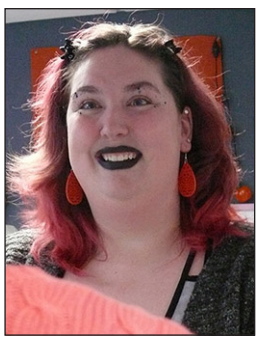

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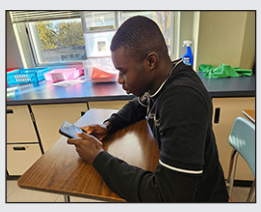

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DISTRICT REVEALS PLANS TO MERGE HIGH SCHOOLS

Proposal unveiled to combine Cooper, Armstrong by the 2030 school year

Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Many questions remain about how the combination of the two schools will work and where the new school will be located.

By TYLER GOODMAN
Quill staff writer

The Robbinsdale School District has discussed plans to merge rival high schools Cooper and Armstrong beginning in 2030. This move is designed to address the district's $21 million budget shortfall and a projected decline in enrollment.

Even though students currently attending these two high schools will be graduated by then, it is still a subject that is generating opinions among students.

Students in sports are worried about sports being Armstrong-dominated even though the two schools would be one in the case of a merger.

"I think it's bad," Zane Halstead (11) said. "I mean, it makes sense financially, I guess, but I just think it's kind of stupid, because we've already had some sports that are merged and [they are] Armstrong dominant, and I have a feeling that everything's just going to get Armstrong-dominated."

However, students are not the only ones that are concerned about the merger. Cooper staff members also have various opinions about it.

"Most of the information that I have learned about the budget shortfall has been through emails from the district office or the superintendent. School closures are something that has come up in conversation with other teachers for the last few years, but again, most of the news I get is from official communication from the district level," Social Studies teacher Nathan Cogswell said.

For many teachers, including Social Studies teacher Chris DiSalvi, a "primary concern is staff-to-student ratios." According to DiSalvi, this may be something that teachers and students should consider and be prepared for.

The planned merging of the schools is not only driven by the district's financial issues, but also by many issues such as lower-than-average test scores, declining enrollment, aging facilities with expensive upkeep costs and more.

The plan to merge Cooper and Armstrong is one of many changes featured in Reimagine Rdale: Vision 2030, a plan that was released in October 2025. The work to produce this plan was first launched by district administrators in November 2024 to improve the students' learning experience and address the district's financial issues.

"Change was needed before. Now, it is essential," Superintendent Terry Staloch said in the Reimagine Rdale: Vision 2030 materials shared with the public.

While they say their plans are to improve many aspects of the learning experience, district officials also acknowledge that the changes that will be made

MERGE SCHOOLS continues on page 5

College fair brought dozens of schools to Cooper

The October 28 event was open to all senior, junior classes after the cancellation of last year's fair due to scheduling issues

By JOHANNA GONZALEZ
Quill staff writer

The annual Cooper MnACC College Fair took place on October 28 during periods six and seven in the Community Gym.

Representatives from more than 50 different in-state and out-of-state colleges came to Cooper to give out information to more than 600 students about the different programs and resources that they offer at their schools.

Helping organize the fair was grade-level counselor Anna Walters.

"I think hosting a college fair at Cooper is a great opportunity for our students to get exposure to regional colleges, ask questions and get direct answers from the reps," Walters said. "Students may not be interested or have the means to go to bigger fairs or travel to schools to get information, so this is a great way for students to get information on colleges and programs they offer. It can provide some clarity on students' college choices, assist in the decision-making process, gain insights on which colleges might be a good fit or ignite the spark for them to start thinking about options after high school."

Walters said that the choice of which schools come to the fair is overseen by MnACC, which is the Minnesota Association of Counselors of Color.

"There is a fair committee that reaches out to the schools for the fairs," Walters said. "They have two fairs a day for about two weeks in the fall."

According to Walters, planning an event of this size takes months.

"Before summer, I had to indicate with MnACC that we were interested in hosting a fair. I then met with the fair's organizers to discuss potential dates that avoid other events that might be happening at Cooper. Once a date was set, we add it to the school calendar, and I clear it with our Physical Education department to make sure we can utilize their space. We also have a contract to sign to make sure we are abiding by their expectations for the fair. There are check-ins with the MnACC committee leading up to the event, and we are provided a list of schools attending. I cross reference that as it changes and then eventually print off a list of the schools," Walters said.

Photo by AMANDA LIESER

The fair gave students the chance to hear directly from college representatives.

The students who attended the fair said they saw the value in the event.

"It gives us more hope and helps us see where we want go for college," Kayden Anderson (12) said.

Agreeing with Anderson was Najmo Mohamed Abdi (11).

"It helps students see their options and what they want to do after high school and be able to answer questions that they got," Abdi said.

COLLEGE FAIR continues on page 5

Celebrating cultural differences benefits Hawk students

The diversity of cultures represented at Cooper can help everyone develop respect, better communication skills

By DIANA SANCHEZ MORALES
Quill staff writer

Cooper is a school with students from a wide variety of different cultures. The intersection of these various traditions helps students at Cooper by fostering empathy, critical thinking and social skills. It also helps students develop respect and better communication skills by learning about and interacting with people from diverse cultures.

According to David Kek, who is Cooper's Climate and Culture Specialist, Cooper is a school with great cultural diversity where students have the potential to share their own family traditions and experiences.

"I would describe the cultural diversity of our school as having pockets of culture that has yet to be fully uncovered and put on the forefront. My question is: what mechanisms can we put into place to optimize that to flourish?" he said.

If students ever need support when it comes to cultural issues, Kek said teachers can help by integrating multicultural content into lessons, fostering respectful student interactions, connecting with families and communities, and creating a classroom that reflects and celebrates diverse backgrounds. Kek said he also plays a role when it comes to supporting students in these types of situations.

"My role is to meet students where they're at while attuning to their cultural backgrounds. If I'm not building authentic relationships with students in a manner that demonstrates cultural competence and humility, then getting to truly honor their voice and ultimately amplify it will be self-defeating," he said.

Kek emphasized that there are specific clubs, events and programs at Cooper that celebrate different cultures. Cooper has clubs such as Latinos Unidos that provide a way of sharing culture and learning about others through food, music and film. Kek said that empowering students to take the lead on cultural initiatives can have a profound impact

"There are Latinos Unidos, Muslim Student Association, Asian-American Student Club and Black Student Union, which are in the works, to name a few," he said.

Teachers can also help ensure that students from all backgrounds can be seen and respected. Strategies include learning about students' backgrounds, using diverse materials like books and music, allowing students to share their experiences and fostering mutual respect through dialogue and collaborative activities.

EL teacher Maria Vallejo said she works hard to ensure students of all cultures that she is there for them.

"I think it's important to help all students, especially those who are new to our communities, feel like they belong. I find it important to treat those students like we would anyone else. I think one thing that makes students feel like they stick out is when we tiptoe around them and put a lot of focus on them being new to our school. What we want is for students in that scenario to feel like this is their school just as much as someone who has been here for a year, two

DIFFERENCES continues on page 5

Preparation helps offset dangers of cardiac arrest

Learning how to administer CPR can be critical in combating incidents of SCA

By BEN KENYON
Quill staff writer

Students at Cooper are given basic cardiac arrest training during their sophomore year health class. They are further eligible and encouraged to become officially certified in administering CPR by attending health teacher Bill Rooney's HLL sessions, during they will be taught about the life-saving practice through in-depth, hands-on learning. On average, these HLL sessions see 10-15 students become decorated with the certification each school year.

Rooney's sessions connect with an effort to raise awareness about sudden cardiac arrest (SCA), an event during which a person's heart abruptly encounters a critical issue in its electrical activity, resulting in a complete cessation of the organ's ability to pump and circulate blood across the body. When this takes place, one of the two most vital organs required to sustain life is no longer functioning correctly and immediate action must be taken for the victim to be saved. Otherwise, their death will become a fact of increasing inevitability.

SCA episodes are of concern because of their severity and how they can seemingly come out of nowhere. In fact, October is now designated as Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness Month.

The good news is that SCA incidents are typically easy to recognize when they occur. They are hallmarked by victims abruptly collapsing, falling unconscious and having an absence of a pulse and rhythmic breathing for an extended amount of time. The necessity of dropping everything to rush over and provide help is crucial at this moment.

Data collected from SCA events in the past have revealed that for every minute aid is not provided, the victim's survival rate drops by an average of 10 percent. Additionally, this same data has also shown a trend where seven out of every 10 SCA cases have occurred in a home, so knowing how to recognize it when others may not be available is all the more pivotal.

In a SCA situation, time is of the essence and rushing over to help is a must. According to Rooney, a bystander needs to check the victim for signs of responsiveness, emphasizing the phrase: "look, listen, feel." He said that the next step is to get emergency services on the line as quickly as possible. Additionally, if an AED device is available nearby, somebody should be sent out to retrieve it.

While this is happening, even if somebody is actively bringing back an AED, life-saving compressive efforts should be applied to the center of the victim's chest with hard, fast pushes, making sure to maintain a rate of around 100-120 compressions a minute. After around 30 pushes have been performed, Rooney stated that a person who has been trained in CPR may aid the victim by applying two rescue breaths. To offer the most help possible and give the victim the best odds at surviving, these measures should not stop being administered until an AED device can be applied to the victim or until emergency personnel arrive to take over the scene. Data has shown that the simple act of a bystander stepping in to provide the victim with immediate assistance can increase their survival odds from a one in 10 to a five in 10 chance once they reach the hospital.

SCA has emerged as one of America's greatest public health crises. However, it is one of the lesser-known medical emergencies that fall under the broad category of heart disease-related conditions. Nonetheless, SCA has been responsible for a sizable portion of these emergencies, which has ultimately kept the condition as the nation's leading cause of death since the 1950s.

The most unsettling part about SCA is that it is not necessarily associated with a person's age or poor health. Instead, these incidents can happen to anyone: teens, the elderly and infants. This widespread impact is the reason why October has been designated to bring awareness to SCA and why teens should properly inform themselves about it.

"Chances are [that teens are] going to know somebody who may go into cardiac arrest at some point in their life," Rooney said.

College in School classes expand at Cooper

More senior, junior courses offered to Hawk students bring with them the opportunity to earn college credits for free

Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Michelle Kope's Introduction to Literature class offers the chance to earn credits through the University of Minnesota.

By MANAL BARE
Quill staff writer

The International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) classes at Cooper have long given students a chance to earn college credit while in high school. A more recent addition to this option is Cooper's College in the Schools (CIS) option.

The CIS program allows students to earn college credits while still in high school. The program is offered through a variety of post-secondary schools, including the University of Minnesota and Minneapolis College. However, the classes are taught right here at Cooper by our own teachers.

