



Getting involved is a key part of creating a community at school

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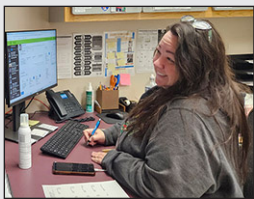


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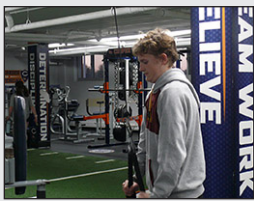


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Weight room is open after school

Any Cooper student can make use of the weight room after school on Mondays through Thursdays to pursue their fitness goals

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FALLOUT FELT LOCALLY DURING U.S. SHUTDOWN



Photo by MIKE HAND

The government shutdown that started on October 1 was eventually ended on November 12 after a vote in the Senate.

By TYLER GOODMAN
Quill staff writer

The government shutdown that started October 1 and ended November 12 was the longest in U.S. history.

“There have been other government shutdowns. This has been the longest, so it has probably been the most dramatic. In other words, no, I

don’t think anything else compares,” social studies teacher Christopher DiSalvi said.

The shutdown had many different impacts on the country. According to *The Guardian*, the shutdown caused around 800 U.S.-linked flights to be canceled in November in order to decrease air traffic. Additionally, many people were financially affected by the shut-

down, including air traffic controllers, who did not receive pay for their work during the shutdown.

“When paychecks ended, people were not incentivized to go to work. As a result, some flights were canceled and there was a fear that the ones that weren’t canceled were being put in danger by underpaid, over-stressed workers,” DiS-

alvi said.

A similar situation was faced by federal workers during the shutdown. *MAPE* reported that the government shutdown affected many Minnesotans, including 18,000 federal workers who not only faced work without pay but also layoffs.

“Not all federal workers were getting a paycheck, yet

Social studies teachers gave students a chance to analyze the shutdown's impact

they were expected to go to work,” DiSalvi said.

According to *BBC News*, the initial cause of the government shutdown was Democrats not letting Republicans pass a funding bill due to the increased healthcare costs that would fall on consumers if the bill passed. Specifically, Democrats wanted to ensure that expiring healthcare subsidies would be renewed. Additionally, Democrats wanted to restore what was cut from Medicaid by the Trump administration. For their part, Republicans contended that they wanted to save taxpayers money and get rid of waste and fraud.

“The government shut down because both the House of Representatives and Senate need to approve a spending bill to send to the president to be signed,” DiSalvi said.

Before the shutdown took hold, *BBC News* reports that there was an effort to avoid it through a stopgap spending bill that was passed in the House of Representatives. However, the bill did not make it through the Senate.

“Is this worth shutting a government down over and risking people not getting paychecks and not getting critical social services? At the same time, should we just let those costs get higher on so many

SHUTDOWN
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Foods students engage in cupcake competition

The winner of the Halloween-themed event in Anna Olson's Foods 1 classes was a treat named "Ghosts in the Graveyard"

By TESSA LENOCH
Quill staff writer

The Foods 1 classes at Cooper ended quarter one with a dramatic conflict: an all-out cupcake war.

The competition, which took place on October 31 during periods two, three and six, encapsulated the lessons learned throughout the quarter as students baked and decorated their own themed cupcakes in hopes of impressing a panel of judges. Inspired by the show of the same name, the cupcake war is a Cooper tradition that has found its place in Family and Consumer Science (FACS) classes throughout the years.

This year’s Halloween theme allowed students to get creative, as they toed the line between spooky and edible. Anna Olson, the Foods teacher at Cooper, said the war is a fun and educational process.

“[Students] learn teamwork, organization, creativity and time management. I let them pick their own cooking group to work with, so it is interesting if they pick friends. Sometimes, that doesn’t work out so well,” Olson said.

The process behind the set-up of the competition is designed so that students and staff work together to create an enjoyable and fair tournament.

“Everything has to be done in the classroom and edible. Voting is done by the class: students give me topics and we vote. Judging is done by staff at this building and they look for creativity, quality of the cupcake and written description,” Olson said.

Taylor Kukachka (12), who was part of the team that won with their cupcake “Ghosts in the Graveyard,” said the experience was fun despite the challenges her team faced.

“We had less people since people were out sick. On decorating, there were only two of us. We accidentally added more leveling to our mix, but we added more vanilla extract to cover it up,” she said.



Photo by ANNA OLSON

Various Cooper teachers were brought in to serve as guest judges.

When it comes to her team, Kukachka said they did not have a hard time balancing creativity and flavor.

“We made a chocolate base with vanilla frosting. If you mess up your leveling, you can easily cover it up,” she said.

Business teacher and DECA advisor Andrew Nau was one of the judges for the cupcake war. As a judge, he had to set up some personal marks for stu-

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Holiday celebrations abound as 2025 nears its end

The weeks during which students head off to their winter break feature different religious observances, traditions

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

Cooper students and staff are just about to start a two-week break. One primary reason for the break is that it allows everyone to celebrate the many religious and cultural holidays that fall over the next few weeks. While some of these holidays are more emphasized in American society than others as the year draws to a close, they all involve beliefs and practices that stretch far back in history.

Christianity

In Christianity, December holidays are first celebrated through a period named Advent. During these four weeks, people are getting ready for Christmas, which is the day of Jesus’ birth for Christians. Historically, several traditions are celebrated during the Advent, like lighting candles on an Advent wreath, using an Advent calendar to count down the

days until Christmas or engaging in prayers and reflection.

On Christmas day, some Christians attend church services like midnight mass. One of the most widespread Christian traditions is to decorate one’s house with a Christmas tree featuring lights, ornaments and a star on the top. A scene from the birth of Jesus is also often depicted at the foot of the tree. Additionally, on December 25, people share special meals and exchange gifts with family and friends.

Islam

Muslims do not celebrate Christmas and there is no major Islamic holiday that always falls in December. However, depending on the Islamic calendar, which is based upon the cycle of the moon, some celebrations can sometimes occur in December. One of those celebrations is Ashura. For Sunni Muslims, Ashura is a day of voluntary fasting and for performing acts of worship. Meanwhile, for Shia Muslims, it is a day of mourning

with public processions and sermons.

Another Islamic holiday that can occur in December is Laylat al-Raghaib. This is a night of prayer to celebrate the conception of the Prophet Muhammad. The next time this event will take place will be on December 22, 2026, a date close to Christmas.

Buddhism

For Buddhists, the main December holiday is Bodhi Day, which occurred this year on December 8. This celebration commemorates the Buddha’s enlightenment. It is a day on which people practice quiet reflection and meditation, chant sutras and perform acts of kindness. Some Buddhists also decorate their houses with lights or candles to symbolize the journey to enlightenment.

It is important to note that some Buddhists, particularly in Western countries, celebrate the sec-

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Hawk seniors starting search for scholarships

Local, national money available to students who take time to complete applications

By JOHANNA GONZALEZ
Quill staff writer

Seniors starting the college application process are also beginning to search for scholarships to make college more affordable.

According to Mark Rosenblum, who oversees Cooper’s College and Career Center, the school attempts to keep students informed of the many scholarship opportunities available.

“[Cooper staff] promote and provide [a] list [of scholarships] on Schoology to the 12th grade class. Also on this list are links to a couple of clearing house websites who have vetted many scholarship programs throughout the country,” he said.

Of the many scholarship websites available, Rosenblum said one to check out is BOLD.org.

“The best search site for scholarships that I have found is called BOLD.org. You have to join for free, but they have many scholarships and they have search capabilities within their website,” he said.

One issue that sometimes comes up when searching for scholarships online is whether the scholarships are legitimate.

“I feel like the best answer to this is asking if it passes the sniff test. If it smells funny, or your gut makes you question something about it, I would definitely ask more questions or skip that one. Trust your gut,” Rosenblum said.

Another option for checking a scholarship’s validity is seeing Rosenblum in the College and Career Center.

“We offer one-on-one help,” he said. “Occasionally, we will work with a group but mostly individuals.”

The resources available in the College and Career Center can be tailored to specific student needs.

“This is a little tricky as students all need a different level or amount of help. Some things are very easy to answer and some things, like filling out applications, take more time. The resources are here for those who need them,” Rosenblum said.

When it comes to the process of matching student interests, backgrounds or intended majors to scholarship opportunities, Rosenblum encouraged seniors to be prepared to do some preparation and research first.

