as a place to hang out or skip class. Students doing this may be more inclined to mess around in the bathrooms. In effect, if they do not take school seriously enough to attend class, they are probably not overly concerned about treating the school facilities with respect. Ultimately, when it comes to these students, the bathrooms generally stay clean until this group begins

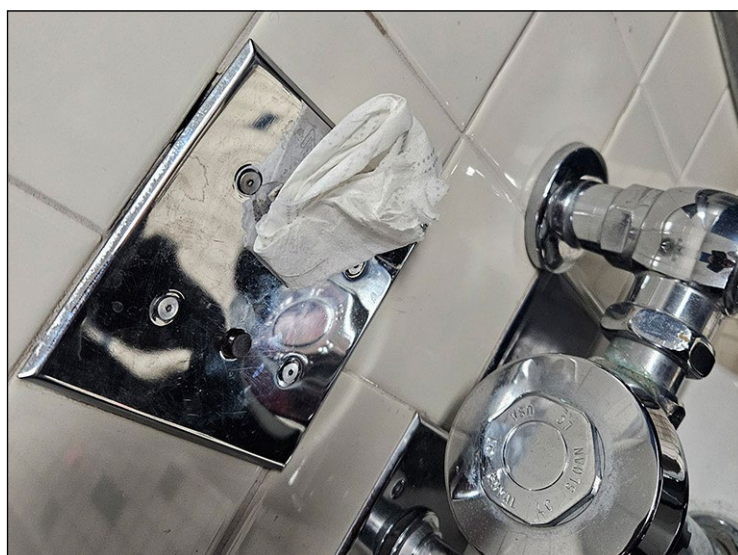


Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Properly using trash cans is one thing Hawks can do to keep restrooms clean.

making bad decisions by trying to vandalize the bathrooms.

When students decide to vandalize bathrooms, it usually involves them writing inappropriate things on the walls, urinating on the ground and throwing trash around. Some students may even try to use drugs in the bathrooms. This behavior can lead to the bathrooms being closed down for a

certain period of time, which negatively affects all students.

Keeping bathrooms clean and free of vandalism not only helps keep the bathrooms accessible to students, it also can help student health. A clean bathroom can keep the germs away from the students who attend Cooper. A lack of bathroom cleanliness could be an issue for spreading

sickness, which is why keeping them clean can be a big issue for schools like Cooper.

At the same time, one thing that might encourage students to treat the bathrooms better is by giving the rooms more modern updates. Cooper has not updated the bathrooms in several years and there are several bathrooms that are suffering from neglect. One common issue in the bathrooms are sinks that do not emit water when you are washing your hands. If you are lucky enough to get water, you then face a second issue, which is hand dryers that do not work. If the bathroom facilities were more consistently functional, students may be less inclined to vandalize them.

Overall, Cooper's bathroom cleanliness is not the worst it has been at the moment, but it does not take much for things like vandalism to become a problem. Students can help keep the bathroom clean by being more mature and picking up after themselves. They can also help by doing the right thing and letting people know that mistreating the bathrooms hurts us all.

Fighting at school fails to solve any problems you might have

The decision to use your fists to solve a conflict usually results in bigger headaches than those caused by the original issue

By ROSE VANG-LOHNES
Quill staff writer

Don't you love it when you are trying to use the bathroom and a fight breaks out? It gets a little annoying when I need to use the bathroom but then I can't because people just don't know how to solve their issues without using their fists. It is concerning how we are so fast to resort to fighting with each other nowadays. I mean, I get it to an extent. When someone is disrespectful to me or someone I care about, I get mad, too. However, I don't resort right away to hitting someone. I think the biggest issue that we have is that we are getting way too com-

fortable with disrespecting others and solving the problem with violence.

One of the main reasons that people get into fights is because of someone making a disrespectful comment. Of course, I don't condone violence, but I do understand where others are coming from when a comment makes them angry. As younger people who spend time making comments about each other on social media, we are getting way too comfortable with being disrespectful. The main reason why is because, when we do it on the internet, we can be anonymous.

We make comments that we know are flat-out disrespectful, but we aren't worried because, what's going

to happen? Nothing. We can say whatever we want and nothing will happen to us. Yes, there are going to be people who call the individual out, but that's normally as far as it goes. I avoid the comment sections on certain apps because I know there are going to be rude comments under the post. Since when was being disrespectful funny?

Personally, I don't think the aftermath of fighting is worth it. Not only are you all beat up, but now you're also in trouble with the school. According to Assistant Principal Mr. Nelson, Cooper has a specific process the administration follows after a student gets into a fight. The first thing that will be done is the student will

get their side of the story heard. After they hear the student's side of the story, the administrators will then ask the student for a formal interview depending on the situation. Next, they will look at the video from the cameras to see each student's involvement in the incident. Phone calls to home will be made to the families so they know about the situation and what steps will be taken next. The students involved in the fighting will then be sent home and be suspended. When the student comes back after the suspension, the student will meet

FIGHTING AT SCHOOL continues on page 7

ELECTION RESULTS continues on page 5

Spider-verse is rare sequel that eclipses first film

Storytelling, animation are two elements that are elevated in *Across the Spider-verse*

By ROBIN JARMAN
Quill staff writer

Spider-man: Across the Spider-verse, which came out in 2023, is a sequel to the to the ground-breaking animated movie *Spider-man: Into the Spider-verse*, which came out in 2018. Not only was everyone impressed with the sequel's amazing story, but also its great animation. In fact, the film, which was directed by Joaquim Dos Santos, Kemp Powers and Justin K. Thompson, and written by Phil Lord, Christopher Miller and Dave Callahan, was nominated for Best Animated Feature Film during the 2024 Academy Awards. Making *Across the Spider-verse* worth watching is its story, its animation and its use of music.