The program currently has a variety of courses, from Introduction to Literature with Michelle Kope and Introduction to College Physics with Anne Johnson, to Topics in Cinema with Eric Zuccola and College Composition with Olivia Major. These CIS classes are designed to provide high school students with a college-level education in a high school setting.

"I enjoy seeing students discover their potential and succeed," Kope said. "The CIS program opens doors for students who might not have earned college credit otherwise."

Unlike regular high school courses, CIS classes are purposely intensive and challenging, requiring students to spend two to five hours per week on homework outside of class. Students who pass these courses can earn between one and four college credits, giving them a head start on their postsecondary plans. Additionally, because these college classes are free and taught at Cooper, they are intentionally made to be highly accessible, costing students nothing, which helps students plan for postsecondary education more affordably.

Valeria Lule (12), who is taking Introduction to Literature, said the financial benefits of CIS are clear.

"I'm really grateful for CIS because it makes saving money for college a step easier and quicker," Lule said.

Teachers who teach CIS classes go through an application and certification process to qualify. During this process, they must get letters of recommendation, be interviewed and participate in professional development programs through the college they are working with. Instructors have to attend multiple meetings during the year and submit their syllabus to make sure it is in alignment with college-level standards.

"After completing the application, letters and an interview, I joined the professional development team," Kope said. "There are probably 50 to 100 teachers in the program, and we're required to attend five professional development sessions a year and submit our syllabus."

The CIS program is especially important for students who may not earn college credit through the high-stakes testing that occurs in programs like IB and AP. Kope said she pursued the CIS opportunity as a way to help all interested students earn college credits.

"I didn't want students to be penalized for something as stressful as high-stakes testing. I wanted them to be able to get college credit without the anxiety that the tests create. CIS classes offer this more realistic and supportive pathway to getting college credits, reducing stress and anxiety," she said.

Overall, the CIS program has made a meaningful impact on Cooper students. According to Hamdi Abshir (12), his work in the Introduction to Literature class has helped him develop new skills.

"CIS has helped me improve my social skills because of how interactive we are," Abshir said.

Kope noted that seeing the growth and development of students like Abshir is what makes CIS classes important.

"I enjoy seeing students discover their potential and succeed. The program opens doors for students who might not have earned college credit otherwise," Kope said.

Media Center welcomes new clerk Emily Lange

Lange arrived at Cooper after budget cuts had an impact on Media Center specialists across the district

By DIANA VANG
Quill staff writer

There is a new face behind the desk in the Media Center this year. Her name is Emily Lange, and as Cooper's new Media Clerk, she is the one making sure Chromebooks are operational, students are supported and books are ready for checkout. Moreover, Lange is on a mission to make the Media Center a vibrant hub for creativity, curiosity and community.

"A goal I have is to make the Media Center into a place that is welcoming and that students want to utilize. Libraries are amazing spaces to get work done, explore new books or just reset. I want to make this space somewhere like that," Lange said.

Lange's path to Cooper was not straightforward, but it was consistently centered around education and literacy.

"I always wanted to go into education," she said. "When I was an English teacher and didn't love it the way I thought I would, I started thinking about other careers that were still in education and still allowed me to work with books and literacy."

That reflection led her toward library and media services, where she could combine her love of books with a passion for helping students in new ways.

Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Lange said she hopes to create a supportive sense of community in the center.

Before joining Cooper, Lange worked for three years as a Media Education Assistant at Meadow Lake Elementary, where she developed many of the skills she brings to her current role.

"I was the Media EA there for three years before coming to Cooper," she said. "It was a great experience and I learned a lot about managing materials and supporting students and teachers."

Her educational background reflects that commitment as well. Lange earned her Bachelor's degree in English Education from North Dakota State University and she is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Library Media Specialist Studies at St. Cloud State University.

"I'm still learning and growing," she said. "It's exciting to be in a program that directly connects to what I do every day."

As for what her typical day looks like, Lange said there are a wide range of things that might happen.

"As Media Clerk, it's hard to say what a typical day is because so much of my day can vary based on what's happening," she said. "Days start with prepping materials for classroom checkout and trying to get organized for the day. The mornings are usually the busiest time for loaner checkouts."

In fact, much of her day revolves around technology management, making sure students have functioning devices and teachers have the tech support they need.

"During the school day, most of the work I get done while supervising is cleaning and testing Chromebooks," she explained. "When classes come in, I help with whatever they need. At the end of the day, it's resetting the Media Center for the next day and sending out notices or other emails."

Lange's job touches nearly every corner of Cooper life. She manages the devices, the curriculum materials, the books and the student usage of the Media Center.

"This includes giving out loaner devices, new devices or replacement devices," she said. "I troubleshoot problems with technology for both students and staff. When classes need books, I get those ready for students. I supervise students when they are using the Media Center and help with whatever needs

MEDIA CENTER
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Student Council outlines its plans for 2025-2026

The new school year will bring with it annual traditions, new initiatives for Cooper's assembly of student leaders

By CARLIE JONES
Quill staff writer

Student Council is starting off another year of leadership, service and Cooper spirit. Led by President Chad Hill (12) and Vice President Kyllander Nelson (12), this group of student leaders are working hard to make sure the 2025-2026 school year is filled with inclusion, pride and community-building.

Group meetings are held during fifth period every Wednesday, at which time students come together to brainstorm, plan and collaborate on ways to make Cooper a stronger, more connected community.

Public relations officer Gianna Lee (12) said a typical Wednesday meeting for the group has a set structure.

"We address the agenda for the whole Student Council and then break into small groups depending on which events we have planned that are coming up," Lee said. "The small groups help our whole council to tackle little things we need to get done for an event."

Honorary officer Kendall Carscadden (12) said she got involved with Student Council to give back to the school community.

"I always wanted to stay involved with my community. I have always had a passion for volunteering, helping others and using my creativity to create something new that would soon benefit others in the long run. I knew as soon as I saw the sign-up for [Student Council] my freshman year that it was something for me," Carscadden said.

Agreeing with Carscadden about the value of Student Council is group secretary Mandy Wu (12).

"I liked the idea of school involvement and Student Council was the right fit for me because of their variety of school events they would host and passion for service," Wu said.

Each year, Student Council works to combine fun and purpose in its events. So far, this year's lineup of Student Council-organized events includes Suicide Prevention Month, Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the Veteran's Breakfast, Cocoa and Cram and the Student Summit. All of these events are traditions that have become staples in Cooper's calendar.

"We have been doing these events every school year that I have been a member of the Student Council," Lee said.

Beyond planning these events, Student Council also plays a big role in representing the heart of Cooper's diverse student body.

"We promote safety around our community and diversity in all cultures, background, heritage and identity. Some examples are our annual Black History Month Expo, Multicultural Expo, Native American Heritage Month, Hispanic Heritage Month and many more," Lee said.

When it comes to getting involved, the officers agree that joining Student Council is one of the best ways for students to build friendships and leadership skills.

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Senior slide more than just laziness

The disconnection 12th graders sometimes feel from high school can be caused by issues beyond their work ethic

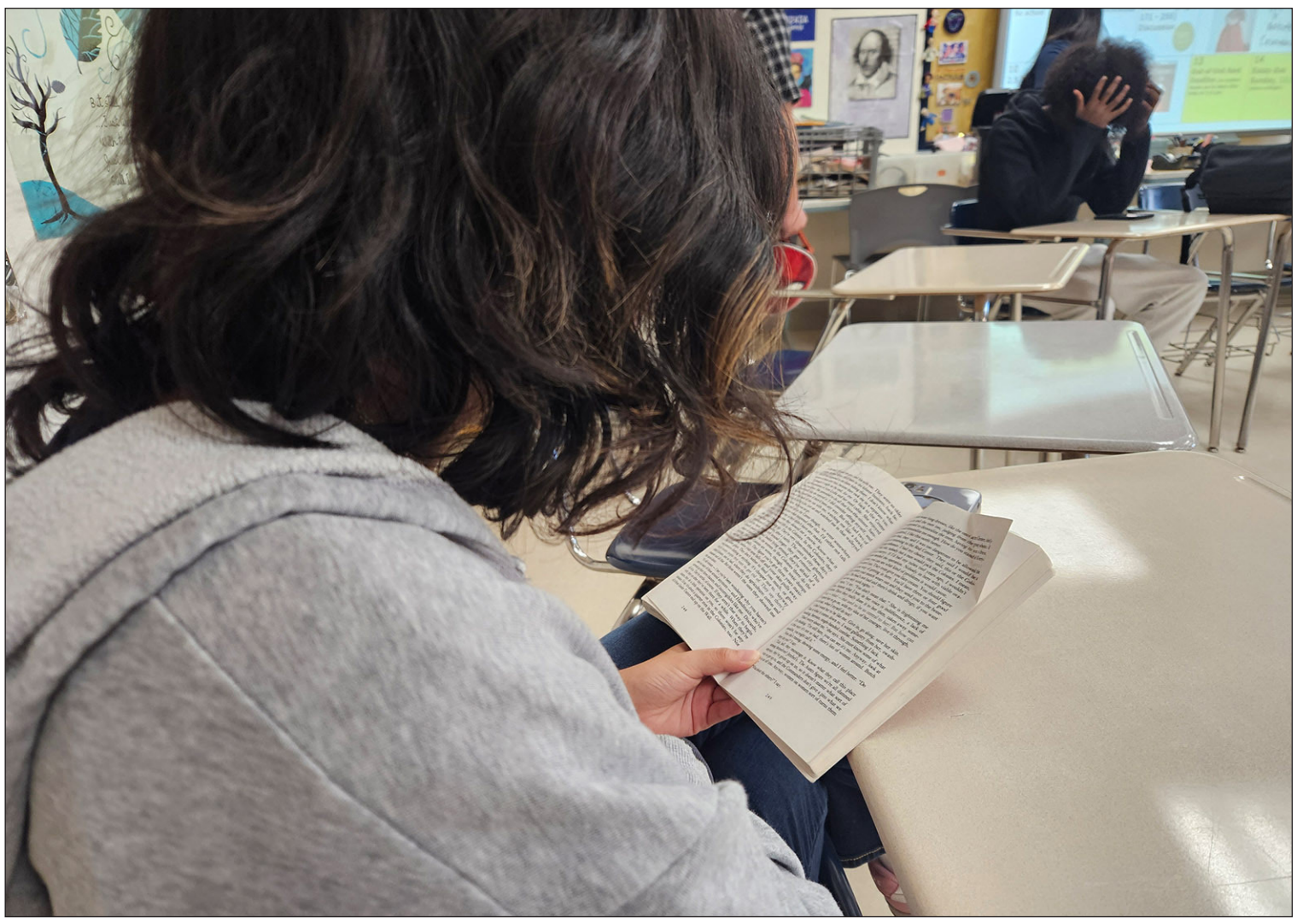

Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

A senior's willingness to stay focused on their classwork may be helped by efforts adults make to keep lines of communication open.