“We try to encourage students to research the opportunities and figure out what they’re up against before they invest too much time in the process of filling out the application,” Rosenblum said.

Another aspect for seniors to consider when looking for scholarships is balancing local options with national ones.

“We have access to VFW scholarships, civic organizations like the Lions Clubs, family scholarships and several others that we promote in the spring,” Rosenblum said. “The bigger, national scholarships usually have bigger pots of money, but it’s harder to set yourself apart from others when the pool of applicants is bigger. The local scholarships typically don’t offer as much money, but the applicant pools are much smaller and may therefore be easier to get.”

Also playing a role in the schol-

SCHOLARSHIPS

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Peterson becomes new yearbook advisor

English teacher takes on the position after former advisor Andrea Obranovich shifted to the role of IBMYP Coordinator



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Annika Peterson (left) guides yearbook staff member Tessa Lenocho (12) through the design of one of her pages.

By JOHANNA GONZALEZ
Quill staff writer

English teacher Ms. Peterson has taken on a new role this school year as Cooper’s yearbook teacher and advisor. This position became available after former yearbook teacher and advisor Andrea Obranovich became the school’s new IBMYP Coordinator.

“Last year, when Ms. Obranovich decided to step into the role of IB Coordinator, she knew she would have to find a replacement to teach yearbook. She mentioned this to me, and I was excited by the idea of taking on a new class. I wanted the chance to teach an elective and be more involved in the overall culture of our school,” Peterson said.

Outside of the yearbook class, Peterson is an English 11 and English 12 teacher.

“I was not involved in yearbook or journalism in high school or college, but I did help edit and publish my high school literary magazine. This helped me learn some of the necessary skills of editing, collaborating and marketing a product to my school community,” Peterson said.

Yearbook is an elective class that juniors and seniors can take. Peterson said she is enjoying the process of teaching the elective class and addressing the many questions students have about putting the yearbook together.

“My experience teaching yearbook has been great so far. At the be-

ginning, I was a little overwhelmed by so many new things, but having Ms. Obranovich as a resource has been incredible. She really helped me get set up and prepared for the new role,” Peterson said.

According to Peterson, one thing she has been trying to emphasize with students is the importance of taking ownership of the yearbook.

“My vision for this yearbook is to support students in creating something they are truly excited about and proud of,” Peterson said.

With yearbook being a creative elective class, the students are given the ability to do a lot of independent work.

“I feel it is important to let students lead in the creative vision, but I see my

role as helping make sure we capture a wide and diverse representation of the entire student body. I want everyone at Cooper to feel represented by the yearbook,” Peterson said.

In order to make sure the diversity of student life at Cooper is fully represented, Peterson has her yearbook students cover the many activities, clubs and groups that call Cooper home.

“One of my favorite things about Cooper is how many clubs, activities and groups we have for students to join. We want to cover all of these wonderful opportunities in the yearbook,” she said.

One important aspect of the class according to Peterson is getting all of the juniors and seniors on the staff to collaborate. While this can be complicated at first, she said the staff is doing a good job of getting comfortable with each other.

“Collaborating with the yearbook staff has been my favorite part of the job. The students in yearbook are creative, enthusiastic and involved in so many things at Cooper: I love seeing their passion and the way that shows up on the page,” Peterson said.

Making the yearbook class unique is that the students will be producing a tangible product at the end of it. Knowing this, Peterson encourages her students to think about the publication from the perspective of a staff member and a Cooper student.

“Students take ownership of every part of the book. It is their photography, their interviews, their writing and their creative vision that will be captured on every page,” Peterson said.

In addition to the creative aspects of the yearbook, Peterson said staff members need to have an attention to detail in order to make sure the publica-

YEARBOOK

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Cooper's nurse EA helps keep students healthy

Nichole Ronich brings her knowledge as a mom to the support she provides students in the health office

By ANGEL JARQUIN RAMIREZ
Quill staff writer

If you have ever stepped into the health office at Cooper, chances are you have met Nichole Ronich, a health educational assistant (EA) who offers everything from Band-Aids to ice packs to a reassuring presence. What many students might not know, however, is that Ronich’s path to this position was not a straight one. In fact, before joining the school district, she spent 25 years in a completely different career: cosmetology.

“I was a hair stylist for 25 years when COVID happened. I had to stay home with my son to do distance learning. When the salons opened, schools did not. I decided to retire from the cosmetology world at that time,” she said.

What followed was a year and a half as a stay-at-home parent. With her son in hockey and her husband traveling for work, her family needed a schedule-friendly job. That is when she found the listing for a health EA in the Robbinsdale district.

“I looked into working in our school district and found this position that required me to have a first-aid and CPR certificate,” she said. “I had taken first aid in high school. Also, being a hairstylist, I enjoyed taking care of people and making them feel better.”

This is now Ronich’s fourth year in the district.

“My first two were across the

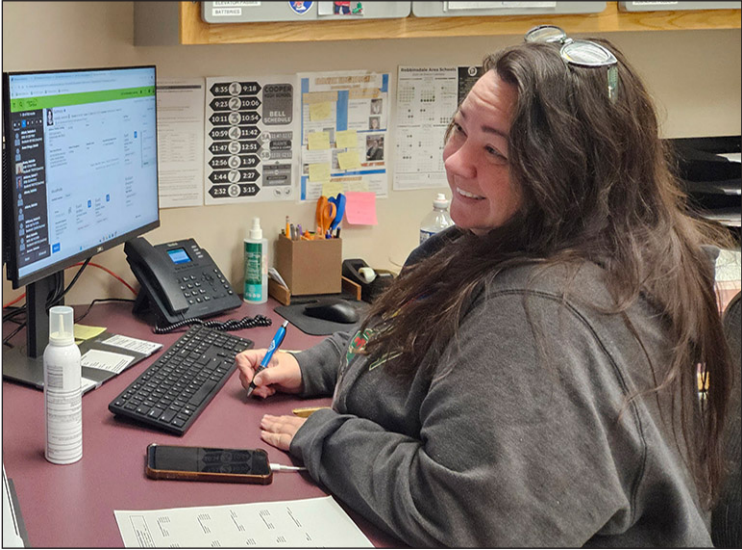


Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Ronich checks in and processes the many student visitors to the health office.

street at the preschool and this is my second year at Cooper,” she said.

A typical work day in Cooper’s health office can vary for Ronich. The office sees a steady stream of students with needs ranging from daily medications to minor injuries.

“Some need Band-Aids for little cuts, some need hygiene products. Sometimes, students just need someone to check in with,” Ronich said.

Ronich’s work includes practical responsibilities like documentation, which she said is one of the most tedious aspects of the job.

“I have to document every student who comes in: when they were in, why they were in, what I did to help them,” she said. “When you have 50+ kids coming throughout

the day, I have to be quick with entering them so I don’t get behind and miss information.”

Though she now works with teens instead of preschoolers, she said the biggest shift has not been medical but relational.

“My biggest change is working with the four-year-olds to working with teenagers,” she said.

Helping Ronich adapt to that change has been flexibility, patience and a sense of humor. In fact, Ronich said the most rewarding aspect of her work is the students.

“They bring me joy,” she said. “I try my best to accommodate their needs to the best of my abilities. I want them to feel healthy and safe while at school.”

Ronich said her personal care-

giving instincts, shaped by her life at home, align perfectly with her role at Cooper.

“I am a wife and mother. I feel like half my job is the same care I give my son at home,” she said.

With hundreds of students passing through her office each week, Ronich said she works hard to get to know the students and to establish expectations.

“There are so many different personalities and needs. I set expectations and boundaries in my office. Kindness and manners go a long way,” she said.

Another challenge is the misconception about what she can and cannot do as the nurse EA. Many students assume the health office operates like a clinic, but that is not the case.

“I am not a nurse or doctor. We cannot diagnose illnesses or treat major injuries,” she said. “I have Band-Aids. I also have a tiny freezer for ice packs. I try to keep them stocked, but some days I run out faster than water freezes.”

One type of help Ronich tries to provide is giving advice to students to keep them healthy in the first place.

“I advise students to cover your cough and wash your hands with soap and water,” she said. “Get plenty of rest and take a daily vitamin if you can.”

NURSE EA

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The Quill

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Getting involved is key to community

Students who are unsure about joining school activities, sports teams should consider the many benefits to doing so



Photo by CHRIS DISALVI

Cooper offers nearly a dozen athletic opportunities during each of the three sports seasons in which Cooper students can take part.