Across the Spider-verse is a continuation of Miles Morales' story from the first movie. Our protagonist is dealing with the responsibilities of being a superhero and the loneliness that comes with being the only Spider-man in his universe. There is a one-year skip in time from the first film. We see that the characters have aged a bit. Also, we see how they have changed, even if we haven't seen the change on screen.

Additionally, the movie allows us to learn more about the larger Spider-verse and introduces us to new characters, such as Miguel O'Hara. Of equal importance is that we get more screen time with the old characters, specifically Gwen Stacy and Peter B. Parker.

The movie also references a lot of characters that comic readers and long time Spider-man fans will recognize. However, the film elevates these characters by putting a unique spin on them. One example would be Hobie Brown, who is also known as Spider-punk. Not only does this character make an appearance in the movie, he does so with a new design and a new approach to his character.

Given all of the characters, like Spider-punk, who appear, the movie does a good job of making sure that the audience members who have not read the comics are fully introduced to each character. In effect, the film does not expect viewers to know who each character is, which gives audiences the feeling that these movies are for everyone and not just Marvel fans. At the same time, *Across the Spider-verse* does not dumb anything down for its audience, which helps the fans of the comic books feel appreciated.

Across the Spider-verse, like the Netflix animated show *Arcane*, uses 3-D animation with 2-D elements to give the film more of a comic book feel. As part of the effort to stylize the animation, the movie gives each universe its own style. For example, when we see Gwen Stacy's universe, the background looks like a watercolor painting. Additionally, the colors change to help the audience feel what she is feeling during certain scenes. Similarly, the Spider-punk character frequently changes color to fit what he is feeling at that moment. In this way, the animation supports the character development.

Another great quality about *Across the Spider-verse* is the soundtrack. Key on the soundtrack is the work of Daniel Pemperton, who was one of the composers for the film's background music. Two of his best compositions are "Spot Holes 1," which is The Spot's theme song, and "Vulture Meets Culture." These tracks are well used in the film and help add to the movie's atmosphere.

Overall, *Spider-man: Across the Spider-verse* is an excellent movie. Thanks to its engaging story, compelling animation and memorable soundtrack, there is something for every viewer in this film, even if that viewer is not necessarily a fan of comic books or superhero movies. In terms of story, animation and soundtrack, *Across the Spider-verse* earns five out of five stars.

Paris, Texas rewards patient viewers

Wim Wenders' much-heralded 1984 film is a slow-developing but satisfying character study that features memorable performances



Photo by 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS

The strained relationship between brothers Walt and Travis (left to right) is central to the movie's intentionally meandering plot.

By TESSA LENOCH
Quill staff writer

Paris, Texas is a 1984 drama directed by Wim Wenders. As we follow a mysterious man who is wandering through the desert aimlessly at the film's opening, a story about family and complicated relationships begins to slowly unfurl. *Paris, Texas* presents its world uniquely through its use of color, lighting and framing. The America that the main characters reside in seems both familiar and detached enough to create a specific feeling distinct to this film.

Ultimately, *Paris, Texas* is about family. This is established in the very beginning when the film presents us with two brothers, both coming from extremely different points in their lives. Travis Henderson (Harry Dean Stanton) has been wandering the great big desert of America's southwest for four years after his sudden disappearance. After Travis collapses in a convenience store and is identified in the hospital, his brother, Walt (Dean Stockwell), travels down from Los Angeles to pick him up. When reunited, Walt makes the discovery that his brother is a mute. Here arises the first large problem of the film: when Travis left home four years ago, he left behind a son. That son, Hunter (Hunter Carson), has been raised by Walt and his wife for most of his developmental

years.

Paris, Texas tells a story through its colors. Bright blue skies, endless gray roads and flashing neon-lights are contrasted against the darkness of concrete buildings. Travis has a dream of a humble life with his family. Despite this relatively simple aspiration, his own selfish decisions and perspective prevent him from

for happy, heartfelt moments. At the same time, it does not miss the opportunity to contrast that with bleak and upsetting sequences. Each scene subtly shifts perspectives as Travis' character becomes more fleshed out and his self-serving decisions are revealed, along with his attempts to justify them. Through this way of developing its characters and plot,

film that both recontextualizes everything and underscores everything already established within the film. Jane is a character only shown to the audience through old family films and word of mouth for a majority of the runtime; however, when she does finally show up, she delivers on everything expected of her.

Too often in film, female characters are denied a happy ending. Instead, they are used purely as a vessel for a male main character's development. One could argue even *Paris, Texas* falls victim to this unfortunate characterization in some aspects. However, Jane's monologue and her ending subvert this expectation. For the first time, the true story of Travis, Jane and their son is told by someone other than Travis himself. This monologue is the highlight of the film and I truly believe that *Paris, Texas* would not be a tenth of the film if it was without it.

Paris, Texas is one of my favorite movies purely because it looks good. Bright colors and distinctive pallets ensure that its visuals are both interesting and memorable. I think most films would benefit from this style of color grading and lighting. On top of that, though, it is a film to watch if I want to cycle through all the emotions I have in the span of around two-and-a-half hours. Because of these two reasons, I give it 4.5 out of five stars.

Too often in film, female characters are denied a happy ending. Instead, they are used purely as a vessel for a male main character's development. One could argue even *Paris, Texas* falls victim to this unfortunate characterization in some aspects. However, Jane's monologue and her ending subvert this expectation.

achieving happiness. Travis begins the film under the illuminating heat of the sun and, by the end, he is draped in shadow.

This rather depressing concept may frame *Paris, Texas* as a slow-moving, never-ending soap opera, but the film's versatility breaks some of the common criticisms of its genre. *Paris, Texas* takes breaks

Paris, Texas never feels like it is holding on for a beat too long. Each small moment, whether it is the camera lingering or a quick cut, feels intentional and important to the overall structure of the film.