By ROSE VANG-LOHNES
Quill staff writer

I have become a victim of the senior slide. I never thought I would fall into this mentality because I have always been an A and B student, but this year, I have become careless. I know I have homework and studying I need to get done but I simply say, "I'll do it later," which I never do. This has brought me to question something: Why do some seniors fall into this mentality? Do we really not care anymore or is it something deeper?

Senior slide, which is also known as "senioritis," is when the academic motivation for high school seniors decreases. Missing work piles up and grades start slipping. The lack of care is major because most of us think, "I am so done with high school," "I can fix it later," or, "It doesn't matter. I already got accepted into my college."

The first of these thoughts comes from the fact that we are in the home stretch of finally being done with high school. We know the routine: come to school, go on about our school day, get the homework done, pass a test, fix the grade, etc. It has become mind-numbing for us seniors. We just want to have fun and be done with high school.

That brings us to the idea that seniors can make up for our slide at the last minute. It is not that seniors flat out do not care about our academics, but we are starting to feel academic burnout. Seniors have been working extremely hard to make sure we get to not only graduate but also get accepted into our dream collages. That stress builds up for years and it gets to a point where most of us are just done. If we get accepted, then we get accepted; if we do not, then we do not. While that is not the best mindset to have, can you really blame us?

While some seniors know that their next step is college, there are other seniors who do not know what they will do after high school, which can also cause senioritis. Students who do not know what they actually want to do next can feel frozen or stuck. They may not want to move on from high school because school is all they have known for years. What if not going to college is the wrong choice? What if we hate the job we always wanted? What if we do not achieve any of our dreams? This list of fears goes on and on, which leads to the anxiety that may cause some of us to just stop caring. This is clearly another cause of the senior slide.

All in all, some seniors are just too prideful to admit that they do not know what to do after high school or that they have fears weighing down on them. In both cases, the result can be senioritis. Right now, many seniors are simply going through the motions of high school. Instead of getting annoyed or frustrated with the seniors who are slipping into the senior slide, adults just need to talk with us. You may or may not be met with some attitude at first, but if you stay gentle and understanding, communication will take place and, perhaps, the senior slide will go away.

Month celebrating Hispanic heritage worth embracing

Hispanic Heritage Month was first established by President Reagan in 1988

By CAMILA RODRIGUEZ LAZCANO
Quill staff writer

People celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month every year from September 15 to October 15. This is a time to honor the culture and traditions of Hispanic and Latin Americans. This month recognizes the history and influence of 66 million people whose roots are from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Spain, the Dominican Republic and nations in Central and South America. I believe this month of recognition is important in a school setting like Cooper and in the broader society.

The date of September 15 is important because it marks independence day in several Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In fact, Mexico's independence day follows after that on September 16 and Chile's is on September 18. This month of recognition first began as a week-long observance in 1968 and was extended to a 31-day period in 1988 by President Ronald Reagan to provide more time to properly recognize the achievements and contributions of Hispanic Americans.

Throughout the month, schools and communities host events that highlight various elements of Hispanic cultures, including music, art, dance and food. From bachata and mariachi to pupusas and pozole, each tradition comes from a different place, and it allows Latin Americans to share their creativity and identity. In school settings, students may also learn about famous Hispanic figures such as Emiliano Zapata, Sonia Sotomayor, Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta.

Ultimately, celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month is not just about having fun and celebrating our culture, but also about remembering and recognizing ongoing contributions made by Hispanics and the work they have done to help shape this country. By celebrating each other's culture, we build connections and strengthen our community to make our schools and country a better place.

Physical education classes can help all Hawks

The value of taking these classes extends beyond the obvious health benefits of being active during the school day

From the Editors

Whether you were the kid who indulged in the activities of physical education (PE) or the one who always got lectured about forgetting your gym clothes because you never wanted to be there in the first place, we have all had a gym class. Contrary to popular belief, PE is not a form of punishment created by the school board. Instead, it is an educational class, just like any one of your other classes. There are many reasons why PE is beneficial for students.

First and foremost, PE classes allow students to dedicate time to exercising. For seven hours a day, five days a week, students are sitting at a desk in a classroom. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 30 minutes of moderate exercise at least five times a week is the minimum a person should be doing to stay healthy. For many students who are enrolled in rigorous courses and involved in non-sports-related extracurricular activities, this standard is especially hard to reach. Fortunately, PE provides students with daily exercise, which is necessary for growing and staying healthy.

Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Eighth period PE students play basketball during class on November 5.

PE activities come with many physical benefits. The class challenges students to work on their coordination and flexibility, which declines as one gets older. According to the CDC, the obesity rate of children and teens in the United States is 18.5 percent. That means 13.7 million children are affected by this rate. PE classes focus on cardio exercise, which helps reduce this rate as well as making your heart stronger, increasing your lung capacity and reducing your risk of high cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes and more. Establishing healthier lifestyles through PE leads to healthier lives and a longer lifespan.

Physical activities from PE also provide mental and social benefits. Endorphins, or "feel good" hormones, are released in your brain as a result of physical exertion, which causes you to be in a better, more positive mood. The social setting of PE classes also allows students to work on skills such as collaboration and sportsmanship, which are harder to develop in a classroom setting. Many of the social skills you take for granted may be the product of the PE classes you took as a youngster.

Despite the sweatiness and frustration that sometimes comes with PE, the class is an important one. It allows you to dedicate time to exercising, which provides students with many physical, mental and social benefits. Upperclassmen who are not involved in sports should consider taking an elective PE class.

STUDENT COUNCIL

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"Joining with friends is always a fun way to get involved while learning more about community building and meeting new people," Lee said.

As for what drives the officers to stay involved, Lee said it is all about creating connections.

"I was interested in planning school events that bring our community closer and meeting new people that have similar interests as me," Lee said.

Echoing this sentiment was Carscadden.

"Without Student Council, Cooper wouldn't have many events that are led by students and events that highlight different cultures and identities," she said.

Looking ahead, Wu said the group has plans for second semester.

"We are currently planning for the Student Summit. We hope to bring back our Martin Luther King, Jr. event in January and host the Snowball Dance again," Wu said.

The Quill

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NSPA

Recognition of Columbus Day needs to end

Switching the holiday to Indigenous People's Day makes increasing sense

By BEN KENYON
Quill staff writer

"In August of 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue" is a well-known phrase that marks the date when Genoese-Italian explorer Christopher Columbus landed his voyage in the Americas, sparking the first European contact in the continent since the Vikings that made landfall nearly 500 years earlier. This event would become the beginning of a long and painful history for the native inhabitants of these lands, bringing about centuries of discrimination, forced assimilation, slave labor, sexual abuses, mutilations, murders and even fully planned genocides, actions that would all be delivered by the hands of the rapidly arriving old world colonists.

There would be no scarcity in the amount of these atrocities perpetrated against the natives and their lands. It all began from the very moment that Columbus and his followers disembarked the Santa Maria and stepped foot onto the beaches of San Salvador for the first time. The immediate cruelty in how they viewed the indigenous peoples could be solely summed up by a first-hand witness' historical testimony, written by the Spanish colonial abuse advocate Bartolome de las Casas: "The reason the Christians have murdered on such a vast scale and killed anyone and everyone in their way is purely and simply greed. The land is fertile and rich, the inhabitants simple, forbearing and submissive. The Spaniards have shown not the slightest consideration for these people...so much as piles of dung in the middle of the road."

Hearing of this, a person would likely begin to question how these colonists brought themselves to do such things, or at least how it was allowed to happen. It must be understood that Columbus' expedition was grounded in a time period when the thought of any sort of rights or liberties for non-Europeans would get anybody that suggested them laughed out of a room. However, even for the dated standards that existed at that time, the explorer led his men to carry out orders of such terror and brutality that the Spanish Crown Authority later decided that enough was enough and stripped Columbus of his colonial leadership role because of complaints about some of his worst actions.

This history of Columbus is the main entryway to a question that must be asked: Should we really, in today's age, keep up with the celebration of Columbus Day? Should we cheer a day that bears the name of a leader who has been well documented to have not given a second thought about the deployment of torture and mass killings as a means to accomplish his goals?

The reality of Columbus Day even existing as a federal holiday in the first place was not originally intended to be in honor of the discovery of the Americas; rather, it was created by former President Benjamin Harrison to quell political tensions amid a relations crisis between the American and Italian governments after growing numbers of Italian-Americans were being lynched and discriminated against in the United States. Essentially, the establishment of this day was no more than a political gesture that happened to bear a famous Italian's name for the sake of appeasing a foreign government. Surely, there has got to be a better way of recognizing the history and hardships faced by Italian immigrants in America, specifically not by pinning them to a day where the intended topic is largely overshadowed by something else entirely, right?

These arguments are what led to my belief that Columbus Day should be done away with in favor of Indigenous Peoples Day. The unfortunate happenings of the past should still be acknowledged and addressed with neutrality because they are, of course, history. However, instead of continuing to carry along the legacy of colonialism, slavery and genocide, people should embrace a celebration of the many unique cultures and practices of the numerous indigenous peoples that once did, still do and forever will inhabit our vast nation.

No phone policies have drawbacks

The need to cut down on classroom distractions conflicts with the need students have to feel safe at school

Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Cooper staff members largely manage to discourage phone use without taking phones away or causing unnecessary conflicts.

By ROSE VANG-LOHNES
Quill staff writer

A new Minnesota law required schools to adopt their own student cell phone policies by March 15, 2025. This law caused many school districts to enact policies that band cell phones from school use. However, I believe it is not safe for schools to ban phones. Yes, I understand the whole argument that phones can be distracting for students. However, with the rise of gun violence, kids, teens and young adults should be able to have access to their phones.

In total, 20 states have banned phones in their schools or have restrictive policies for students. The reason why so many states have started to ban or create restrictive policies is due to students not paying attention to or engaging in class as a result of their phones. Thomas Toch, the director of FutureEd said, "We're trying to get kids to engage, to immerse themselves in the subject at hand, to communicate with their peers, to be part of a learning community." While I understand that argument, I still do not agree with banning phones from schools. Safety is still a concern for me.

At Cooper, our phones must be put away during instructional time but we can use them during passing time and lunch. This is a healthy and reasonable expectation. Students should have their phones put away during a lesson so we understand what is needed of us and to be respectful of the teacher. This healthy expectation can help students learn self-control and discipline. They will learn how to prioritize things other than their phones.

At the same time, taking a student's phone away is not going to make them more prone to listen. If anything, it is going to make students push back even harder. Students will just learn how to get better at hiding their phones or they will get argumentative with a teacher or staff member about putting the phones away.