By ROSE VANG-LOHNES
Quill staff writer

One of the most important things that you can do in school is get involved. That can range from acting on stage to hitting a ball. For me, I am part of the speech team, *The Quill*, the Asian American Student Club and the Native American group. All of these activities have helped me in many different ways. Students who take part in any school activity or sport will see many benefits, ranging from experiencing a sense of community to developing a skill you will need in the world after high school.

Joining a school activity or sport gives you the chance to build a community and find new friendships. When I joined my many activities, I found people who I connected with and built friendships with. The best way to build a community or find people to build friendships with

is to get involved in an activity you already enjoy. It is easier to find a community and friendships when you are with people who already share the same interests as you. At the same time, it is important to understand that you may not always like every person in the activity or the adults leading the activity, but even that can benefit you more than you might think. These situations help students understand the importance of not always liking someone but still being able to work with them and get the job done, which is critical to learn before heading into the adult world.

Another reason that a student should join an activity or sport is because doing so can help you build skills that you will need in the real world. Public speaking is an amazing example of this. My time in speech has helped me get comfortable with not only speaking in front of people, but also being able to speak my mind

on various topics. Likewise, when it comes to sports, students will learn the importance of teamwork and putting in maximum effort. You cannot always win and succeed by yourself, so learning how to have people around you who push and uplift you is an important part of life. Similarly, students who are in theater can learn that standing out and playing your part is not scary and it provides you with a chance to express yourself. While school activities and sports are fun, they also will give you life skills that are beneficial to any student.

Lastly, being involved in school activities and sports can uplift your school spirit. Being involved and serving as a representative of the school can build one's school pride. This pride can then translate into the fun of participating in theme weeks during the school year, such as homecoming week during which the whole school is focused on the Friday football game. Activities and

sports can also lead to fun rivalries as you compete against different schools. Additionally, it is fun for students when they can invite their friends and families to their tournaments or events. In these many ways, joining an activity or sport helps you get more involved in school and embrace the spirit and pride that comes with it.

Overall, it is important for students to get involved by joining a school activity or sport. Doing so builds a community for students and makes their years at school a little better. Not only that, getting involved helps students develop skills and tools that they may need outside of school. For those of you who are uncertain about joining an activity or sport, you should try to check out a meeting, a tournament or a game that Cooper may be hosting. You may find an activity that appeals to you and learn that getting involved is not as daunting as you might think.

HLL gives students a welcome chance to reset

The mix of options for lunch, leisure, academic help justifies the continuation of the school's approach to fifth period

By JA'LAYIAH MCCLINTON
Quill staff writer

I enjoy HLL because it gives me a chance to take a break and reset when things feel overwhelming. It offers time to walk the hallways, clear our minds and talk with friends, especially when classes are stressful. When work is already finished, HLL becomes a small but meaningful break from school assignments that could easily pile up.

One reason HLL is beneficial is because it gives students time to hang out in the hallways during fifth period. The hallways can be peaceful and relaxing, and sometimes just walking around or talking with friends is enough to reduce stress. I also sign up for HLL rooms where I need help,



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Relaxing in the hallways is a new addition to the fifth period options this year.

which has helped me finish work early and avoid homework.

HLL is also useful because we

can join study sessions in subjects like English, art or math. Teachers give us time to work, ask questions

and get one-on-one support that regular class time does not always allow for. When I sign up for a HLL study session, I receive more attention and help, which makes my assignments much easier.

Another benefit relates to lunch. Seniors and freshmen with HLL before lunch get extra time to relax, while juniors and sophomores get to eat right away and then hang out afterward. Also, juniors and seniors with open lunch get the entire period to leave the building, which is a type of reset for them.

Overall, the HLL schedule helps everyone feel more balanced throughout the school day. We should continue HLL next year because it gives students a healthy break and may even possibly reduce skipping later in the day. HLL is the reset all students need.

Advisory is a valuable part of Cooper's weekly schedule

While some students are tempted to skip this Wednesday routine, going to advisory during fifth period brings benefits

Advisory takes place every Wednesday for 30 minutes to inform students about academic, social and future-planning issues. While a lot of students think it is unnecessary, advisory is important and it can help you in many ways. Advisory gives students the opportunity to have time to do work or to hang out with classmates while getting necessary administrative information.

One reason advisory is important for students in all four grades is because it gives them a chance to address different kinds of concerns. During advisory, students get time to plan out their future, to get information about school issues, to take care of make-up work and to talk one-on-

one with a teacher about their concerns.

Having the chance to meet and talk to an advisory teacher every week is a highlight for most students. Students can discuss issues with this teacher when they do not have anybody else to turn to. Advisory teachers also update students on information related to school activities and help with school work when students need it. These are some ways in which advisory benefits students in all grade levels.

Advisory is also important in

specific ways for students in specific grade levels. For example, freshmen and sophomores benefit from advisory because it helps them get comfortable in the high school environment. Whether it is the lessons they get from

their advisory teachers or details about how to get around the high school, younger students can benefit

from the fact that advisory serves as an orientation to life at Cooper.

Advisory can also be beneficial for juniors and seniors. It is typically in the last two years of high school when students deal with big events

like the ACT test, the college search, prom and graduation. Typically, the advisory period is used to give upperclassmen information about these important events. Advisory is also a place where older students can make sure they are on track with their credits and their grades, which is key to moving on from Cooper at the end of senior year.

Overall, advisory is a necessary part of every student's week. All students should attend advisory so they do not miss out on what is happening at Cooper and so they have a teacher who they can get close to and get help from. The administration should keep advisory because it serves as a support system for all students.

Federal ICE raids are clear assault on all Americans

No one should have to live in fear of being detained, especially teens

By ROSE VANG-LOHNES
Quill staff writer

ICE, or U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, is "a merger of the investigative and interior enforcement elements of the former U.S. Customs Service and the Immigration and Naturalization Service" that was made in 2003, according to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's website. While that is who they are on paper, to most of us who have been following the news since President Trump took office, ICE is the embodiment of dread and terror. For me, ICE is the group I have to look over my shoulder for when a car slows down near me as I am walking down the street.

When I first heard that ICE officers were being deployed in large numbers to Minnesota, I got anxious and paranoid. I heard of all the things that they have done to people while they are detained and how the people are treated in the detention centers. This treatment and the general threat of ICE have also been on the mind of Cooper Climate and Culture Specialist David Kek, who said he is distraught on behalf of our community and the students and families that are affected.

"On one hand, I recognize national security and immigration laws are needed; on the other hand, I take issue when the humanity of those that are impacted continue to be attacked," Kek said.

When I am in school, I should not have to worry if ICE decides to show up, but I do. According to the law, if ICE has a warrant that is signed by a judge, then they are allowed in non-public areas like classrooms and offices. The possibility of this happening frightens me, as it does Kek.

"They have no business being in a building where young people are not directly involved in the decisions they make, where that emotional toll and harm is constantly lurking," Kek said.

Thankfully, students concerned about ICE have some protections while at school. According to Head Principal Shaunece Smith, the district has a process and procedures to follow if ICE comes to our school. Additionally, the staff is prepared to do what they can to protect the students.

"We will do everything possible to keep our kids safe," Smith said. "I want my kids to feel safe when they're here."

Smith's words do ease my worries. She and Cooper staff members will do what they can to protect students. A student should not be afraid to come to school. School should be a safe space for teens and young adults to grow and flourish.

The toll that ICE is having on the mental health of students needs to be acknowledged. Some students may not always be able to focus in class or in school in general due to concerns about ICE. Students may have fear and anxiety about going home and discovering that loved ones are not there due to an ICE incident. Students may also be worried about ICE getting them. This fear that is in place in some people's hearts and minds takes a huge toll on their well-being.

"The harm that is done on families from that threat of deportation; I can only imagine that taking an emotional toll on someone," Kek said.

Obviously, I do not like nor agree with ICE. The way in which people who are being detained are treated does not seem moral. There are also too many instances when ICE has wrongfully detained someone who is a U.S. citizen. The trauma that

ICE RAIDS continues on page 7

Change is season means students should alter attire

Adjusting to the colder weather necessitates a bit more planning for one's day

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

Now that the school year is well underway, the good weather has faded and winter has begun to take its place. That means it is time to leave behind the warm and sunny summer days and prepare ourselves for colder weather, complete with blustery winds, rainfall and, of course, snow. Minnesota has a reputation for having harsh and freezing winters, which means that students' lives can be impacted in several ways during the coming months.