However, there is one standout sequence and actor in *Paris, Texas*, and it is undeniably Jane (Nastassja Kinski). Jane has a monologue in the

Chase Atlantic delivers excellent sophomore album

R&B-influenced Australian trio started when two brothers recruited a friend for a school music project

By MARIAH WASHINGTON
Quill staff writer

Australian band Chase Atlantic has just released its latest album, *Lost in Heaven*. There is a flawless beauty to *Lost in Heaven* that fans of R&B and related genres of music will enjoy. Overall, the vocals are wonderful and the instrumentation could not be better.

Chase Atlantic has been making music since 2014 but have not released an album for three years. Fans of the band, me included, were ecstatic when their new album, *Lost in Heaven*, was released on November 1 of this year. On this new release, Chase Atlantic once again displays their unique sound. This album really highlights each member's talents while also showing how they work together as a group. This album is a perfect blend of energetic music and slower music.

The band consists of three



Photo by FEARLESS RECORDS

Chase Atlantic has been making music since their formation in 2014.

members: lead singer Mitchel Cave, his brother, Clinton Cave, and their best friend, Christian Anthony. The story of how the band came to be is undeniably hilarious. Mitchel recruited Clinton and Anthony for

a school project and recorded a song that caught the attention of Benji and Joel Madden, producers at MDDN. This discovery led to them releasing their first studio album in 2017, titled *Chase Atlantic*.

Perhaps the best song on the new release is its sixth track, "Night Calls." This is the band's first song to feature vocals from only Christian Anthony and it is an absolute masterpiece. Anthony has a beautiful raspy quality to his voice that conveys so much emotion. It is as if you can feel every word he is saying. The band likes to address a lot of heavier topics in their lyrics and this song fits right into that category. The song is about his past drug abuse and how it conflicted with his relationship.

The excellence of "Night Calls" is a great example of what to expect from the 12 other tracks on the new album, which the band wrote, performed, recorded and produced by themselves. *Lost in Heaven* once again demonstrates that Chase Atlantic has a unique sound and they are unafraid to explore deep and fascinating topics. This album easily deserves five out of five stars.

OPEN LUNCH GIVES FREEDOM, REQUIRES RESPONSIBILITY continued from page 2

we usually go to Chipotle."

Montenegro agreed that fast food is her usual choice for lunch.

"Normally, my friend and I

go in my car to many places, like Chipotle, Hy-Vee, Subway and Mexican food places," she said.

While there are many ad-

vantages to open lunch, there are some disadvantages to open lunch as well.

"One downside of having

open lunch is that some students might not be responsible with getting back to their sixth period class on time," Amangandi said.

Viewers craving cute comedy will like *Prom*

Available on streaming service Hulu, *Prom Dates* is the debut feature film from veteran television director Kim O. Nguyen



Photo by HULU

Prom Dates follows the adventures of Hannah and Jess (left to right) as they attempt to make good on a pact to have the perfect senior prom.

By ISABELLE ROSS
Quill staff writer

Prom Dates, directed by Kim O. Nguyen, was released on May 3, 2024. I chose to review this film because it is a movie I have never seen before and I had not even seen the trailer. It was also a good excuse to watch a funny movie with my mom, since we do not end up spending much time together. Kim O. Nguyen's film *Prom Dates* uses effective costume design and makeup to make the story feel as real as possible.

Prom Dates follows the story of best friends Jess and Hannah, who make a pact when they are 13 years old to have the perfect senior prom. Despite the changes that life will bring them over the next four years, the two are committed to honoring their prom pact. However, when prom finally arrives in their senior year, both girls coincidentally break up with their respective dates with only 24 hours left before the big event. Jess and

Hannah now have one night to find new dates and live out their middle-school fantasies.

Costume design is one filmmaking element *Prom Dates* puts to good use. Effective costume design can tell the audience a lot about a character. In the film, Jess and Hannah leave a party during their quest to find new prom dates and eventually get into an argument in front of a fountain. As they fight, the audience can tell things about each character based on the clothing they are wearing. First, Hannah wears clothes that cover her body, which helps us know that she is insecure and tries to hide things about herself. Meanwhile, Jess wears shorts, a crop top and a zip-up hoodie, which shows that she is not afraid to show everyone who she really is. The costumes help the audience connect with the protagonists and determine what they are like as people. Additionally, given the fact that their clothes are in disarray during this scene, we can see that they are having a

long night and that they are physically exhausted.

Also making the movie more realistic is the use of makeup design. When Jess and Hannah arrive at the second party in the film, they discover that the only people there are guys because the sororities they invited did not show up for the party. While at the party, Hannah ends up falling on a glass table, getting a bloody nose and sneezing blood on a dancer that showed up at the party. If Hannah had merely sneezed on the dancer, the rest of the events in the movie would not have happened; however, by sneezing blood on the dancer, which is depicted through makeup design, a whole series of events unfold that reveals a hidden secret about the Hannah character. Ultimately, if Hannah had never gone with Jess to the party, they never would have found their prom dates or figured out how to be the people that they truly want to be.

This brings us to the main

message of the movie: always be yourself even when you think no one will like who you are. In the last scene of the movie, Hannah is giving a speech at prom during which she comes out as gay to the entire school. While she is giving the speech, someone says something nasty and Jess punches him in the face. Even though Hannah never told anyone that she is gay, her decision to do so at her prom shows her realization that she needs to be true to herself and to her best friend instead of caring about what other people are thinking. I agree with the film's message; what others think is less important than what you think about yourself.

Overall, I enjoyed *Prom Dates*. In addition to its great central message, the characters feel real and relatable, which makes the movie even more enjoyable. I think Kim O. Nguyen is a good director and this is the perfect film for high school students to watch. *Prom Dates* earns four out of five stars.

CHEMICAL HEALTH continued from page 1

Research by the Center for Disease Control and Protection shows 75 percent of people with addiction survive and go on to live full lives, especially if they get good treatment.