No one likes getting their stuff taken away, whether they are an adult or a child. A ban on phones in schools will just create a bigger gap between educators and students due to the lack of trust and frustration the students may feel. It is sad, but for some students, their phones are like an extenuation of themselves. Taking away the phone is like taking away something precious to them.

On a more serious note, we live in a reality in which there is a chance that a shooting may break out at any school at any moment. The fear and anxiety that something may happen to us students is inexcusable, yet it is a new normal that we have to live with. We need our phones in those situations so we can call for help or contact our family. Yes, this is a "what if," but it is still a possibility that a shooting can break out at any moment.

Thankfully, we have had no school shootings at Cooper, but we have had guns or different kinds of weapons found in students' backpacks. Unfortunately, most students have become numb or even play off those incidents as jokes as a way to cope with the fact that a weapon was brought into school. Ultimately, school is a place where kids should have a sense of safety. A phone is one way that feeling of safety can be provided.

I truly understand both sides of the argument when it comes to banning phones at school. Yes, students have become disengaged in school because they are always on their phones. While that is annoying, we should not neces-

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Students need to rethink their treatment of bathrooms

Continued misuse of school restrooms may once again force Cooper administrators to lock them up during class time

By ANGEL JARQUIN RAMIREZ
Quill staff writer

I had a negative experience during my freshman year at Cooper when I went to the bathroom. Already in the room was a group of boys. They asked if I had anything on me, which I assumed referred to a vape or something similar. I ignored them and went to a stall to use the bathroom. Unfortunately, they opened the stall door because the lock did not work. I have not used the boys bathroom at this school since then because that incident made me feel scared and paranoid.

The school bathrooms are open almost all day this year. While some students are there to actually use the bathrooms, others are skipping class, vandalizing the space or smoking without anyone stopping them. This is why some of the hallway security people check the bathrooms to see what is going on.

One key problem that happens in the bathrooms is students skipping class. Many students choose to hide out in stalls or hang around in groups to avoid class. While it might seem harmless to some, skipping class in the bathroom causes several issues. It takes away from valuable learning time and can make the bathrooms overcrowded or uncomfortable for students who actually need to use them. It also forces teachers and administrators to spend more time patrolling hallways instead of focusing on teaching or helping students.

Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

The bathrooms are typically a mess by day's end thanks to careless users.

Another major issue is the damage that often occurs in the bathrooms. Things like broken soap dispensers, bent or dented stall doors, graffiti and clogged toilets have become far too common. This type of vandalism makes the bathrooms unpleasant and sometimes even unusable for everyone else. It also costs the school money and time to repair what was broken.

Vaping and smoking in the bathrooms are also serious concerns. Many students use the bathrooms as a place to vape, thinking they will not get caught. However, this behavior creates unhealthy air for others and can make students feel uncomfortable or unsafe entering the room. The smell often lingers and the devices can even set off alarms. It also violates school policy, which can lead to disciplinary action.

Overall, the problems in our school bathrooms are all connected by a lack of respect for shared spaces and for each other. These issues affect everyone, from students to staff, and make the school environment worse. To fix this, we all need to take responsibility. Students should treat the bathrooms with care, report damage or unsafe behavior and hold one another accountable. If we all work together, we can make the bathrooms at Cooper safe, respectful and welcoming places for everyone.

Bullying remains an ongoing issue despite awareness

Whether it is in person or on social media, teenagers cannot seem to learn the lesson that victimizing others has no upside

By JA'LAYIAH MCCLINTON
Quill staff writer

Bullying is a problem among students that does not seem to go away. Despite there being school policies against it, and despite us being taught since elementary school that bullying is wrong, students persist in being nasty to one another. Clearly, bullying is unnecessary and cruel.

One reason why some people get bullied is because they are different in some way. Why make fun of or pick on someone just because they are different? You never really know what someone might be going through at home or in their personal life. Picking on someone for how they look, talk, dress or act only adds more pain to what they may already be dealing with.

School should be a safe place to pursue your creativity and passions, whether that is sports, music, art or the academic subjects. When bullying happens, it takes away that safe feeling and makes people afraid to be themselves. It is hard to enjoy learning or feel confident when you are being torn down by other people.

It is a good rule of thumb that if you feel like what you are about to say might hurt someone, maybe you should not say it at all. Putting down someone's self-confidence is mean and words stick with people longer than you think. Treating people the way you would want to be treated is a much better way to act. Just because someone is different does not mean they should be treated poorly. We all deserve respect and kindness.

Fixing the problem of bullying may be difficult, but it is not impossible. Let us make school a place where everyone feels welcome and supported. It starts with thinking before we speak and choosing to lift each other up instead of tearing each other down. There is no place for bullying at Cooper.

Silent Voice a stellar slice of anime

Director Naoko Yamada's 2017 film adaptation of the manga of the same name does justice to the source material

Photo by SHOCHIKU

A Silent Voice deals with the tumultuous relationship between Shôko Nishimiya and Shôya Ishida over many years.

By CHENG VUE
Quill staff writer

The anime film *A Silent Voice* is directed by Naoko Yamada and was released in the United States on October 20, 2017. I chose to review this film because I had watched it years ago and wanted to revisit it, especially since I did not fully understand it the first time. Another reason I picked it was that I enjoyed the movie back then and wanted to see if I still liked it. After rewatching *A Silent Voice*, I found that it uses art direction and music to explore an important question: is it possible to find love again while trying to fix past mistakes?

The film revolves around Shôko Nishimiya, a grade school student with a hearing impairment. She transfers to a new school where she is bullied by her classmates, especially Shôya Ishida. Eventually, the bullying becomes so severe that she transfers schools, and as a result, Shôya is ostracized and bullied himself. Left with no friends and no direction, Shôya becomes deeply depressed. Years later, filled with regret, he seeks out Shôko to make amends.

One of the most powerful aspects of the film is its art direction. Many scenes are shown from Shôya's perspective, and we often see large X marks over people's faces. These Xs represent Shôya's emotional disconnection from those around him and his inability to see himself forming relationships with them due to the guilt he carries. One of the most powerful scenes is at the school festival near the end of the film. As Shôya walks through the crowd, Xs cover many people's faces. Then, as he uncovers his ears and opens himself to the world, all the Xs fall away. At that moment, he sees the happiness of his family and friends, and he breaks down in tears as colorful confetti floats around him. The visual of a tunnel with light at the end follows, showing Shôya's friends bathed in the glow. As the light grows brighter, the film reveals its title. The falling Xs symbolize that Shôya can finally let people into his life and the confetti adds a celebratory feeling to this breakthrough. What is more, the tunnel imagery signifies that he has finally found hope. This scene captures the emotional depth of his journey. We can feel how difficult it was for him to reach this moment of self-acceptance.

The music in the movie is beautiful and plays a key role in the pacing. About 14 minutes into the film, there is a montage of Shôya bullying Shôko. He throws her hearing aid out the window, yells into her ear, trips her, draws cruel images in her notebook and pours water on her. The background music during these moments is upbeat and jolly, contrasting sharply with Shôya's cruel actions. When we eventually arrive at the final act of bullying, which involves Shôya pulling out her hearing aid and causing her ear to bleed, we hear a low bass tone that underscores the horror of what he has done. The shift in music emphasizes the seriousness of that moment. Another standout musical moment comes during the festival scene. The music starts off soft and sad, matching Shôya's uncertainty and anxiety. However, as the Xs disappear from people's faces, the music shifts into something more joyful and uplifting. The transition feels like crossing a finish line as he finally finds peace. The heartbeat sound layered into the music adds a deeply human touch, making it feel like Shôya is finally at peace with himself.

Ultimately, the movie poses a meaningful question: is it okay to feel happy after all the bad things you have done, especially when you are trying to make things right? After growing up, Shôya gives his mother nearly 1.7 million yen (about $12,000) and then leaves. In another scene, he tells Shôko, "I don't want Shôko to hurt anymore." He spends much of the movie doing things to make amends, including returning the notebook she used in elementary school. However, one of the most important moments is when he is out with friends, enjoying himself, and he pauses to ask, "Am I allowed to have this much fun?" Despite all his efforts to make things right, Shôya still doubts whether he deserves happiness. This message resonates with many people: how much do you have to fix before you are allowed to forgive yourself and feel joy again? I found this to be one of the most powerful and relatable parts of the film.

A Silent Voice uses art direction and music to explore whether someone can rediscover love and happiness by making amends for past mistakes. I think the movie is very well done, though sometimes it jumps between scenes too quickly, which can make it hard to follow. That is one of the reasons I wanted to rewatch it, because when I first saw it, I did not understand much of what was going on. Now that I am older, I was able to follow the story more clearly. Afterward, I watched a recap of both the movie and the manga it is based on. While some details from the manga were left out, I think the director did a good job including the most important parts, even though I do feel a little sad that more content was not added to build the story further. Overall, *A Silent Voice* earns four out of five stars.

The Hobbit successfully returns to Middle Earth

Peter Jackson's first film in his *Hobbit* trilogy captures the same magic as his *Lord of the Rings* movies

By AMIRA EMBABY
Quill staff writer

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey is directed by Peter Jackson and was released on December 6, 2012. One reason I chose this movie to review is because of the storyline and the creative elements used in making it, which are also carried over into the later movies in this series. Another reason is that I genuinely enjoyed both the movie and the book it is based on, *The Hobbit*. In my opinion, the *Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* movies are some of the best I have ever watched. *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* uses makeup techniques and costume design to convey the true look and feel of the story to the audience, helping bring out the theme of bravery in the film.

In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo Baggins is swept into a quest to reclaim the lost Dwarf Kingdom of Erebor from the dragon Smaug. Approached out of the blue by the wizard Gandalf the Grey, Bilbo finds himself joining a company of 13 dwarves led by the legendary warrior Thorin Oakenshield. Their journey takes them through treacherous lands swarming with goblins and orcs, deadly wargs, giant spiders, sinister shapeshifters and powerful sorcerers. Although their goal lies to the east in the wastelands of the Lonely Mountain, they must first escape the goblin tunnels, where Bilbo meets the creature that will change his life forever: Gollum. Alone with Gollum on the shores of an underground lake, the unassuming Bilbo Baggins discovers not only his own cleverness and courage, he gains possession of Gollum's precious ring, an object imbued with unexpected and powerful qualities.

In the scene where the orcs chase Radagast the Brown, makeup plays a significant role. While some orcs, like Azog, are created using CGI, most of the background orcs are brought to life using prosthetic makeup. This scene takes place in a wide field, where Gandalf and the others are fleeing from the orcs. Radagast rides his sleigh to lead the orcs away, and we see wargs and background orcs chasing after him. One orc, who tracked the dwarves using their scent, tries to attack them with just axes. In this moment, the first things that stand out on the orcs are their noses, scars, and ears, all of which are crafted using prosthetics. In addition, the facial makeup and paint help create a pale, blue-gray skin tone across all the orcs. This makeup is impactful because it highlights how different orcs are from other species in the movie. It also reinforces their aggressive reputation: their fierce appearance matches their violent behavior, enhancing the sense of danger they bring to the story.