First, bad weather significantly impacts the manner in which students dress. Even if the school's temperature is regulated, students must now come to Cooper with extra layers. Indeed, since the temperatures in the morning are now well below 30 degrees, it is wise to come to school with a coat or even sometimes a hat, a scarf or other winter accessories.

Weather changes also impact the mental health of students. Cold temperatures, reduction of sunlight and bad weather have significant consequences on how students feel. This phenomenon has a name: Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), also known as "winter depression."

Researchers are still determining what causes this syndrome, but studies have shown that people with SAD have reduced levels of certain hormones such as melatonin and serotonin, as well as vitamin D, all of which play important roles in a person's well-being. Indeed, melatonin regulates the sleep-wake cycle, serotonin influences mood and vitamin D is crucial for regulating both melatonin and serotonin synthesis and function.

"Winter depression" is characterized by symptoms like fatigue, weight gain, changes in sleep patterns and a loss of interest in activities. Some tips to avoid this disorder are to practice light therapy, to exercise regularly, to eat healthy and to maintain a sleep schedule. In these ways, students can make sure they are proactive about staying on top of the transition into winter.

As we settle into the long stretch of cold months, it is important to remember that a little preparation can make this season far more manageable. Dressing in layers, keeping a warm coat on hand and staying mindful of the school's ever-changing indoor temperatures can help you keep comfortable throughout the day. Just as importantly, taking care of your mental well-being by getting outside when you can, sticking to healthy habits and reaching out for support can make a meaningful difference. Winter in Minnesota may feel endless at times, but it will not last forever. Warmer days are on the horizon, and before long, spring will return to thaw both the weather and our spirits.

NURSE EA
continued from page 2

She also stresses the importance of mental health. "Being true to yourself and making sure your well-being is a priority will make you healthier and happy," she said.

In order to stay up-to-date in her own work, Ronich said she keeps her CPR and first-aid certifications current. She also reads health news regularly.

Outside of school, Ronich's life revolves around family and her son's involvement in hockey.

"I am a hockey mom. I am at a hockey rink year-round, sometimes five days a week or more," she said. "My life revolves around my son. Ask me about him: I have a million pictures and hockey clips I will share."

When she is not at the rink, Ronich said she enjoys gardening and crafting.

"I enjoy gardening and making things. I do a variety of arts and crafts. I make jewelry, paint and sew; I have stitched up a few holes in pants here," Ronich said.

Students need to clean up hallway trash

The flexibility of morning breakfast, fifth period lunch has led to Hawks abandoning their garbage around school



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Discarded lunch trays, often with uneaten food still on them, are a frequent sight in the building after the daily lunch period.

By BEN KENYON
Quill staff writer

Now, it goes without saying that this might not be one of the most pressing issues going on in our school, and thus the nature of this piece of writing could come off largely as "man yells at clouds," but I am flabbergasted by the number of students who think it is acceptable to leave trash laying around our building. The prevalence of this problem, especially after breakfast and lunch, has taken on a certain sense of ridiculousness.

You have seen it, I have seen it: there is always something like an empty soda bottle or pile of torn candy wrappers serving as an eyesore somewhere in the hallway.

Sometimes, this trash can be seen in the stairwells too. The occasional piece of plastic wrapping, a miscellaneous scrap of garbage, a dropped pencil or a crumpled assignment paper that somebody could not care less about are the usual offenders you will eventually come across in the hallways.

When you expect to see this sort of trash, it takes a lot to make you stop and think, "How could somebody go about being so careless and apathetic?" It is at that point that you come across some of the more surprising items of trash in the school. Boom: right there in front of you is a browning, half-eaten apple covered in debris that has been wedged in the corner. Look to your left: that is a full-on lunch tray just sitting there with a plethora of

seemingly untouched food still on it. And then comes one of my all-time favorites: just a few feet right ahead of you is a big puddle of questionable liquid that passively presents a hazard to anybody who may fail to make notice of its presence.

Are we serious with this stuff? To be completely honest for a moment: is it that treacherous of a task to take responsibility for your own things and make sure that your discarded waste ends up where it belongs in the trash bin? I am not saying that this behavior is absolutely unacceptable and can never happen. That is unreasonable since we all may sometimes find ourselves in a rush or in a bout of forgetfulness. However, given that this littering is the normal, go-to choice

for many students in our school, there seems to be a complete lack of care or common courtesy.

The main takeaway of what I am trying to get across is that some people need to have the bare minimum level of accountability. Take the extra few seconds to gather up your trash and walk it on over to the nearest disposal place. There are literally no negatives to doing so. You will build a nice, expected habit as a result, you will help maintain our school's appearance and you will even spare the adults in the building from having to pick up after you, which it should be known is not their job in the first place. That pretty much concludes this little public service announcement. Thank you for picking up your trash.

Daylight Savings Time offers more upsides than downsides

Although the days will feel shorter as the winter months get rolling, the initial fall back process is a welcome one

By JA'LAYIAH MCCLINTON
Quill staff writer

Some people do not love Daylight Saving Time, but I do. The longer days make me feel like I have more time to do things. While I know some people find it hard to adjust to the time change, for me, it brings a feeling of energy and productivity.

Daylight Saving Time works by moving clocks forward one hour in the spring and back one hour in the fall to make better use of natural daylight. It started in 1918 to conserve energy as World War I was underway.

One aspect I enjoy about Daylight Saving Time is that it seems to positively affect my perception of time. I feel like I have more time to accomplish things when we gain the extra hour of daylight in November. Even on days when there is not as much light outside, I find myself



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Setting clocks back one hour in the fall will eventually be reversed in spring.

getting more done. Generally, I feel like there is still more daytime ahead of me after the time change.

Another aspect of Daylight Saving Time I enjoy is related to

sleep. Even though I love summer, I actually find it harder to sleep during that season because it does not get dark until so late. During the fall and winter, it is easier to fall

asleep at night because the sunset happens earlier.

This brings us to the major downside of Daylight Saving Time: there is less actual sunlight during the day hours. I do not enjoy having shorter days where it gets darker earlier. When it starts getting dark early, it feels like the day is winding down too soon, which can make me feel less motivated to get things done.

Although I prefer Daylight Saving Time despite its drawbacks, I know not everyone feels the same way. In fact, only about 40 percent of U.S. adults say they are in favor of it. For me, however, those extra hours of daylight make a big difference. They lift my mood, help me stay active and make each day feel a little brighter. This could be an indication that we may be evolving to embrace Daylight Saving Time and that our bodies are automatically adjusting to these annual changes.

Pepfests are a critical part of bringing students together

From acknowledging accomplishments to highlighting performances, there are many ways pepfests add to school spirit

By DIANA SANCHEZ MORALES
Quill staff writer

Pepfests are one kind of school event that students talk about the most. I have never been the one performing on the gym floor or leading a cheer. Instead, I am usually up in the bleachers, just watching. However, even from the stands, I can feel the energy in the room. The music is blasting, the crowd is yelling and the entire school is joining together for that one, special moment. Overall, I enjoy pepfests because they boost motivation and morale.

One reason I feel so positive about pepfests is due to the energy

of the event, which makes everyone feel more motivated. When I watch the performances, join in the cheers and feel the excitement, it lifts my mood and gives me a burst of energy. Other students feel it too. After pepfests, people talk more, smile more and feel more excited about school events. This matters because, when students have higher morale, they participate more in school activities and feel happier coming to school.

Pepfests are also useful because they are used to recognize students and celebrate their achievements. Pepfests shine a spotlight on students who deserve recognition. Watching

students involved in teams, clubs and performance groups get cheered for makes me feel proud of my school. This gives me a deeper appreciation for my classmates and everything they do. It also shows the students in question that their hard work is noticed and valued. This is important because recognizing people's achievements builds confidence and encourages students to keep getting involved and doing their best.

Pepfests also strengthen Cooper's school culture and traditions. Even as a spectator, I love being part of something the whole school looks forward to. This gives me memories that make the school year special.

What is more, it creates a tradition that brings students together year after year. This matters because a strong school culture helps students feel connected, safe and proud of where they go to school.

Overall, pepfests at Cooper are important. They bring students together, boost our motivation and celebrate the people who make our school special. These moments remind us that Cooper is a real community. To keep that spirit strong, we should continue supporting pepfests and showing up for each other. Even something as simple as attending helps make our school a more positive and connected place.