"Talk to your students, friends and families if you are struggling with or see someone struggling with chemical use. Addiction is real and can be harmful long term. Talking to people that are close to you about your chemical usage is the first step to getting over your addiction," Nelson said.

Chemical health can be a sensitive subject, which means students often feel afraid to speak out about it. However, the staff in the building and the adults in a student's life are available for this very reason: to help. While Cooper takes action against illegal activity happening on school grounds, it is important to understand that, ultimately, the safety of students is a priority. Therefore, resources to help with addiction will always be available, even if they are paired with disciplinary acts.

"If a student receives a minor consumption violation, they will have to serve a MSHSL penalty," Rooney said.

D.A.R.E. programs, anti-vaping posters and health class can only do so much to curb addictions. In the end, it is up to a student and the decisions they make about their health. Drug abuse can ruin lives and change people, but the future can always be changed with better choices and the courage to speak up. Millions of people recover every single year and Cooper puts in the effort to ensure its students can as well.

" Oftentimes the substance use can be an underlying coping skill, and there might be other things going on to support, and by allowing that student to feel safe to share what is going on might provide everyone a chance to get the right resources and response in place," Nelson said.

VOTING

continued from page 1

nation and time. For example, if one election does not turn out the exact way a voter was hoping for, it does not mean that hope is lost. Historically, activist movements have taken years to come to fruition and individual voters can be part of those movements.

One Cooper student that turned 18 before November 5 is Emily Blanchette (12), who voted in this year's election. She echoed King's sentiments about the importance of voting.

"For a few years before I turned 18, I wished I could have a say in things. I wished I could have my voice matter. Some people think their vote is like a small dot on a big map and it's insignificant, but I like to think of it as your vote can make or break it. Young people's voices matter because they are the future," Blanchette said.

No matter what one's opinion is about a specific election and its results, many people find it productive after an election to have conversations about voting and its connection to societal change. While it may be hard to have conversations with those who hold a different opinion from oneself, the core concept of the United States can be a guide: unity. According to King, by having difficult discussions and looking at other people's perspectives, change can be made and the country can move forward.

"The sensible thing to do is to become politically active. Volunteer for the politician or party you want to be successful. And people should know that becoming a politician or working in politics is actually good, useful work. Many people make lifelong careers in politics," King said.

ELECTION RESULTS continued from page 3

will have to possibly deal with an abortion ban.

Although there is nothing I can do to influence these looming decisions except write in my school newspaper, I am still voicing my opinion. I highly encourage you to do the same. Disagree with what you believe is wrong about our new administration and voice that opinion to your friends, your families and your political representatives.

Interesting premise cannot save *Immaculate*

An inability to provide a satisfying ending makes *Immaculate* a mediocre example of the religious horror subgenre

By MANDELINA THAO
Quill staff writer

The film *Immaculate* was directed by Michael Mohan and released on March 22, 2024. I chose to review this film as it was quite hyped up by many people. I am also interested in horror films that take place in a church as it tends to create more conflict, which can create more tension and anxiety for viewers. The Michael Mohan film *Immaculate* uses special effects and costume design to teach audiences a lesson about what happens when women do not have control over their own bodies.

The main character of *Immaculate* is Sister Cecilia, a woman who turned to Christianity at a young age after she nearly drowned in a frozen lake and was declared dead for seven minutes. Convinced that God has saved her for a purpose, Cecilia eventually decides to join a convent in Italy that cares for dying nuns who are in their final days. It is at this convent that Cecilia is struck by certain oddities, such as a nun who has scars on her feet in the shape of crosses. Even stranger is when Cecilia learns that she is pregnant, even though she is a virgin and has never had relations with a man. The convent's inhabitants begin to treat her as the next Virgin Mary, with many proclaiming the child is a blessing. However, it soon becomes clear that dark forces are at play, and Cecilia does not know who to trust or how to address her increasingly threatening situation.

One key filmmaking technique in *Immaculate* is special effects. The

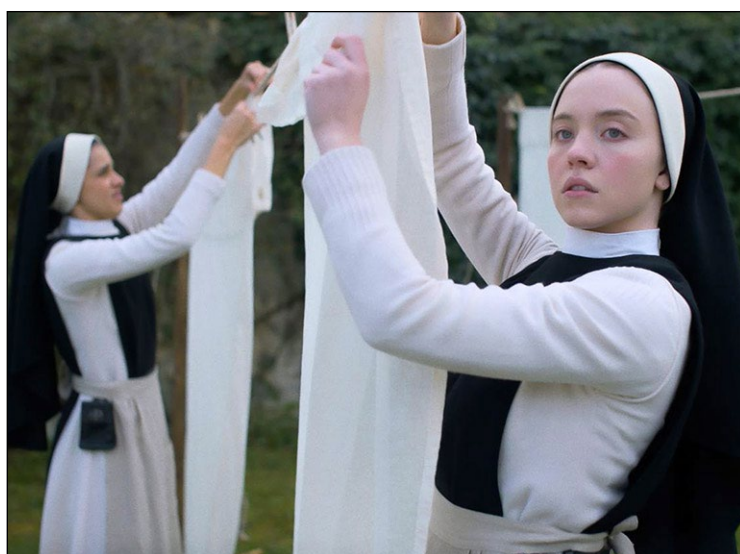


Photo by NEON

Sydney Sweeney stars as Sister Cecilia in *Immaculate*, which came out in 2024.

fact that *Immaculate* is a horror film means the use of prosthetics, CGI and practical effects is key to the movie. A scene in *Immaculate* that displays the use of practical effects is when Father Sal Tedeschi shows Sister Cecilia a series of preserved babies that did not survive an experiment in which they tried to produce a savior. There are many stages of fetuses preserved in jars that are seen on screen as Father Sal Tedeschi explains to Sister Cecilia how she came to be pregnant without having sexual intercourse. This practical effect is important because it displays the countless number of failures Father Sal Tedeschi had during his experiments as well as demonstrating that the resulting fetuses do not look natural. The special effects cause the audience to feel distraught and the realism of the effects make it seem as

if what is happening to Cecilia could really happen to someone.