Another important filmmaking element in this movie is costume design. The impact of costumes can be seen in the sequence when the dwarves arrive at Bilbo's house in the Shire with Gandalf. As each dwarf enters, we see that each one has a distinct look, different from the last. The contrast between the hobbits and dwarves is also clear in their clothing. Hobbits wear simple clothes and walk barefoot, meaning they leave no footprints, while the dwarves wear armor-like garments and boots. Additionally, the dwarves carry weapons such as axes, bows and arrows. The costume design visually shows the cultural differences between the two groups. It also emphasizes their different personalities and behaviors. The dwarves are more reserved and blunt, while the hobbits are friendly, polite and kind, even to strangers they have never met.

The central message of *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* is that anyone can be a hero, even someone who seems ordinary or unassuming. A key scene that demonstrates this is when Bilbo saves Thorin during an attack by Azog. Earlier, Bilbo was too scared to even think about fighting, but in this moment, he shows bravery. Even though he was once just an ordinary hobbit who would not hurt a fly, he steps up when it matters most. This also ties back to the ring, which becomes one reason he is hunted. In life, many people are told they cannot be something or do something, but that is not true. Nothing is impossible unless you believe it is.

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey uses a wide range of makeup and costume techniques to highlight the theme of bravery. I always enjoy watching this movie, not just because I love fantasy films and books, but also because of how well the characters are developed and how the film is directed. The filmmakers make it feel just like the book, which must have taken a long time to write given its size and complexity. While I have not watched any other movies directed by Peter Jackson, I definitely enjoyed his work here. *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* deserves five out of five stars.

CELEBRATING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BENEFITS HAWK STUDENTS continued from page 1

years or longer. We've always been a school whose community is familial and I think this sets us up pretty well to help students feel good in their day-to-day activities," she said.

Student involvement in cultural clubs can be a way to feel a sense of belonging and pride in one's own culture while also learning about others. That helped Sofia Barrera Lopez (12), who is part of a Hispanos Unidos club at Cooper.

"I am involved in the Hispanos Unidos club at Cooper. I really enjoy being part of the group and spreading knowledge to the students about our culture. Sometimes, it can be challenging to get people to join or participate, but it's all part of the journey," she said.

To improve the visibility of culture at Cooper, the school attempts to establish cultural clubs, have cultural events, implement inclusive policies, integrate multiculturalism into the curriculum and create opportunities for dialogue and celebration. Barrera Lopez has an additional idea for improvement.

"Some changes that I think the school can do is try to represent all cultures, not just the ones that have the most people," she said.

Cultural traditions, holidays and practices are important because they build a student's sense of identity, strengthen family bonds and foster a more inclusive and empathetic school community. Barrera Lopez has a good holiday she celebrates that strengthens her family bonds.

"An important holiday for my family is Christmas, since that day is when we get together and spend it as a family," she said.

What is more, Joy Flores Hernandez (12) said that describing your cultural background in school can build self-awareness, foster empathy and improve communication with other people.

"I come from a Mexican-American background, and my heritage is deeply rooted in both the traditions of my family and the experiences of growing up bicultural. It's a blend of Spanish and English," Flores Hernandez said.

Exploring meaningful cultural traditions related to food, holidays and storytelling is another way schools can foster open dialogue and respectful interaction. Flores Hernandez has an example related to her own family that can help other students learn about her culture.

"One of the most meaningful traditions for us is Dia de los Muertos. We build altars to honor loved ones who've passed, decorate with marigolds and papel picado and share pan de muerto. It's not just a holiday, it's a way of remembering, storytelling and celebrating life," she said.

Overall, staff and students agree that Cooper is making progress in celebrating cultural diversity.

"I think we're making progress. Through Latinos Unidos and other groups, we've created spaces to celebrate our culture and educate others, and it's been amazing to see students come together around that. There's still room to grow, but I've seen openness and curiosity from classmates and staff. When we share our traditions and perspectives, it helps build understanding and I'm excited to keep pushing for even more representation and respect," Flores Hernandez said.

MERGE SCHOOLS continued from page 1

may produce strong reactions and generate a wide array of emotions among not only students, but also families, staff and the community.

"In the short term, I am anticipating that there may be an increase in class size, which is not preferred," Cogswell said.

However, other teachers say there are benefits to larger classes.

"The one upside is that having larger classes can result in more diverse perspectives and experiences," DiSalvi said.

However, classes are not the only ones getting merged in this situation. If the two schools were to merge, it would also lead to sports teams and other after-school activities being merged.

"We would expect the combined band program to be around 270 students. That would most likely mean combining efforts with my colleague at Armstrong," band director Markus Hahn said.

Additionally, teachers may be worried about their job security.

"There has not been any discussion yet on future job security," DiSalvi said.

Similarly, Cogswell stated that he has not "received any reassurance that [his] position is safe."

"As a continuing-contract teacher, if there is a position open for me, I can stay in the district, but I do not have seniority in my department, and it sounds like there is likely to be some downsizing again in the future as there has been the last two years," Cogswell said.

The plan to merge the schools and create a better learning environment will be made in five phases. The first phase will be setting the foundation; the second will be refining plans and early implementation; the third will be transitioning and preparing facilities; the fourth will be improving facilities and starting a roll-out program; and the fifth will be full implementation. The entire five-phase process began in September 2025 and is planned to be finished in August 2030.

The final plan was not something that popped up out of nowhere. Instead, it came from eight months of studying by the district, which concluded that now is the time to make a change for the betterment of the district. However, to many students and staff, it seems like the plan is too abrupt and the timeline for changes is too aggressive.

"I think it seems too reactionary and not as calculated. Maybe that has to do with the urgency of the issue," Cogswell said.

COLLEGE FAIR continued from page 1

According to Abdullahi Sharif-Abdullahi (12), students who have not previously thought about college benefited from the fair.

"It helps students figure out more about college and about different colleges to get more help because some students aren't in AVID or in TRIO, so they wouldn't know about different colleges," Sharif-Abdullahi said.

Another unique aspect of the fair was the ability to meet and talk to actual representatives from different colleges. Although speaking to a college representative might have seemed scary to some high schoolers, most who attended the fair were able to roll with it.

"I was prepared because I was ready to just get information and see different colleges," Steven Cortes (11) said.

Anderson agreed with Cortes' assessment.

"I felt prepared because I just think it's something to be prepared for," Anderson said.

One thing many visitors enjoyed was the ability to learn more about schools they were not previously aware of.

"The colleges were ready to tell us about their school," Kayla Long (12) said.

Overall, the MnACC College Fair helped many Cooper students gain their confidence about the college search, whether it was knowing which one they want to go to or what resources a college will have once they get there. Walters said she was pleased with the 2025 fair after some issues with the fairs of the last few years.

"We were unable to run it last year due to conflicts, and prior to that, we did it after the ACT, so only juniors attended. The way we did it this year provided a way better turn out," Walters said.

Premier Performers

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

Aubrey Brown

By DIANA VANG
Quill staff writer

Music has been a defining part of Aubrey Brown's (12) life since elementary school.

"I started back in fifth grade because I found both the instruments and music to be interesting and pretty," Brown said.

Photo by T. GOODMAN

Nearly eight years later, Brown is still part of the band and does not plan on stopping anytime soon. One reason for that is the role band has played in helping Brown find community.

"I've enjoyed getting to know the teachers and students and learning how to play my chosen instrument," she said. "My favorite memories from being in band are making friends that'll last a lifetime and all the opportunities and experiences I wouldn't have gotten otherwise."

Currently, Brown is a dedicated member of both Concert Band and Marching Band.

"I will continue being in band until I graduate," she said.

When she is not making music, Brown enjoys a wide array of hobbies and interests.

"I enjoy art, gaming, music, training my cat and dog, and playing with my brothers," she said.

When it comes to school, Brown said she enjoys her band, chemistry and English classes.

"Band and chemistry are both easy and fun," she said, "and English is challenging but so much fun."

Looking ahead, Brown plans to major in psychology at either Charleston Southern University or the University of Minnesota. She also hopes to continue pursuing her passion for the arts.

Nick Divine

By DIANA VANG
Quill staff writer

Music has been a big part of Nick Divine's (12) journey through high school.

"I've been doing choir since fourth grade," Divine said. "It's grown on me and I love to do it for the community and singing."

Photo by T. GOODMAN

After nearly a decade in choir, it is clear that Divine's enthusiasm for the activity has not faded.

"I've enjoyed choir the most. It's been my number-one favorite and will always be," he said.

Over the years, Divine has developed countless memories through the experiences that only come from being part of a group activity like making music.

"Some of my favorite memories from choir are the teachers and the community that choir makes, and the field trips that we get the privilege to do," he said.

This year, Divine has taken on several leadership roles that keep him busy behind the scenes as well as on stage.

"Currently, I am a section leader. I keep my section on track and help my teacher with work for that section. I'm also a student director, so I'll be directing concerts in the future for one of my choirs. As robe manager, I measure the students and keep track of their robes, and as a music librarian, I help organize and label choir music," Divine said.

When he is not in rehearsal, Divine enjoys drawing, modeling and singing outside of school. His favorite classes this year are choir and AVID.

Looking ahead, Divine plans to attend University of Wisconsin, Stout to major in animation and digital media.

Lily Plahn

By DIANA VANG
Quill staff writer

Whether delivering an argument in debate or harmonizing with the Chamber Singers, Lily Plahn (12) has spent high school developing a powerful voice.

A member of Concert Choir since junior year, Plahn's love for music began long before that.

Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

"I have been a member of choir since I was in fifth grade," Plahn said. "I joined choir because I had a passion for music and singing since I was a little kid."

As part of Chamber Singers, Plahn helps bring music into the community.

"My favorite memory in choir is caroling with the other Chamber Singers," Plahn said. "We traveled to different teachers' houses and sang for them, which was fun."

Outside of music, Plahn is just as dedicated to speech and debate. As captain of both teams, Plahn is leading their peers to new heights.

"This year, we have over 40 kids on the debate team, the highest we've had since before 2020," Plahn said. "It took a lot of effort and I've given up time to help coach, but it's so worth it to watch kids fall in love with the activity."

Plahn's competitive spirit has paid off. Last year, they won the MSHSL Congressional Debate State Championship and received the MSHSL Spotlight on the Arts award.

"I'm incredibly competitive and debate has been a good outlet for that," Plahn said.

After graduation, Plahn plans to pursue legal studies and health sciences to become a paralegal specializing in medical malpractice cases.

Niko Her

By DIANA VANG
Quill staff writer

Whether he is leading the trumpet section under the Friday night lights or helping the boys volleyball team face off against their opponents, Niko Her (12) brings energy, leadership and passion to arts and athletics.