Woo's *Tomorrow* a gangster classic

The film *A Better Tomorrow* from influential action director John Woo is approaching its 40th anniversary in 2026



Photo by CINEMA CITY ENTERPRISES

John Woo's signature use of cinematography and costume design helps bring the film's characters to life.

By MATTHEW YANG
Quill staff writer

A Better Tomorrow is a Chinese gangster movie directed by John Woo and released on August 2, 1986. One reason why I am reviewing *A Better Tomorrow* is to honor my Asian American and Pacific Islander heritage. This film is a Chinese classic filled with iconic scenes and music. Another reason I am reviewing the movie is that it revolutionized Chinese and Asian cinema and culture. John Woo does an amazing job of using cinematography and costume design to create character depth and enhance emotion in key scenes.

A Better Tomorrow is set in Hong Kong and focuses on gangsters Sung Tse-Ho and Mark, who are best friends. Ho's younger brother, Sung Tse-Kit, wants to be a police officer and does not know that his brother is a criminal. When Ho travels with another criminal to Taiwan for a negotiation, he is betrayed and arrested by the police. Meanwhile, Mark kills the gang that betrayed his friend. After three years, Ho is finally released from prison and returns to Hong Kong. He finds that Kit

hates him and is investigating the Mafia, while Mark is limping and in a state of complete misery. Ho promises not to return to a life of crime and prefers to work as a taxi driver. However, he is haunted by his past and his need to protect his estranged brother.

Woo's use of cinematography in *A Better Tomorrow* shows the depth of the characters' emotions and the relationships between characters. In one scene, Mark speaks to Sung Tse-Ho about taking their chances to retaliate against the gangsters and become better people. Sung Tse-Ho does not want to, fearing the danger, but Mark gives him a piece of his mind, stating that he never wanted sympathy and never wanted to beg; instead, he wants to prove to himself that he is more powerful than the others. Mark also tells Sung Tse-Ho that he does not want to end up like him: someone who failed his people by not taking risks. Shallow focus is used during this scene, blurring the background and keeping the characters sharply in focus. This technique allows the camera to emphasize facial expressions and draw attention to the intensity of

the conversation. The audience really feels Mark's desperation, regret and determination through the close-ups on his expressions and gestures. Viewers are drawn into the emotional weight of the moment and feel the same empathy and inner conflict as Sung Tse-Ho does.

Woo also uses costume design to represent character development throughout the film. At one point, Mark is seen wearing a black trench coat as he walks through corridors, hiding weapons in various places before initiating a shootout to avenge Sung Tse-Ho. Later, when Sung Tse-Ho is released from prison, he sees Mark opening doors for gangsters and cleaning car windows for money. In this scene, Mark is wearing a green jacket with a towel over his shoulder and white pants. Additionally, he has a visible limp when he walks. This stark contrast in wardrobe symbolizes Mark's fall from being a relentless gangster to a broken man. The costume design emphasizes how much he has lost: his dignity, his power and his purpose. It also reinforces the emotional cost of revenge. The audience watches a once-powerful

man reduced to near-beggar status, making Mark's arc feel tragic and meaningful. This use of costume design shows that revenge comes with a steep personal price.

The central theme of *A Better Tomorrow* is redemption. The film shows that those who strive to change for the better can achieve a better life. Sung Tse-Kit, a police trainee, resents his brother, Sung Tse-Ho, for being a gangster. When Ho returns home, Kit beats him up in the rain, dismissing him and forcing him to leave. Toward the end of the movie, Kit still harbors resentment, but Mark snaps him out of it by explaining Ho's sacrifices and sincere efforts to change. This powerful moment leads Kit to forgive his older brother and recognize that Ho's actions, however flawed, were rooted in a desire to protect his family. The film teaches viewers that no matter what mistakes you have made, redemption is possible if you believe in yourself and commit to change. I strongly agree with this message, as each of the main characters redeems themselves in their own way: Mark and Sung Tse-Ho by turning away from crime, and Sung Tse-Kit by learning to forgive.

In *A Better Tomorrow*, John Woo uses cinematography and costume design to create character depth and heighten the emotional stakes in important scenes. I thoroughly enjoyed this film. It is entertaining, emotional and filled with strong performances and plot twists. It is the kind of movie where you do not need to speak Chinese to follow along because the storytelling is so clear and engaging. Woo is known for blending Western cinematic elements with Eastern storytelling, which can be seen not only in *A Better Tomorrow*, but also in his other classics like *The Killer* (1989) and *Bullet in the Head* (1990). Woo's signature use of slow motion, freeze frames and choreography, whether in fight scenes or heartfelt character exchanges, never fails to convey the emotion and weight of each moment. *A Better Tomorrow* deserves five out of five stars.

YEARBOOK

continued from page 2

tion is professional.

"I think something students might not realize is how detail-oriented you need to be. We need to make sure every student name is spelled correctly, every picture is tagged correctly and everything is aligned perfectly. It takes a lot of patience," Peterson said.

Connected to these responsibilities is the importance of students learning the design software that is used to lay out the yearbook.

"I think the most challenging part was learning how to use the editing software. I've never done graphic design or digital editing, so that was definitely new to me," Peterson said.

In order to meet all of these challenges and produce a good final product, Peterson said the yearbook class follows deadlines like any other class. However, the yearbook deadlines are strict because they are attached to the demands made by the company that prints the yearbook.

"We split the book up into three deadlines to make it more manageable," Peterson said. "Students are working on one page or spread at a time. We have a deadline for a rough draft and then we go through peer feedback to make sure everything is accurate before the final deadline. Now that we've finished our fall pages, it feels like the book is really starting to come together."

Helping Peterson oversee the creation of the yearbook are a group of student editors. Vashite Budhu (12), Jazmin Tlaseca (12) and Chad Hill (12) are three students who were in yearbook last year and returned this year as editors.

"They are incredible leaders and are always willing to take on extra page assignments to help the class out," Peterson said.

According to Budhu, working on the yearbook gives her and other students a chance to learn new skills while also having fun.

"Last year, Ms. Obranovich asked [student counselor Alessandra Bivona] if there were any juniors who had an open sixth hour who she would recommend to be in the yearbook class. Because I had that period open, I joined as a junior, which meant that I could be a mentor senior year," Budhu said.

As the school year continues, Peterson said she hopes to recruit more students to contribute to the yearbook this year and beyond.

"I would love for the yearbook program to continue to draw students from all areas of the school. We need athletes, musicians, artists, members of various clubs and cultural groups, and any student who is excited about photography, journalism and design. It would also be awesome to continue growing our resources. We could always use more cameras," Peterson said.

As the staff heads toward its next deadline, Peterson said she hopes her students continue to grow and develop.

"I hope students take away a huge sense of pride in what they created. I hope they learn valuable skills and gain confidence in themselves as positive contributors to a community," Peterson said.

CELEBRATIONS

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ular aspects of religious traditions like Christmas as cultural or family events. However, people engaging in these traditions will still try to adapt them to Buddhist values.

Judaism

The main celebration for Jewish people at this time of the year is Hanukkah. This eight-day holiday is also called the "festival of lights" because it is celebrated by lighting a nightly menorah, which is typically a nine-branched Jewish chandelier. Special prayers and songs are also played during these days and people eat fried foods. Hanukkah also has its own traditions like giving or receiving "gelt," which is money, usually in the form of chocolate coins. Gelt is exchanged much like the giving of gifts in the Christmas tradition.

Hanukkah celebrates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem after the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid Greeks. When the Maccabees rededicated the Temple, they only found a small jar of olive oil, which was only supposed to last for one day but miraculously burned for eight. That is why people light the menorah and eat fried food during these eight days. This year, Hanukkah is taking place from December 14-22.

Ratatouille is a modern masterpiece worth revisiting

Made for Pixar by celebrated director Brad Bird, *Ratatouille* is a timeless tale about chasing your dreams

By GRIFFIN GILMORE
Quill staff writer

Ratatouille, directed by Brad Bird and Jan Pinkava, was released on June 29, 2007. I chose to review this film because it is my favorite movie. One reason I love it is because of how vibrant and rich the colors are throughout the film. Another reason is the music and how perfectly it matches each scene, creating just the right mood. The final reason I chose this movie is the animation, which works beautifully with the film's color palette to bring everything to life. In *Ratatouille*, lighting, music and sound help communicate the message that you cannot judge a book by its cover.