A second filmmaking technique that is important to the film is costume design. Given the fact that the main characters of the film are nuns and priests, they must have believable costumes. One scene that displays this is when Sister Cecilia is beginning to be worshipped by the other nuns around her. Instead of the modest outfit of a nun, Cecilia is wearing a blue dress with gold patterns. Additionally, on her head is a golden floral headpiece. This costume is important because it shows a big shift in Sister Cecilia's position in the convent. Instead of being seen as just another nun, Cecilia is treated as if she is Mother Mary. The audience can now see that they have taken the situation too far and Sister Cecilia is being forced to become someone

else.

One central issue that is explored in *Immaculate* is what happens when women do not have control over their own bodies. A scene in the film that displays this is when Father Sal Tedeschi captures Sister Cecilia after she attempts to kill him and destroy his scientific work by setting fire to his hideout. He forces her to lay flat while he tries to cut the baby out of her. Sister Cecilia is shown screaming in agony as he cuts a straight line through the center of her stomach. This connects to the message of the film because it shows how Father Sal Tedeschi is not worried about Cecilia's survival; instead, he only cares about the child, which is part of his special experiment. The child is forced out of Cecilia's body without her permission, showing that she is a woman who has no control over her body. The question about whether or not women should have control over their own bodies is a big issue in our society and in other societies as well, so it is interesting to see how this film brings attention to it.

The Michael Mohan film *Immaculate* uses special effects and costume design to explore the problem of women not having control over their own bodies. While the filmmaking techniques are interesting and the concept of the movie is good, *Immaculate* is not scary at all, which is a shame since it is considered a horror film. I wish there was more to the story, especially in light of the ending, which feels like it is missing something. Ultimately, *Immaculate* only deserves two out of five stars.

Premier Performers

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

Leah Blanchette

By LESLY TIPANQUIZA ESCOBAR
Quill staff writer

Leah Blanchette (12) takes part in Cooper's choir, orchestra, improv and theater programs. Additionally, she is a teacher's assistant for Ms. Wurzer's Introduction to Theater class and will be taking Wurzer's Acting class second semester.

Blanchette said that each of her performance activities is enjoyable for different reasons. For choir, she said she likes the teachers, who have "helped [her] in so many ways that were more than just singing." In orchestra, Blanchette said she has enjoyed the challenge of playing, which has made her grow. Finally, in improv and theater, she has appreciated the chance to perform.

"I love the rush I get right before I head on stage and the roar of applause at

the end of a performance. Also, all the hard work that goes into deserving the applause makes it such a unique and excitable experience," she said.

Blanchette's experience in so many performance activities has led to her taking on a leadership role in improv.

"For improv, I'm a captain with Elliott Voigt (12)," she said. "It's going really well."

Blanchette said her favorite classes at school are those connected to her performance activities. However, she also said AVID has been an important class.

"I've been in it since seventh grade and the community I have in this class is awesome," she said.

After graduating, Blanchette plans to attend college.

"I would like to go to a four-year college, hopefully for performing arts," Blanchette said.



Photo by R. VANGLOHNES

Fernanda Cruz

By LESLY TIPANQUIZA ESCOBAR
Quill staff writer

Fernanda Cruz (12) is a musician who takes part in Cooper's orchestra program.

"I have been in orchestra since fourth grade," Cruz said.

After nine years in orchestra, Cruz said she has learned that her favorite elements of this activity are the people and the music.

"I like being able to meet new people who also enjoy being in orchestra and building connections," she said. "I also like learning new music."

Cruz said she values her time in orchestra because it gives her a chance to develop new skills as a musician and a person.

"I like being able to develop my playing abilities and improving to become a better player," Cruz said.

The recent Fall Music Festival and the holiday concert were cited by Cruz as being two of the events she most cherishes about her time in orchestra.

Although she enjoys music, Cruz said her favorite subject is actually science.

"Science is the right amount of challenge and excitement all into one subject," she said.

Outside of her school work, Cruz said she enjoys using her free time to cook, exercise, explore new places and "spend time with family and friends."

Next fall, Cruz will begin her college journey at the University of Minnesota. She is hoping to go to the Twin Cities or Rochester campus, where her intent is to work toward becoming a doctor.

"I want to get my degree in public health or psychology. I then want to go to dental or medical school," Cruz said.



Photo by R. VANGLOHNES

Hypnos Gorder

By LESLY TIPANQUIZA ESCOBAR
Quill staff writer

Hypnos Gorder (12) is involved in Cooper's choir and art programs. Gorder has taken part in choir since sixth grade.

"I love music and choir because I find them fun and easy," Gorder said.

Gorder said his interactions with the other singers has been the part of choir he has most enjoyed.

"The people involved are so cool. I have made many friends through choir," Gorder said.

When it comes to art, Gorder said it has always been a central component of his life.

"I have been doing it forever. It helps me express myself," Gorder said.

One thing Gorder has appreciated about his time in art is the chance to complete complex projects.

"The things I've made in art are more than I could imagine. I never thought I'd have a mural in my life, but here we are," Gorder said.

Not surprisingly, Gorder said art and choir are his favorite classes during the school day. However, he also mentioned that he enjoys his psychology class because he has friends in the same class.

Outside of school, Gorder enjoys arts-related hobbies, including art, music, writing and watching shows.

"I'm sure very few people want to hear about my superhero and musical ramblings," he said.

After high school, Gorder plans to take a gap year before focusing on more schooling.

"I will likely go to art school," Gorder said. "Art will forever be a major part of my life."



Photo by R. VANGLOHNES

Gordy Elliott

By LESLY TIPANQUIZA ESCOBAR
Quill staff writer

Gordy Elliott (12) is a Hawk involved in several arts-related activities, including choir, music cafe, theater and painting.