"I started Marching Band my freshman year," Her said. "I made it into the Wind Ensemble at Cooper, where participating in the Marching Band is mandatory."

Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

That experience quickly grew into something much more meaningful for Her.

"I've enjoyed getting to know so many different people and becoming a leader to teach the younger folks so many different things," he said. "I feel that teaching them has allowed me to grow also."

Her has served as a trumpet section leader for three years, helping new members learn the fundamentals of marching and musicianship.

"I really enjoy being able to teach younger folks the basics of Marching Band," he said. "I love that I have been able to grow so close to so many different people."

In addition to his musical commitments, Her is also involved in athletics. In the fall, he works as a student manager for the girls volleyball team, and in the spring, he is a captain and starting libero of the boys volleyball team. Her said last that last volleyball season went well.

"We placed second in the Tri-Metro Conference and made history as the first team in Cooper volleyball history to win a sections game," Her said.

After graduation, Her plans to major in biochemistry at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

Candidate remains compelling

The Cold War paranoia featured in the film still resonates in our contemporary times

Photo by UNITED ARTISTS

Actress Angela Lansbury (left) steals the movie in her portrayal of sinister Eleanor Shaw Iselin.

By TESSA LENOCH
Quill staff writer

History is a repeating cycle. It is exceedingly obvious how time echoes itself when you look at American political cinema, as the same societal problems and critiques seem to appear in seemingly every drama, whether in contemporary films like 2025's *One Battle After Another*, or in older ones like *The Manchurian Candidate*, which was directed by John Frankenheimer and released in 1962. With Frank Sinatra in the lead role, the cultural impact of *The Manchurian Candidate* was unmistakably large at the time and eventually led to a modern remake in 2004. Thrilling twists, shocking cinematography and great performances solidify the original *Manchurian Candidate* as a must-watch for history buffs of all kinds, whether your specialty is in film or world events.

The film begins in the midst of the Korean War. A platoon of U.S. soldiers is kidnapped by the Soviet Union and its allies with the intention of creating a human weapon. They are ultimately successful, and Raymond Shaw (Laurence Harvey), and his fellow soldiers return home without memory that they had been kidnapped and brainwashed. Upon their return, veteran Ben Marco (Frank Sinatra) begins to experience recurring nightmares of what really happened on their not-so-relaxing vacation to China: unremorseful murder at the hands of Raymond Shaw.

The Manchurian Candidate is expertly shot. Each scene's composition feels interesting and new, despite the fact that the movie is quite old. Many of the sets, angles and overall decisions were quite ahead of their time while still holding the charm of old Hollywood cinema. Compared to its 2004 remake, the original film is refreshing to view, despite the fact that it being in black and white might turn off some potential viewers. I would recommend this movie as an introduction to colorless movies if it is a new concept for a viewer, as the contrast is used expertly in this film.

Despite the obvious star whose name most people know, Frank Sinatra, I would actually argue that the most iconic performance in *The Manchurian Candidate* is that of Angela Lansbury, who plays Raymond Shaw's overbearing mother. Equal parts irritating and menacing, every moment she is on screen, she steals the scene completely. She is a bit cartoonishly evil, yet the turns her character takes are still somehow unexpected.

If you are looking for patterns in films featuring political critiques, it is good to start early. While it is not the most topical film, the overarching themes and ideas in *The Manchurian Candidate* are still just as sharp as they were in 1962. *The Manchurian Candidate* is the kindest, bravest, warmest and most wonderful film I have ever known. I rate it a four-and-a-half out of five stars.

Blood Orange triumphs on *Negro Swan*

Musician Devonte Hynes combines alternative, R&B genres to make an instant classic

By MANAL BARE
Quill staff writer

Have you ever heard someone explain your struggles over a gorgeous melody? Let me introduce you to Devonté Hynes, the man behind Blood Orange. The British artist released his 2018 album, *Negro Swan*, through Domino Recording Company. *Negro Swan* is an alternative indie and R&B record that dives deep into his creative brain. This album stands out in Hynes' already flawless discography not only for its artistry but also for its powerful exploration of the Black and queer experience.

Negro Swan features one of the most beautiful album covers I have ever seen. The photo shows a young Black man sitting outside the window of a car, wearing bright white angel wings. The shot, taken by photographer Ana Kraš, perfectly captures the tension between vulnerability and grace of the young Black experience. Swans are often seen as symbols of transformation, but the "Black swan" carries a darker, misunderstood connotation. Hynes uses this double meaning to mirror the album's themes.

Throughout *Negro Swan*, snippets of conversation from trans activist Janet Mock remind listeners that healing happens through community. One of the best examples of this is the track "Family." Mock speaks over a smooth, neo-soul melody with subtle jazz undertones, saying, "We are not limited by biology, we get to make ourselves, and we get to make our families." Even though Hynes expresses the identity struggles within the queer community, he also shows how people can look toward one another and build chosen families, proving that biology does not define us and that we can become something even greater through love and acceptance. This is one of the many ways *Negro Swan* teaches listeners self-acceptance.

The song "Charcoal Baby" perfectly captures Hynes' ability to express vulnerability through both lyrics and sound. He sings, "No one wants to be the odd one out at times," a line that really captures the isolation from society one feels if they are from a marginalized community. The track blends soft rhythms with gentle guitar, reflecting the slow process of self-acceptance. Similarly, in "Saint," Hynes sings, "You're a saint in the face of your faults," offering us grace and communicating the fact that we need to have compassion for ourselves. The ambience of these two songs feels spiritual in a way, highlighting Hynes' gift for writing music.

Overall, *Negro Swan* is easily a five-star release because it is a deeply emotional and innovative album that challenges how we think about identity, vulnerability and belonging. Through his lyrics, experimental production and storytelling, Devonté Hynes creates a space where pain transforms into art. Every track feels intentional, carrying a message for those who have ever felt different or unseen. This album reminds listeners that healing happens through community and oneself, which can help us all find strength. I believe everyone should listen to *Negro Swan* at least once for the comfort and understanding it offers. This album earns five out of five stars.

MEDIA CENTER WELCOMES NEW CLERK continued from page 2

arise."

One common element that runs through each of Lange's days is working with people. She is continually helping both students and staff find what they need to succeed.

"I provide a space for students and staff to work," she said. "I work with staff for troubleshooting issues and pulling resources for them, or directing them to what they are looking for. It's similar with students: troubleshooting devices [and] finding and pulling resources."

Sometimes, Lange's work with students goes beyond their classroom needs.

"I've helped a student with their resume and found resources that I could print and give to that student," Lange said. "I try to meet people where they are and provide support however I can."

When it comes to what fills the Media Center shelves, Lange follows a thoughtful process that balances district guidelines with student interests.

"There is a selection policy in place throughout the district and all materials have to fit into the selection criteria," she said. "Along with meeting those qualifications, we look for books that are popular, interesting to students and add something new to the Media Center that we don't have."

Lange is always on the lookout for titles that spark excitement and she loves when students recommend books or series they think others would enjoy.

Outside of books, Lange also works with the Media Center's access to digital materials.

"The Media Center website has links to databases that are free to use as Minnesota residents," she said. "There have been times when the Media Specialist, Ms. Lurie, has gone into classrooms to provide instruction on how to use them. Since so much of my day is supervising, I'm not able to go into classrooms, but I can help students when they come in and direct them to those resources."

One of Lange's biggest goals for the year is to make the Media Center feel more vibrant and student-centered.

"I would like to add more to the library visually, like more signs, posters, student art and book displays throughout," she said. "I want it to be a space that feels alive, somewhere students want to come even if they don't have to."

She envisions the Media Center as a hub for collaboration, creativity and curiosity. Whether students are doing research for a project, finding their next favorite read or just taking a breather between classes, Lange wants them to feel at home.

"I like the community that comes with being in a school," she said. "Each day is different and I never really know what kind of interactions or challenges the day will bring. That's what keeps it interesting."

Fall play preps for December 4 debut

Cast, crew promise that *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* will be highly entertaining to audiences of all ages

Photo by ROSE LONG-LOHNES

Students involved in the production run through a scene during a November 5 after-school rehearsal.

By JA'LAYIAH MCCLINTON
Quill staff writer

The Cooper fall play, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, debuts next Thursday, December 4 at 7 p.m. There are additional shows on December 5-6 at 7 p.m.

The play is an adaptation of the Washington Irving story about Ichabod Crane, a schoolmaster who comes to the town of Sleepy Hollow to teach. He falls for the wealthy Katrina Van Tassel, sparking a rivalry with the local hero, Brom Bones. The play follows Ichabod's pursuit of Katrina, his interactions with Brom and his infamous ride home on Halloween night, where he is pursued by the Headless Horseman.

The students involved in the cast and crew had different points of view on what makes *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* special and why audiences should see Cooper's production.

Chaokhang Vang (11), who plays Ichabod Crane, said he loves the "group effort" that brings the show to life and especially enjoys the wedding dance scene.

"The most challenging part of rehearsal wasn't dancing but rather trying to act out love," Vang said. "It's kind of hard to act out an emotion so raw, but the trick is to respond like how you would love someone. So, it's more of reacting rather than acting."

One element that Vang said makes the hard work worth it is his castmates.

"Honestly, working with the cast is probably the most enjoyable part. If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't find it as enjoyable. Yes, I do enjoy doing scenes, but that's also because the cast are amazing people," Vang said.

Playing the other lead alongside Vang is Mariah Washington (12), who stars as Katrina Van Tassel. Washington said she admires how seriously everyone takes their roles. Washington encourages everyone to come see the show, even if they have never before gone to live theater.

"Even if you don't like plays, this one is engaging and lighthearted," Washington said.

Also performing in the play is Tyler Moewes-Bystrom (9), who plays Dirk Vanderflat. He described rehearsals as "the highlight of [his] day."

"I am called for rehearsals almost every day of the week, which is very fun but also very tiring. Luckily, I don't have any other activities for school, so I manage to get my work done," he said.

According to Moewes-Bystrom, blocking scenes has been essential in helping him build confidence on stage.

"It may be a bit repetitive, but I find it really fun going through scenes, learning what to do and how it feels to finally understand what is happening," Moewes-Bystrom said. "I love working with the director, choreographers and everyone else because of how friendly and kind they are to me."

Another ninth grader in the show is Emerson Beeck (9), who appears in several ensemble roles. Beeck noted that the teamwork between the cast and crew is essential. Beeck also said the voice lesson scene is a favorite aspect of the play.

"It's so, so funny, and then, after that, we dance," Beeck said. "It's really fun."

Also in several roles is Abby Vetter (9), who plays Mother Van Pynner, a farmer and a congregation member. Vetter said rehearsals feel like getting together with "a giant friend group."

"The experience in rehearsal so far has been amazing. It has been so fun to do," Vetter said.