Ratatouille follows a rat named Remy who dreams of becoming a great French chef, despite his family's doubts and the obvious problem of being a rat in a world that fears them. After fate drops him into the sewers of Paris, Remy finds himself beneath a famous restaurant once run by his idol, Auguste Gusteau. Though it is dangerous for a rat to be in a professional kitchen, Remy's passion for cooking drives him to take the risk. What follows is a hilarious and heartwarming story that turns the culinary world upside down and proves that inspiration can



Photo by WALT DISNEY PICTURES

The film's state-of-the-art CGI animation still looks impressive decades later.

come from the most unlikely places.

One scene in which lighting plays an important role is at the end of the movie when Remy, Linguini and Colette open their restaurant together with Remy's rat friends. The lighting in this scene is incredible. We are shown the brightness of the kitchen along with the upstairs dining area where the rats are eating by candlelight. The warm glow of the candlelight creates a cozy and welcoming atmosphere. Eventually, the camera zooms in on Remy, then pulls back to show the action in the

kitchen as he prepares the dish of ratatouille for Anton Ego, the food critic. This is a visually stunning and emotional moment that is made possible by effective lighting.

Also adding to the film's impact is its great use of sound and music. This can especially be seen in the sequence when Remy is inside Linguini's hat helping him cook alongside Colette in the kitchen. The audience can hear every detail of the cooking process, including the sound of food being chopped, bread being squished, potatoes being peeled and

peas popping out of their pods into a bowl. In the background during this scene is the use of music, which becomes more intense when Colette gives Linguini advice. The sound of violins and cellos builds tension before they are eventually joined by trumpets, trombones and piano. The sound and music work together to create a rhythm that mirrors the energy and motion of the kitchen, which helps make the scene come alive.

The message that *Ratatouille* is trying to share is that you cannot judge a book by its cover. At first, everyone is afraid of Remy, but he helps Linguini keep the restaurant running and even impresses the toughest food critic in Paris. The critic enjoys the ratatouille so much because it reminds him of his childhood. That moment shows how powerful food and acceptance can be. By the end of the film, we see that someone no one would expect to become a gifted chef can make incredible food.

Overall, *Ratatouille* is my favorite movie. The colors are vibrant, the music always fits the moment perfectly and the animation is stunning. I highly recommend this film to anyone who has not seen it or to anyone who enjoys movies with great visuals, powerful music and a heartwarming story. *Ratatouille* earns five out of five stars.

FOODS STUDENTS ENGAGE IN CUPCAKE COMPETITION continued from page 1

dents to meet.

"I'm looking to see if the cupcake matches both the written description and the image they drew. Next comes overall taste, and then creativity," he said.

Even though Nau had to eventually vote on a winner, he said he was thoroughly impressed by all of

the students' work.

"Their creativity and level of effort blew my mind. All of the cupcakes were so fun to look at and all of them were super tasty," Nau said.

Although students were already thinking outside of the box, Nau encourages students to make even more unique cupcakes in the future.

"Don't feel too self-conscious of your ideas. The ones that are more out there are sometimes the best ones. At the very least, they tend to be the most fun to look at," he said.

For students interested in the idea of a cupcake war, the event will make a return in third quarter for stu-

dents taking Foods 1. This means those students with a competitive spirit still have an opportunity to throw their chef hat into the ring.

"[If I could do it again.] I would, because it is so fun, but I can't because I'm graduating. I would recommend it for lower-classmen, though," Kukachka said.

Premier Performers

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

Askah Nyabuto

By CHANDLER HUNTER
Quill staff writer

Askah Nyabuto (12) is involved in choir, orchestra, the Pan African Dance Team and the Cooper Step Team.

Nyabuto has been involved in choir for five years. She said she decided to join because she loves to sing.

"My favorite memory is singing 'River in Judea' at the end of our very last concert every year and I can't wait to sing it for my senior year," she said.

Meanwhile, Nyabuto has been playing violin in orchestra for nine years. She said her favorite thing in orchestra is the "muscle memory that takes over" when playing a piece.

When it comes to the Pan African Dance Team, Nyabuto first joined this group during freshman year because

she wanted to be a part of something that represented her culture.

"What I've enjoyed the most has been sharing my love for dancing with other students and getting to learn more about different African countries, their music and their dance moves," she said.

Another activity Nyabuto has been involved with is Step Team, which she joined as a freshman. She is currently captain of the team.

"I joined step my freshman year as an opportunity to make new friends and be a part of a team," she said.

Nyabuto said her favorite class is AVID because it helps her prepare for life after high school. Outside of school, Nyabuto is active in her church and is involved in the Pathfinders Club.

After high school, Nyabuto wants to go to college to become a cardiothoracic surgeon.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHINES

Alene Lor

By CHANDLER HUNTER
Quill staff writer

Whether performing onstage at Orchestra Hall or stepping into theater for the first time, Alene Lor (12) has spent her high school years exploring what it means to create, express herself and grow.

Currently, Lor is involved in choir, an activity she describes as both energizing and grounding.

"There has never been a time where I left the class in a sour mood," she said.

Singing has been a constant in her life for as long as she can remember, but Lor credits her sophomore year as the moment when choir truly clicked. She described singing as "a creative outburst," adding that making music releases "feel-good hormones" that lift her spirits daily.

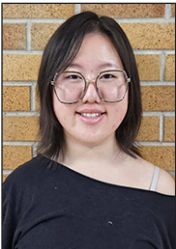


Photo by R. VANG-LOHINES

One of Lor's most cherished memories is performing in the school's annual Fall Festival at Orchestra Hall.

"Performing on the full stage is so exciting," she said. "Rehearsing with the full orchestra and adding this big and important platform to my list is pleasing."

In addition to singing, Lor has played violin for seven years, starting in fourth grade simply because her friends did as well. Though the initial decision was casual, it led to nearly a decade of practice.

"I really enjoy playing the instrument," she said.

Last year, Lor pushed herself in a new direction by taking part in the spring one-act plays.

"I had such a blast performing on stage with everyone," Lor said.

After graduating, Lor hopes to major in communications and continue to express herself creatively.

Ryan Phan

By CHANDLER HUNTER
Quill staff writer

Ryan Phan (12) is currently involved in orchestra. Phan said he has been playing violin for around five years, first starting in elementary school after hearing music during a school concert.

"I first started during elementary because hearing those songs at school concerts inspired me to also play songs as well," Phan said. "I returned to the violin during my freshman year and I am still to this day playing music for others to hear and for myself to enjoy."

Phan said one of his joys in orchestra is performing in other venues outside of Cooper.

"I enjoy exploring new places and meeting new people," Phan said.

Among the many activities he has

taken part in during orchestra, Phan said he especially loves the Halloween concerts.

"Seeing all the students, children and some of the adults dress up makes me happy. [I also enjoy] seeing others celebrating Halloween as well," he said.

Phan will continue to be in orchestra for the rest of his senior year. In addition, he is planning to sign up for another arts-related class.

"I hope to sign up for a painting class in the spring," Phan said.

When it comes to school, Phan said his math, orchestra and gym classes are his favorites.

"I enjoy these classes because they all challenge me to always do my best while still learning new things," he said.

Phan's plan for college is to get a degree in business in order to eventually become a financial educator.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHINES

Samariya Wright

By CHANDLER HUNTER
Quill staff writer

Samariya Wright (12) is involved in both band and choir. Wright said her music journey began at an early age.

"I've been doing band since I was in fifth grade and choir since my sophomore year," she said.

What keeps Wright motivated to make music is the shared energy of creating something bigger than herself. She said her favorite aspect of band is how they all come together to make music. Meanwhile, choir gives her a sense of belonging.

"I love the people in choir," she said. "Being around them makes everything better."

Some of Wright's most vivid high school memories have grown out of these musical communities. This is especially the case when it comes to their

performances.

"Our concerts and how our hard work pays off in the end are the moments I cherish," she said.

This year, Wright stepped into a leadership role for the first time as a choir assistant. Though new to the responsibility, she said she is happy she got involved.

"I am enjoying it for the most part," she said.

When it comes to school, Wright said her English 12 class is her favorite thanks to the fact that her teacher, Annika Peterson, "always motivates me to keep going even if I am super tired." Wright spends

her free time reading and listening to music.