According to Elliott, his work in choir allows him "to embrace the voice [he] has," while his time in art allows him to "be somebody." Meanwhile, music cafe has allowed him to "try new things" and theater has given him a chance "to be up on stage" and tell his story.

Across these various arts activities, Elliott said there are shared aspects that he enjoys.

"I like the people, the journey, the experiences and the new challenges in each one," Elliott said.

As for favorite memories in each activity, Elliott had a few that came to

mind.

"I have enjoyed singing in pairs and hitting notes in choir, creating works that cause happiness in art and embracing the chance to have fun in theater," he said.

Elliott said he has been lucky during his senior year to take several arts-related classes. In fact, four of his six classes are connected to music, art or performance. At the same time, Elliott also enjoys sports.

"I want to finish what I started on the basketball court this winter," Elliott said.

When it comes to life after high school, Elliott is still considering his options.

However, at the present time, he said he is leaning toward doing something related to art and music.

"I would love to learn more about art and music and to become a creator," Elliott said.



Photo by R. VANGLOHNES

Mirage has feel of classic Creed

Shortened play time, concise narrative of *Mirage* will remind fans of earlier *Creed* installments



Photo by UBISOFT

The newest *Assassin's Creed* game revolves around the central character of Basim Ibn Ishaq.

By TRISTAN JAY TOLENTINO
Quill staff writer

Assassin's Creed Mirage, which was released in 2023, is an action-adventure game developed by Ubisoft Bordeaux and published by Ubisoft. The game is the 13th installment in the *Assassin's Creed* franchise and it follows 2020's *Assassin's Creed Valhalla*. The new game is set in the city of Baghdad and it features a new assassin, Basim Ibn Ishaq.

The new *Assassin's Creed* installment provides gamers with a nostalgic play-through experience as the map is smaller and the story is shorter than the previous games. In fact, the new game lasts about 20 hours. However, the brevity of the game does not undermine the fun that can be found with its small map and shorter story.

One highlight of the game is the story and its connection to real historical information. Going through the first play-through of *Mirage* is no different from any other *Assassin's Creed* game. Within the first hour, I was stunned by the game's depiction of the golden age of Baghdad in the 900s, which is based on the real historical record. At this time, Baghdad was a trading hub for merchants of European, Indian and Asian backgrounds, all of whom brought in treasures and

spices. It is into this dynamic setting that the hero of the game is placed.

Our protagonist in *Assassin's Creed Mirage* is Basim Ibn Ishaq. This character is a knowledgeable street rat and thief, which was the only way to survive at the time. Eventually, this character discovers the Hidden One, also known as the Assassin's Creed Brotherhood. This group is on a mission to stop the Order of Ancients, also known as the Or-

Our protagonist in *Assassin's Creed Mirage* is Basim Ibn Ishaq. This character is a knowledgeable street rat and thief, which was the only way to survive at the time. Eventually, this character discovers the Hidden One, also known as the Assassin's Creed Brotherhood. This group is on a mission to stop the Order of Ancients, also known as the Order of Knights Templar, who are attempting to exert control over Baghdad.

der of Knights Templar, who are attempting to exert control over Baghdad. As you play the game, you witness the corruption of the antagonists, explore the mysteries of this ancient city and learn more about the world of *Assassin's Creed* before it became *The Brotherhood*.

Another highlight of the game is its attention to detail, especially when it comes to its animation and design. For example, the amount of detail in the environment is vast.

Each step on the sand feels smooth, the density of the population in the bustling city is astonishing and the details of the physical structures like buildings create a story in their own right. These details effectively show the history of the time and age in which the game takes place.

Ultimately, *Assassin's Creed Mirage* is a highly satisfying game despite its short running time in comparison to other titles in this franchise. Veteran fans of this series will enjoy the nostalgic feel of the game, which connects back to earlier *Assassin's Creed* installments. Even if you are a first-time *Assassin's Creed* player, I still recommend trying out *Assassin's Creed Mirage* because it is an amazing way to start your journey in the Brotherhood of Assassins. This game earns five out of five stars.

CHALLENGES EXIST WHEN BALANCING COLLEGE, LIFE continued from page 2

ing that will undoubtedly support you in the long term.

After you make it past the initial panic of all your newfound adult difficulties, you begin to realize the equally important aspect that is your social life. Family, friends and significant others all play an essential function in the makeup of someone's social life. Some former friends will remain prevalent, others will reappear and some will dissipate. Along with that comes a new bunch of faces that may lead to budding new friendships.

The group of people I've quickly grown the closest with are other students who have the same college major as me and teammates on my football team. Due to our aligning goals and

similar classes, everyday interaction is unavoidable and relationships blossom. At the same time, I have also built relationships with people in entirely different fields of study and sometimes those perspectives are even more enticing. Learning about different people's journeys and what molded them into the person they are in college is fascinating.

Even those these new relationships are exciting, it is important along this new and winding road not to forget about those people who got you there. It is important to lean on family when applicable or when it is not. Whether it be a parent or cousin, surrounding yourself with something familiar in such an unfamiliar time can be very uplifting.

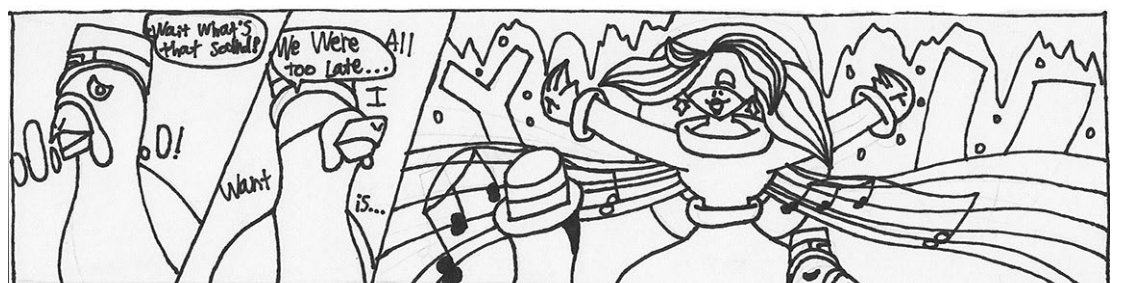
The toughest ability to develop as you become an adult is balance. Although some people may think they have discovered the answer to how to balance their lives, no one really has the answer to this problem. Balance is unique to you and you alone. Your concept of balance may be different than your peers, but that's okay.