Vetter added that the work of the behind-the-scenes crew has been the most critical element of the show's success.

"The stage crew and the tech crew help bring the show to life with the props, sets and lighting," Vetter said.

Playing a character named Dame Van Winkle is Akiane Willis (10). Willis said she has learned to balance schoolwork with rehearsals and appreciates the tech crew for making everything run smoothly.

"The crew is amazing and very helpful," Willis said. "They are an amazing group and should not be brushed over."

Another cast member is Alivia Shannon (9), who plays Old Man Codger along with several other small roles. Shannon said the choreography is "so fun" and praised the directors for their kindness and creativity.

"I don't know why, but practicing different movements and being creative makes it all the more fun," Shannon said. "It's visual and adds so much depth to the character and overall story."

Also taking part in the play is Annika Nogle (10), who plays one of the gossips. Nogle said the chemistry between the cast and crew has made "every rehearsal a blast."

"We collaborate as a cast and crew every day to put this play together. We collaborate during school to work on lines and choreography to become even more prepared for rehearsal and we collaborate with the crew to make the stage truly come to life. The dynamic between the cast feels like we have been friends forever. We never feel judged with each other and are always working our butts off to put together a truly magical performance," Nogle said.

Although the premiere of the play is just around the corner, Nogle said she is looking forward to the rest of this year's Cooper productions and encourages other Hawks to get involved with theater.

"If you are considering auditioning for the play or musical in the future, do it," Nogle said. "You will not regret it. Work hard, put in the work and you totally got this. Remember to enjoy yourself when auditioning, though there's nothing you need to worry about because no one is there to judge you. They are only there to support you."

Marching Band closes out season with indoor show

Performance group adds several new songs to the setlist it played during the 2025 football season halftime shows

By TYLER GOODMAN
Quill staff writer

The Cooper Marching Band had their 10th annual indoor concert on Saturday, November 1 in the auditorium as their final hurrah to end the season.

The indoor concert is not just for performing. It is also intended to serve as a silent auction to raise funds for the Marching Band.

During the indoor concert, the Marching Band performed a show that is similar to their halftime show, which features songs from Katy Perry, Green Day, Lady Gaga and more.

"A lot of the songs we played this year just made me want to sing along. *Party Rock Anthem* I thought was a lot of fun," Raiden Southwell (11) said.

The selection of songs is not just chosen at random. Instead, drum majors submit themes that the band members can vote on.

"For the Marching Band season, I try and have band members choose as much of the music as possible. Drum Majors submit five show themes and proposed titles to me in May," Marching Band director Markus Hahn said.

However, the band plays additional songs that are not in the usual song show list during the indoor concert. Hahn said that, after their main show, "we add additional songs to the indoor concert." These songs were not suggested by Hahn; instead, he "asked each section to provide [him with] some music to check out."

Photo by MARKUS HAHN

The annual concert took place in the Cooper auditorium on November 1.

Additionally, each section of the Marching Band chooses their own feature song to play after their main show. For example, the low brass section feature was *Phantom of the Opera* by Andrew Lloyd Webber for the fourth year in a row.

"The low brass *Phantom of the Opera* is a great arrangement and they played it really well," Hahn said.

Many of the seniors were happy with how the indoor concert turned out. However, they agreed that they will miss the Marching Band. One said they would even describe the group as family.

"It's like leaving behind a family," Niko Her (12) said.

For the seniors, the concert marked their last performance with the Marching Band during their last year of school. According to Gavin Otero (12), this combination of realizations feels "kind of surreal." Otero added that he will miss the people around him in the Marching Band.

"This is my last time doing it with them specifically, so it's just kind of crazy," he said.

The seniors are vocal about the community and atmosphere of the Marching Band, which was on full display at the indoor concert.

"This is a great community of people," Joseph Watkins (12) said. "This is the last Marching Band event, so I know I'm not going to be in Marching Band ever again. It's both freeing and also, like, sad that I don't get to be in Marching Band anymore."

Many Marching Band members were pleased with how their performance went at the final show.

"It was fun," JJ DeGroot (10) said. "This year has been great. Everyone's improved a lot and I think that this year is probably one of the best years we've had."

However, band members were also disappointed that it was the end of the Marching Band season. DeGroot said he is sad he "won't get to play with the seniors again."

The seniors were not the only ones who were glad with how the show turned out. Hahn was also happy with how it went and proud of his band.

"The band has worked really hard and I couldn't be more pleased with how the indoor concert and the season as a whole went," Hahn said.

What is more, Hahn had specific praise for the drumline.

"The drumline was really young and inexperienced this year. The oldest member is in 10th grade. They stepped up in a huge way," he said.

However, the drumline was not the only group getting the spotlight from Hahn.

"The clarinets showed a tremendous amount of growth from last year," Hahn said. "That was really exciting."

Along with all of the Marching Band members, especially the seniors, Hahn agreed that this year was another fun one for the band.

"Every season is a different collection of individuals and a different dynamic. I'll remember this for being a really fun year in a line of fun years. We've had a good run of exceptional people in Marching Band working together and putting out a fantastic product," Hahn said.

Mielke makes creativity key in art classes

Art teacher celebrates the opportunity to help all students express themselves

Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Mielke works with students in her first period Painting class.

By DIANA SANCHEZ MORALES
Quill staff writer

A day in the life of an art teacher can be busy. This definitely is the case with Claire Mielke, who is a Painting and IB Art teacher.

Mielke said she enjoys being able to help students pursue art, watch them grow and guide them toward a creative career. Her students agree that Mielke is a teacher who establishes clear expectations, structures interesting activities, asks open-ended questions and uses many strategies to encourage participation.

Breana Beenken (12), a student in the IB Art class, said Mielke has influenced her and many other students in class.

"Ms. Mielke has been a great influence on the students she teaches as she encourages creativity in all her classes," Beenken said.

For Mielke, the most rewarding part of teaching art is witnessing students' growth and the discovery of their unique voices through the creative process. She especially likes knowing she has made a positive difference in a student's life and contributed to society's future.

"The most rewarding part of teaching is seeing my students complete the course, receive the credits needed for graduation and to see them walk across the stage knowing that I was a small part of their journey," Mielke said.

Mielke has helped many students pursue art in school and after high school. She said she provides encouragement, acts as a mentor and offers a safe space for students to explore their emotions and potential through art. Mielke said this support can lead to the discovery of a life-long passion, help students develop critical thinking skills and provide students with a pathway to a creative career.

"I have had many students pursue art after high school. At the moment, I have one student at MCAD [Minneapolis College of Art and Design] and quite a few students have gone to do graphic design. I also have a few students in college currently for art education. It's an amazing feeling knowing that I impacted their future goals in life," she said.

Mielke supports students who want a creative career by making them study established artists, different movements and diverse disciplines in order to broaden their own perspective, spark new ideas and provide inspiration that can be integrated into their own unique vision. Mielke said she hopes her art students delve deeper into their chosen themes, providing a richer, more complex understanding of their subject matter.

"I love helping students realize the possibilities that visual art has to offer. My advanced classes will be doing quick research projects on art careers as well this year," Mielke said.

NO PHONE POLICIES

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sarily ban phones. While they are distracting, the phones themselves are not bad. They can be extremely helpful, especially in emergencies.

I believe there are different ways to approach this problem and Cooper generally seems to have a healthy and reasonable no-phone policy. In effect, we have our phones but there are set times when we need to put them away. In the end, this problem should not be viewed as educators versus students because teachers and staff members do want what is best for students. We just need to learn how to understand each other.

Cheer squads ready for winter

Student interest sparked the creation of two cheerleading teams for the new season

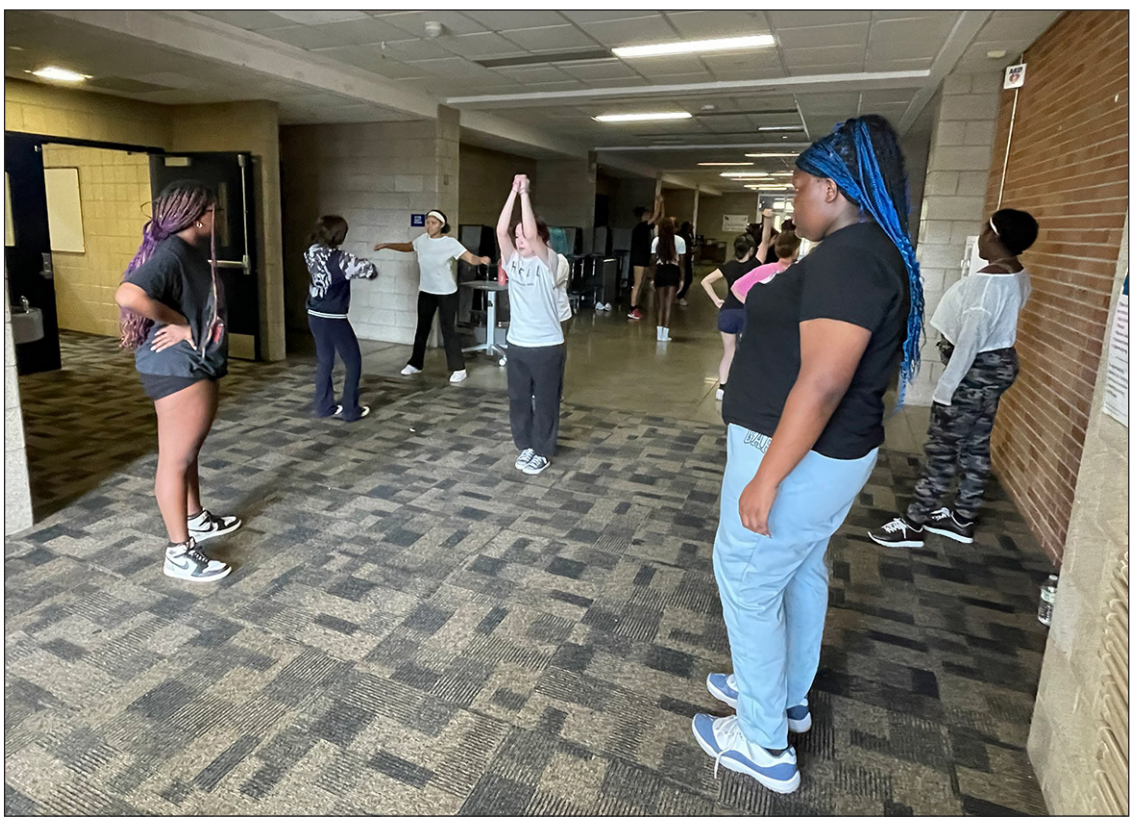

Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Hawks run through routines during tryouts for the cheerleading team after school on October 24.

By JOHANNA GONZALEZ
Quill staff writer

There are many after-school sports programs at Cooper, including football, basketball and track. However, one program that is associated with other sports and is a sport itself is cheerleading.