After graduation, Wright plans to study psychology at a community college before transferring to a university, where she hopes to minor in music.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHINES

Molitor guides Hawks to success

Students taking Design in Clay, Photography find that mistakes are part of learning



Photo by MANAL BARE

Jamie Molitor helps a student start a clay piece during his third period Design in Clay 1 class.

By MANAL BARE
Quill staff writer

Before most students even walk into the building, art teacher Jamie Molitor is already hands deep in clay. His day begins in the Cooper ceramics studio, siphoning water off barrels, wedging dried slurry and moving pieces in and out of the kiln. Only after these duties are done does Molitor turn on some music, sip his coffee and write the day's learning target on the board.

"To be honest, most days, I do the coffee and music before anything else," Molitor said.

Molitor teaches a full schedule of Design in Clay 1, Design in Clay 2 and Photography, in addition to overseeing a study hall. Still, much of his day revolves around the ceramics studio.

When students arrive, Molitor urges them to head to the kick wheels. At their wheels is where Molitor does his headcount and takes attendance. He then moves around the room, answering questions and checking in with everyone. The new schedule and its 43-minute class periods move fast, but Molitor said he tries to make the studio a relaxed environment with music playing, wheels spinning and happy students exploring their creativity.

"During the class time, I often get wrapped up in helping students through their challenges and sud-

denly realize it's already time to start cleaning up," Molitor said. "Our 43-minute class sessions are just never enough time."

For students, the environment is what makes his classes special.

"It's a fun environment. I look forward to class every day," Beckham Vanvoorst (11), who is taking ceramics for the first time, said. "He lets you do what you feel you need to do. I've been able to finish projects at my own pace, and when I need help, I ask him."

Similarly, Chad Hill (12) described the class as "very welcoming and relaxed," adding that Molitor "makes every student feel like they belong." Hill also commented on one recent moment in class that stuck with him.

"A few weeks ago, a fellow ninth grader passed away, and [Molitor] told the class they could decompress after a heavy week. That's the type of teacher he is: empathetic and down to earth," Hill said.

Molitor's teaching philosophy revolves around letting students experiment, take risks and make mistakes with no fear. Molitor shared a quote from Minnesota artist Warren MacKenzie that connects with this philosophy: "The first 10,000 pots you make are difficult, but then it gets a little bit easier." According to Molitor, the goal of an art class is not to create perfection, it is to teach stu-

dents that failure is an essential part of learning.

"I love watching students suddenly realize that they are capable of accomplishing something that they were previously unable to do," Molitor said.

For many of his students, the impact of Molitor's teaching lasts beyond the class period.

"I used to think I wasn't artistic," Hill said, "but I've developed a love and appreciation for clay by showing up every day and trying something new."

Echoing this sentiment was Beckham.

"Taking ceramics with Mr. Molitor has made me want to keep doing it in my life," he said.

Both students agreed that other people at Cooper should take the classes Molitor teaches.

"You might find something unexpected that you really enjoy," Beckham said.

Overall, Molitor said his job is more demanding than many people suspect. He spends hours preparing, repairing equipment and dealing with a limited budget. Even with a full teaching schedule, however, he tries to make time to stay connected to the creative process.

"I try to make time to create outside of school," he said. "Usually, that is painting, but sometimes I work in clay or other media."

Band musicians put on winter show

December 11 concert featured Freshman Band, Concert Band, Wind Ensemble groups

By TYLER GOODMAN
Quill staff writer

Music lovers had many concerts to attend this December with a variety of different songs being played by students in band, orchestra and choir. One of the bigger concerts took place on December 11, when the Freshman Band, Concert Band, Wind Ensemble and Jazz I musicians performed their winter concert.

The concert started with the combined eighth grade bands from FAIR and Robbinsdale Middle School playing songs. Next up were Cooper's Freshman Band, Concert Band and Wind Ensemble groups under the direction of Markus Hahn.

According to Hahn, he spends the beginning of the school year teaching music and preparing his students for this concert.

"The first concert of the year takes about two months to prepare for. After this concert, we have one roughly every 1.5 months," Hahn said.

In order to quickly prepare his students for their concert, Hahn said he tries not to waste time on little issues. Instead, he tackles them in a way that shows improvement over the course of a couple of days instead of trying to get it right instantly. He said he does this because of the short 43-minute class periods this school year.

"Fifteen-to-twenty minutes of class is skill development and then we

work on our music for the remaining class period," Hahn said.

According to Hahn, one thing he was looking forward to in the band concert this year was a guitar solo in a song performed by the Wind Ensemble.

"For the first time in my career, there was a screaming electric guitar solo in one of the songs that Wind Ensemble is playing," he said.

Hahn added that an additional reason he enjoys this band concert is because they serve root beer floats after the concert in the main foyer with the Jazz 1 group serving as background music.

"Come for the concert, stay for the root beer float," Hahn said.

Lakeyah single "Too Much" still resonates

The catchy song comes from the popular performer's 2021 release *In Due Time*

By ANGEL JARQUIN RAMIREZ
Quill staff writer

One song I currently enjoy listening to is "Too Much," by Lakeyah. This song was released on April 9, 2021, and it is from her album *In Due Time*. I chose to review this song because of its empowering lyrics and appealing musicianship.

Lakeyah Danae Robinson was born on February 28, 2001 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Lakeyah was raised mainly by a single mother. She began her entertainment career by doing slam poetry. Eventually, she was convinced by her friends at age 15 to enter a freestyle contest, which moved her into a music ca-

reer. In 2017, she joined the music duo BTM, which stood for Beyond the Music. Since then, she released the mixtapes *Time's Up* in 2020, *In Due Time* in 2021, *My Time* in 2021 and *Keymix III* in 2024.

I do not know how other people reacted to "Too Much," but I immediately got excited because I like her music. Lakeyah's sound can be described as a blend of modern trap beats with classic hip-hop influences. I love the beat featured in this song, the lyrics are relatable and Lakeyah has a flow that I like.

Another thing I enjoy about this song is Lakeyah's subject matter. In the song, she is talking about how she is in a relationship with

a man who does not know how to be there for her emotionally. She is also talking about the importance of knowing your worth and how to bring boss energy in life.

As the lyrics in the song make obvious, the man she is talking about does not know real love and has never had a solid, real woman in his life. Listeners should note that Lakeyah does cuss in this song to drive her points home, so it is not a song to listen to in front of kids.

Overall, you should listen to this song if you want to hear a positive message about self-worth. Lakeyah is so real and bold in her lyrics. I rate this song five out of five stars.

Bugonia is a scathing social satire

Celebrated director Yorgos Lanthimos takes aim at corporate greed, environmentalism, conspiracy culture



Photo by FOCUS FEATURES

Bugonia hinges on a stellar performance by frequent Yorgos Lanthimos collaborator Emma Stone.

By TESSA LENOCH
Quill staff writer

Power makes you an alien. It is up to you to take that statement literally or figuratively, but a case can be made either way. Every day, it seems a new multibillionaire is in the news. No matter if their exploits are framed as tragic, comical, profound or outright stupid, there is no doubt our lives are often greatly impacted by a handful of “lucky,” powerful people. This issue is at the heart of Yorgos Lanthimos’ *Bugonia*. Following a trend already seen in *Eddington* and *One Battle After Another*, *Bugonia* is the latest conspiracy thriller to be released in 2025. It is a roller-coaster of a movie, but despite the twists and turns, its central theme remains: humanity is a little bit doomed if it keeps being led by the kinds of people who currently hold

power. *Bugonia*’s plot revolves around two conspiracy-fueled shut-ins, Teddy (Jesse Plemons) and Don (Aidan Delbis), who kidnap a wealthy female CEO, Michelle Fuller (Emma Stone), in an attempt to confront what they interpret as alien interference in Earth’s affairs. There might not be a word I hate more than “girlboss,” especially if you stick the word “corporate” in front of it, but this is the best descriptor for the central character of *Bugonia*. Michelle Fuller is the head of pharmaceutical mega-corporation Auxolith and her character is a cutting depiction of the effects of corporate culture. She is introduced to us through her performative diversity lectures, unfathomably bad labor practices and *Art of the Deal*-esque motivational dialogue, all of which she delivers in a loud, brassy fashion.