Each person is navigating their own journey and at their own pace. You may be "ahead" in some regards compared to one person and "behind" compared to another. But who truly decides who is in the first place and who is not? Who decides if you are playing the "balancing act" right? If you have not picked up on it yet, the answers is: you.

Quill Comics Corner

Too Late

By John Papenfuss



Esports team debuts at Cooper

The brand new squad has been climbing up the rankings in the Midwest division



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

The Hawk gamers were brought together this school year through the efforts of science teacher Ms. Sutliff.

By MARIAH WASHINGTON
Quill staff writer

The Hawks esports team just wrapped up its inaugural fall season. The team is coached by science teacher Ms. Sutliff, who said the players have been doing well considering that it is just their first year competing.

“The [fall] chess team had a great season and finished 39th in the Midwest,” Sutliff said.

Sutliff started the planning for the esports team during the 2023-2024 school year.

“We just had some students who were interested in gaming and wished they had a team, so we made it happen,” Sutliff said. “It was a bit of a rush at the beginning getting people organized and finding a free league, but we pulled it off.”

The Cooper gamers compete through a system called PlayVS. This free platform has partnerships with the NFHS Network, which allows outside viewers to watch the competitions. Additionally, PlayVS is available in nearly every state and offers an assortment of games in which high school players can compete. Currently, the Cooper team is in the Central League, which has teams from Minnesota, Texas, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Alabama and Wisconsin.

“Teams log in to our current platform, PlayVS, and have their game accounts connected. Coaches are required to be present online for each match in case something comes up during the match. The players get their match set up and play. It’s as easy as that,” Sutliff said.

According to player Corey Chesness (11), the competitions against other teams have been enjoyable.

“We would get paired up with another school and communicate with them through this app and the coaches would start the match and it would last around an hour long,” he said. “The teams we’ve gone against were pretty easy to beat so it wasn’t too hard to beat our competitors.”

Following the successful launch of the team in the fall, the team has been enjoying even more success in the current season.

“Our *Rocket League* team is currently ranked eighth in the Central League and our *Valorant* is currently ranked 12th. Both the *Valorant* and *Rocket League* teams have their eyes set on the title, so we’ll see what happens,” Sutliff said.

In preparation for the competitions, esports players practice just like athletes in traditional, “real world” sports. However, in esports, a lot of practice time is spent alone.

“The players do the practices on their own,” Sutliff said. “Usually the leaders of the teams organize and get online to play. We currently have to play from home since we don’t have a designated space here at Cooper, but we’re

ical sports.

“Several of our older players have interest from multiple colleges and we have a coach from St. Cloud State University coming to speak to a group of us,” Sutliff said.

Beyond the promise of scholarships, Sutliff said that esports players learn useful life skills.

“For most of the titles, team play is key, so students are improving their collaboration skills as well as coaching others [and] being coachable. These are valuable traits out in the world,” Sutliff said.

Agreeing with Sutliff about the value of teamwork is Hawks player Dylan Vang (10).

“Students benefit from being involved with the esports team by using teamwork. Also, if someone ever needed help with something like homework, they will have friends they can ask immediately,” Vang said.

According to player Leland Johnson (11), the teamwork element of esports can result in newfound friendships.

“I like working with the esports team since everyone is very friendly,” he said. “I have not seen any hostile behavior at all so far.”

Another appealing element of getting involved in esports is developing one’s skills at video games.

“Students benefit from their involvement in the esports team by getting better at the game they chose to participate in,” Chesness said.

As the team looks toward the 2025-2026 season, Sutliff said she hopes to grow the roster, especially through the recruitment of more female players.

“Yes, there are members of the team who are not guys. Imagine that. We could use many more females,” Sutliff said.

One player already looking forward to next season and next year is Tavian Thomas (10).

“I’m really looking forward to playing some more next season,” Thomas said. “Hopefully, we can generate some hype for *Splatoon 3*.”

The Cooper gamers compete through a system called PlayVS. This free platform is available in nearly every state and offers an assortment of games in which high school players can compete. Currently, the Cooper team is in the Central League, which has teams from Minnesota, Texas, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Alabama and Wisconsin.

working on that.”

Among the 20 players who signed up for the esports team is William Nichols (12).

“I have been on the esports team since it started this fall and joined because I heard Ms. Sutliff talking about it last year when I was in her chemistry class,” he said.

According to Nichols, participating in esports is fun because it connects players to other people with similar interests.

“Students benefit by learning teamwork, getting better at strategies and possibly getting scholarships to a college they might want to go to,” he said.

Sutliff echoed Nichols’ observation about college scholarships. In fact, many college have established esports teams and offer scholarships to prospective players just like traditional phys-

you then have to try and dodge the people trying to see the fight.

I remember one specific incident in my sophomore year. I was on the third floor, and out of nowhere, a fight broke out. I was confused at first about why people were running. Then, out of nowhere, I was shoved. Luckily, my friend was able to catch me or else I would have ended up on the floor. I can promise you that I wasn’t the only one who has experienced this. When little fights break out, I can see my peers get

pushed or they try to avoid the area and go a different route to get to class. Why should we have to put up with our peers fighting?

Overall, just don’t fight in school. It causes commotions that are not needed and the aftermath of fighting is just not worth it. If you are upset at someone or someone is being disrespectful to you, find another way to deal with the problem. I promise that there are other ways to deal with the issue. Your fist can only get you so far in life.