The cheerleading squad is currently heading into its winter season. According to head coach Hallie Gossell, the winter team will consist of an orange squad and a blue squad.

"We are doing two teams: one for the girls teams and one for the boys," Gossell said. "There will be opportunities for every athlete to cheer at either team's games."

Blue squad member Sofia Barrera Lopez (12) is looking forward to the start of the season.

"I've been part of the cheer team for two years. I've always wanted to try stunting and have something to do after school, which made me try out for the cheer team," she said.

While two years is a long time, some other members have been on the team even longer.

"I've been on the team for three years because I'm a dancer and it looked so much fun. I have wanted to be one since my sisters were one," Marnida McCrownsey (12), who is on the blue squad, said.

Celebrating their first chance to be on the team is blue squad member Penny Beardlocks (9).

"This is my first time on the cheer team and I decided to join so I can get more involved in school and get out of my comfort zone. Another reason was because I like dancing and I also wanted to wear a cute uniform," Beardlocks said.

With the season now underway, the cheerleading team practices are from 3:30-6 p.m. after school in the front foyer.

"A typical practice for us is warming up by running laps, exercising, stretching, going over cheers, weight room and practicing stunts," Melvina Blay (12), who is on the orange squad, said.

According to blue squad member Ajionna Jones (12), cheerleading practices are challenging.

"A typical practice looks like a lot of hard work," she said. "We get ourselves together, then do our warmups and stretches while listening to our favorite tunes. Afterwards, we may stunt or cheer or practice in any competition we have."

In addition to their winter performances, the cheerleading team also performs during the fall season. Primarily, they perform at home and away football games, and at home basketball games.

"An upcoming event that I am excited for is the first basketball game of the season. Since we have so many more people compared to last year, I am excited to see how we will all do in the first few basketball games," blue squad member Catalina Montejo Silvestre (11) said.

In addition to their appearances at games, the cheerleaders also perform at other school events.

"We perform at pepfests, so we usually prepare in advance. We learn the dance or cheer we are going to perform, put it to the music and do our best," Barrera Lopez said.

During a typical performance, Jones said the team tries to create "magic."

"[We have] huge facial expressions, loud cheer and spirit, tight movements and lots of stunting," she said.

In addition to their appearances at games and pepfests, the squads also take part in cheer competitions.

"Me and the team are looking forward to our Stomp and Shake Competition," Jones said. "It's a form of cheering. We're going to have so much fun and I'm really looking forward to it as it's the first competition Cooper has done in a while."

Before the winter season starts, they held cheer tryouts on October 24.

"[I was] looking forward to basketball cheer tryouts," Barrera Lopez said. "[I was] excited to see all the new girls and what they are going to bring to the team."

With the two squads now set, the cheer team is looking forward to working together.

"I enjoy working with the cheer team because all of the girls and coaches are so nice and supportive. Everyone has a really positive attitude and tries their best. It's a really good environment," Beardlocks said.

There are many benefits when it comes to being on the cheer team. One is having a chance to collaborate with other students.

"I enjoy working with the cheer team because all of the girls are super supportive and helpful, especially since I'm new to cheer. They can be very patient and kind when we're learning cheers," Theresa Blabuh (9), who is on the orange team, said.

Another benefit to being on the cheer team is learning life skills.

"I benefit from being in the team by learning new skills. I used to be soft spoken, but now, in cheer, you have to project your voice. This has helped me outside of cheer when I have to do presentations," Barrera Lopez said.

According to blue squad member Jaeda Wiley (12), the team also benefits its members because of the family atmosphere that they create.

"I personally enjoy working with the cheer team because we are a family. We are with each other approximately four out of five days a week. We grow bonds and connections with almost every girl. As Cooper Hawks cheerleaders, it's our job to uplift and keep a positive and happy spirit, and we really show that within our team," Wiley said.

Students interested in trying out for future cheer teams are encouraged to look out for posters on the school bulletin boards or informational slides during advisory.

"I want to encourage more people to join cheer. It's not only a one-gender sport; anyone can do it. Cheer may look easy, but it's not. There is the commitment of going to practice and showing up to games. You also have to be in charge of knowing the cheers and practicing on your own," Barrera Lopez said.

Vikings have mixed results at season midpoint

The team's owners, coaches, players pin their hopes on rookie quarterback J.J. McCarthy

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

The Vikings season has consisted of many ups and downs. Now that we are just beyond the midpoint of the season, the Vikings stand at 4-4. The team showed promise early on but has struggled to maintain a consistent rhythm due to the early injury of rookie starting quarterback J.J. McCarthy.

This season, Viking's fans placed great hope in McCarthy as the team's new quarterback. After beating the Chicago Bears in the season opener, McCarthy suffered a high ankle sprain during the team's week-two loss to the Arizona Cardinals, which led to him missing the next five games.

It was at this point that the Vikings were forced to start backup quarterback Carson Wentz. After having played for six different teams in six consecutive seasons, Wentz made his debut with the Vikings in the team's win against the Cincinnati Bengals in September.

Wentz was a big fan of the Vikings during his childhood, and by starting to play for the team, he was fulfilling a dream.

"It's pretty surreal, honestly. When you're a kid, you have those jerseys, you watch those players and you dream of being there one day," Wentz said in an Instagram post.

During the five games he started, the Vikings went 2-3, with Wentz throwing for 1,216 passing yards, six touchdowns and five interceptions. Unfortunately, during a game against the Cleveland Browns in London in week five, he started suffering from a left-shoulder dislocation. Despite the injury, he played on for a couple more games, but the pain in the shoulder significantly impacted his mechanics and mobility. Eventually, he had to undergo an operation. He was placed on the list of injured players and can no longer play for the rest of the season.

Fortunately, the Vikings were able to turn back to J.J. McCarthy, who was fully recovered from his ankle injury to once again lead the team for the rest of the season. His first game back saw him rekindle Vikings fans' hopes for a winning season as the team beat the division-leading Detroit Lions 27-24 on November 2.

As the race for the title of NFC North continues, Minnesota is still fighting for a playoff spot. Vikings are a talented and determined team that is still searching for the stability and execution needed to turn this potential into success.

Cooper Competitors

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

Richard Baysah

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

For Richard Baysah (12), soccer is more than a sport: it is a lifelong passion. He began playing soccer at the age of six, with his father as his mentor. Today, he is not only a member of the Cooper team, but also leads them as their captain during the fall season.

"I'd say it's going pretty good. Although we do have our ups and downs," Baysah said.

Photo by T. GOODMAN

What he likes most about his sport is the new connections that he is able to create with other players. Baysah loves getting to know new people and said soccer is a good place to do this.

The greatest memories Baysah has with the team are the bus rides. He also has good memories of the goals he has scored.

However, soccer does not stop after the fall season for Baysah. During winter, he plays club soccer and said his last season went well. In fact, his club won the Minnesota Cup and the team placed second in their league. In the spring, he remains active with his soccer club while also engaging in recruitment, meeting players from other clubs and building connections.

Soccer is not Baysah's only hobby. Outside of school, he plays the drums, runs and recently became the sound engineer at his church.

At school, his favorite class is AVID because he has built a strong bond with the teacher, Brooke Schaffer.

"She's always looking to help me and support me in my school work," Baysah said.

Baysah's plans for the future are to go to college and major in sales or marketing. He hopes to earn both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

Alpha Combay

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

Alpha Combay (12) competes in several sports at Cooper. Since fourth grade, he has been dedicated to football during the fall sports season.

"I picked it at first because I felt inspired by a game-winning play I saw at an old Cooper football game," Combay said.

Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

What he enjoys most about football is earning acknowledgment from the people around him.

"[I enjoy] the slow process of gaining respect," Combay said.

In fact, the respect Combay has earned can be seen through the fact that he got an award for working the hardest in the summer for football.

During the spring, Combay competes in track and field, specializing in the 4x100 relay. Last season, Combay said his relay made it to the state meet and placed seventh.

In school, Combay said his favorite class is AVID. He said he enjoys this class mainly because of the friends he has in that class.

"I have so many friends in one classroom," he said.

Outside of school, he enjoys playing video games like *College Football 26*, *Hollow Knight* and *Madden 26*. Sometimes, Combay also likes to draw.

Next year, he plans to attend a four-year college, where he is considering majoring in cybersecurity or information security analysis. At the same time, he hopes to continue his journey in athletics, especially football.

"Because it's been a part of my life for too long and the lessons I've learned have improved me as a person," Combay said.

Kelvin Kallon

By TESSA LENOCH
Quill staff writer

Kelvin Kallon (12) is an athlete who plays football in the fall and runs track in the spring. Kallon leads by example, valuing the brotherhood he finds in his teams.

"Sports have always been a big part of who I am as a person," Kallon said.

Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Kallon has had great success as an athlete on both the football team and the track team. His favorite memory was his first varsity game in football against Buffalo, which coincidentally was on his birthday. On top of that, he has set new records for Cooper through the track team.

"I was a part of the 4x100 relay team that went to state and broke the school record that stood for seven years previously. It was a pretty big achievement," he said.

In the winter, Kallon participates in AAU track, but was unable to run as much as he would have liked last year.

"Unfortunately, I didn't run much because I suffered a hamstring tear," Kallon said.

In school, his favorite classes align with his pursuit of success.

"My favorite classes are Advanced Weight Training and AVID. Weight training keeps me fit and in shape while AVID is getting me ready for college," Kallon said.

Kallon said he wants to balance sports with his future career.

"[I'll] hopefully [continue] to play sports while pursuing a degree in the STEM field," Kallon said.

Outside of school, Kallon works. In the free time he finds, he enjoys watching Netflix, traveling and hanging out with his friends.

Edmund Hettle

By TESSA LENOCH
Quill staff writer

Edmund Hettle (12) has been a staple in the Cooper soccer community since his freshman year, but his sports career started much earlier.

"I've been playing soccer for about eight years now," Hettle said.

Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Hettle started playing soccer in order to hang out with his friend. Since then, he has been able to make new connections.

"I play soccer because one of my best friends played it with me," Hettle said. "The thing I've enjoyed most about fall soccer is meeting new people and getting better."

As a long-time player, Hettle said he enjoys helping out new members of the team, especially since it helps bolster the sense of community.

"I help some underclassmen sometimes with adjusting to the new environment," he said.

According to Hettle, his favorite soccer-related memory was the team's trip to Duluth, where he was able to see Lake Superior.

In school, Hettle said he enjoys his weightlifting and chemistry classes because of his teachers and classmates.

After high school, Hettle does not intend on continuing to play soccer.

"I will be getting older but I will always keep watching it," he said.

Outside of school, Hettle enjoys fashion and video games. After he graduates, Hettle is planning to attend college, where he will pursue a career in engineering or take courses to become a firefighter.