Cooper Competitors

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

Princess Nyarkoh

By LESLY TIPANQUIZA ESCOBAR
Quill staff writer

Princess Nyarkoh (12) is a member of the Hawks girls basketball and track teams.

“I started playing in the fifth grade,” Nyarkoh said. “I have been playing at the high school level for five years.”

Nyarkoh said that the basketball team is a welcoming one thanks to each player’s focus on bonding.

“I love the way everyone connects with each other and the teamwork that happens as a result,” she said.

As for her favorite aspects of playing the sport, Nyarkoh pointed out some skills she is able to display during games.

“My favorite things are blocking shots from anyone and stealing the ball,” Nyarkoh said.

With the winter season now under-

way, Nyarkoh said her main goal is to provide guidance to the younger players.

“I want to be a role model to the other players on the team,” Nyarkoh said.

Once the winter season is at its close, Nyarkoh transitions into track.

“I think this should be a good season,” Nyarkoh said.

Beyond her interest in sports, Nyarkoh is interested in medicine.

“My favorite class in school right now is CNA because I want to go into nursing after high school,” Nyarkoh said.

With nursing as her ultimate goal, Nyarkoh said that college will come after her time in high school.

“My plans for college are to study nursing so I can become a registered nurse,” Nyarkoh said.

In her free time, Nyarkoh said she enjoys singing and dancing.



Photo by R. JARMAN

Jessica Tlaseca

By LESLY TIPANQUIZA ESCOBAR
Quill staff writer

Jessica Tlaseca (12) competed on the Armstrong-Cooper girls soccer squad during the fall sports season.

“I’ve been playing for almost my whole life outside of school with just my cousins, but I have played for Armstrong-Cooper Football Club for two years,” she said.

Among the many elements she has enjoyed about her time in soccer, Tlaseca said her interactions with other people rank among her favorites.

“I have enjoyed working with my friends and coaches,” she said.

Looking back at her time in soccer, Tlaseca said it was a game during her junior year that she enjoyed most.

“My best memory is when we won our last game,” Tlaseca said.

When she is off the field, Tlaseca is focused on her schoolwork. She cited science, math and AVID as her favorite subject areas.

“I enjoy math because it is easy to me and I like to find patterns, I love science because I am interested in the medical field and I enjoy AVID because of the environment my teacher and classmates create in that class,” she said.

Outside of school, Tlaseca spends a lot of time working to earn money for college. She also enjoys playing soccer with her cousins and friends.

Next fall, Tlaseca will be starting college at Concordia in St. Paul, where she is considering a major related to medicine.

“I am interested in the medical field, most specifically, I want to either be an ultrasound technician or a delivery nurse,” Tlaseca said.

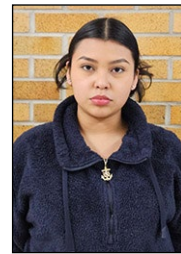


Photo by R. JARMAN

William Nichols

By LESLY TIPANQUIZA ESCOBAR
Quill staff writer

William Nichols (12) is part of the Nordic skiing team in the winter and the esports chess team in the fall.

“I have been playing on the Nordic team for four years now starting my freshmen year after Ms. Domenichetti kept encouraging people to join during class,” he said.

Nichols said he enjoys skiing because it helps him be “more active in winter.” Another thing he has enjoyed about the sport are the fun activities he gets to take part in with his teammates.

“My favorite memories are the costume races we do at the end of each season where we all dress up in costumes and ski a short race,” he said.

Prior to the Nordic season, Nich-

ols tried a new activity this year by joining the esports team.

“I did chess on the esports team, which has been pretty fun even though we rarely win,” he said.

As a student, Nichols said he most enjoys his science classes.

“My favorite types of classes are science classes like AP Environmental Science and AP Computer Science Principles because science is something I find very interesting,” he said.

Nichols’ interest in his computer science class is actually connected to his long-range plans after high school.

“I plan to go to Bemidji State University for a major in computer information systems,” he said. “After that, I hope to work in software development or IT.”



Photo by R. JARMAN

Mara Schley

By LESLY TIPANQUIZA ESCOBAR
Quill staff writer

Mara Schley (12) is an athlete who plays hockey in the winter and ultimate Frisbee and softball in the spring. Additionally, she plays in the Cooper marching band in the fall.

“I have been playing hockey since my sophomore year,” she said. “I knew I wanted to start a winter sport that year, but I didn’t want to do Nordic skiing or play basketball, and I saw hockey in an advisory slide and decided to join.”

Schley cited the fast pace of the sport as an aspect she enjoys about hockey.

“I also just love skating on the ice,” she said. “It doesn’t take much effort and makes you feel so free.”

Looking back at her fall season, Schley said that marching band went

well in 2024.

“We got third at our competition and we still have marching band next July in Washington, D.C.,” Schley said.

Looking ahead to the spring, Schley is still deciding her athletic plans.

“Last year, I participated in softball. Right now, I’m debating on playing softball or taking photos of Frisbee,” she said.

When it comes to school, Schley said English is her favorite class.

“I’ve never really enjoyed English before, but Ms. Kope has really made me enjoy her class,” she said.

After graduating, Schley has many plans for what she will do next.

“I plan to major in music performance and minor in nutrition, but I also plan to dual enroll in a nearby community college to practice culinary arts. I hope to be a private chef one day,” she said.



Photo by R. JARMAN

FIGHTING AT SCHOOL FAILS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS continued from page 3

with a principal for a reset and go over school expectations for that student. Now, doesn’t that sound like a long process that you don’t want to go through?

It gets annoying to not only have fights in the bathroom but all over the school. The easiest way to get half of your peers to dislike you is to start your fight in the stairways. Like, come on. The stairways of all places? It gets tiring having to walk around fights that people want to start in an inconvenient area. On top of that,