Once she is kidnapped early in the film, the plot goes in directions that can be expected. There is a tense struggle for power as these physical representations of two ideological extremes try to outsmart each other. At the same time, the movie avoids the cliches of edge-of-your-seat cinema. In fact, *Bugonia* carefully treads the line between unbearable suspense and laugh-out-loud moments. In any given scene, the audience may be laughing, sitting in shock or slapped across the face with sad revelations. Despite this, it is never too overwhelming. *Bugonia* also stands out in terms of Lanthimos’ filmography. While it follows his generally quirky style of movie-making, it is accessible enough to capture audiences that may not have enjoyed his other works like *Poor Things*, which faced lots of criticism despite its success

during the 2023 film awards season. Specifically, Lanthimos was criticized at that time for his portrayal of female characters and his decisions regarding depicting exploitation. As *Bugonia* began its press tour, many film critics were concerned that the plot of *Bugonia* would have similar issues. However, this major point of contention is completely removed from *Bugonia* to the point where even the characters are making one-off, self-referential quips about the topics of gender and exploitation. In the end, though, my favorite thing about *Bugonia* is its approach to cinematography. I especially enjoyed following the color grading in the film. In cold, unfriendly corporate settings, sad shades of grey and teal engulf the screen. In contrast, when we are at Michelle’s awfully modernist home, her pristine green lawns evoke memories of 2019’s *Parasite*. Then there is Teddy’s home, which, despite the fact that it serves as the base of a large-scale kidnapping plot, features warm yellows and reds that remind you that it is simply an old home in rural America, cluttered and lived-in. Thanks to these details, *Bugonia* stands out, especially when compared to the dark greys that permeate most color grading in modern cinema. Aliens may or may not live among us or in the Andromeda galaxy, but plenty of powerful people act strangely enough for me to count them as Martians. Their routines are too pristine, their actions are too brash and their worldview seems too detrimental to humans as a species. If I decided to start kidnapping them like Teddy and Don, though, I am not sure if the result would be better or worse than the outcome depicted in the film. Ultimately, *Bugonia* takes a look at behavioral extremes and it is not afraid to shy away from ugly truths about humanity. I rate it a 4.5 out of five stars.

SCHOLARSHIPS

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arship search process is Cooper counselor Alessandra Bivona, who works with this year’s seniors. “Seniors should start looking for scholarships as soon as possible. Some scholarships are open to juniors, so essentially students can get started on their scholarship searches their junior year of high school,” she said. When applying for scholarships, Bivona said students should be wary of making common mistakes. “Some of the most common mistakes that students make when filling out scholarship applications include not filling out important information such as listing after-school activities, hobbies and volunteering hours that are done at school or outside of school hours. Other mistakes include doubting yourself and not focusing on the strengths that make you a unique candidate,” she said. As the 12th grade counselor, Bivona said she tries to provide guidance to seniors about writing good scholarship application essays when they are required. “Some tips that I would offer to seniors include relying on the following themes when writing a strong scholarship essay: great storytelling, sharing vulnerability and clarity within your essay. Another important thing to note is that the reader should feel and understand why you are the most important candidate for the scholarship,” she said.

Beyond emphasizing one’s GPA and ACT or SAT test scores, Bivona said good scholarship applications should focus on demonstrating the contributions a student has made to their local communities. “This includes leadership experiences and volunteering experiences that are done in their local school community, spiritual center or local neighborhood. Seniors should also be highlighting their after-school activities such as extracurricular activities,” she said.

One issue Bivona sometimes sees with seniors is that they get discouraged about even applying for scholarships given how competitive the process can be. However, she encourages students to not give up. “There are a vast range of scholarships that exist for a variety of diverse students, diverse talents, cultural backgrounds, academic achievements and different circumstances. Trust in the process and don’t forget it is okay to ask for help when you feel you need guidance,” she said.

In addition to the support she and Rosenblum can provide, Bivona also suggested students look into the resources provided by the TRIO Upward Bound and GEAR UP programs, which are located on Cooper’s third floor. “The GEAR UP program is a federally funded initiative that helps schools and underrepresented students prepare for post-secondary education. The GEAR UP program also provides academic support, mentoring, college and financial aid counseling. Lastly, GEAR UP helps set up college visits to increase college enrollment and success for students through high school and into their first year of college,” Bivona said.

One senior making use of the TRIO Upward Bound program for the scholarship search is Valeria Lule Herrera (12). “My search began when I started joining TRIO Upward Bound and they helped me apply to this website where you put your information and they start sending you different types of scholarships,” she said.

Making use of the Cooper AVID program to start her search for scholarships was Melody Xiong (12). “I begin searching for scholarships spring of my junior year. It was an assignment from my AVID class to prepare us for our senior year,” she said.

Cooper seniors who have started applying for scholarships have been seeking out options in a variety of scholarship categories. “I’ve applied to creative ones mainly, but I plan on applying to ones about community service also since I have done a lot of community service,” Jazmin Tlaseca (12) said. Applying for grade-related scholarships is Lule Herrera.

“I’ve applied to academic schol-

SCHOLARSHIPS

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Fans of indie horror games should check out MiSide

From its excellent mechanics to its compelling narrative, 2024’s MiSide is an overlooked gem all players will like

By DIANA VANG
Quill staff writer

The psychological horror indie game *MiSide*, which was developed by MakenCat and Umeera, was first released in December 2024. I chose this game to review because it is a somewhat new game that not many people know about and because the game is well-made despite only being developed by two people. The game mechanics are fun and easy to use. What is more, the story has both comedic and horrifying moments. Additionally, all the characters have their own personalities and stories that make you fall in love with them. Of course, the connections that you develop with the characters makes it even more tragic when something happens to them as they are helping you. I think *MiSide* is a good game because there are a lot of choices you can make that change the story and how you interpret it. The plot of the game is about a male protagonist who downloads an app on his phone that causes him to be transported into the app itself. Inside, he meets a girl named Mita who shows him around her home. Sometimes,



Photo by INDIEARK

Although marketed as horror, *MiSide* should appeal to a wide range of gamers. things take a while to load and Mita mentions it is because this is a game world. I appreciate how they break the “fourth wall” of the game by mentioning things like loading time and unfinished assets. The protagonist explores the house and hangs out with Mita for a while, but eventually he wants to return home. Mita does not want him to go

media, so the style of the game combined with a cute girl draws in a lot of people. Throughout the twists and turns of the game, the visual elements will keep the player engaged. Another game element that really intrigues players is the story. As you play the game and interact with the world around you after you are trapped by Mita, you learn more about what she has done to other players and what is likely to become of you unless you escape. Meanwhile, you are still also trying to find the means of escaping back to the real world. The playability of this game is good since things change based on the actions you take. Additionally, the other characters react differently to what you do or do not choose to do. In these ways, the game manages to feel different each time you play it. The indie horror game *MiSide* is worth your time and money. The graphics are beautiful, the story is well-crafted, the characters are distinct from one another and the playability is not dull due to the changes you can make. You should all play this game, which earns five out of five stars.

FALLOUT FELT LOCALLY FROM U.S. SHUTDOWN

continued from page 1

more Americans and let costs continue to soar? These are the decisions politicians, and the citizens who vote for them, need to decide on,” DiSalvi said. A second effort was made with a bill in November that included funding for SNAP food aid, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Veterans Affairs. This new bill passed with a vote of 222 to 209. Six of the opposing Democrats joined the Republicans to pass the bill, leading to the end of the 43-day government shutdown. “The Senate could not get enough votes from Democrats to sup-

port the Republican House spending bill until November 13,” DiSalvi said. In addition to its political and financial impact, the shutdown also made its presence felt in Cooper classrooms. According to DiSalvi, he saw students adversely impacted by the suspension of SNAP food benefits during the shutdown. “There are students in my room who were impacted by that, and it breaks my heart that they weren’t getting the money they needed and it wasn’t their fault,” he said. What is more, for social studies classes, most notably U.S. History

and Government, the shutdown was looked at as part of the curriculum. Government teacher Katie Huebsch said the shutdown came up on multiple occasions. “We start each government class with current events, so the shutdown definitely came up in discussion,” Huebsch said. Huebsch said she tried to use the shutdown and other current event topics as a way to make her students learn something from the news. “I give background context so we can discuss the topic. If the current event relates directly to something we

have learned in class, we circle back to those topics and make direct connections,” Huebsch said. Additionally, she said she wants her students to see how important voting is because most of her students will be able to vote soon. “The major thing that I want them to see from this event is how important voting is,” Huebsch said. “Most of my students will be able to vote next year. Students should inform themselves about who is on their ballot and who they want to vote for. Voting is the best way to enact change in government.”

FEDERAL ICE RAIDS ARE CLEAR ASSAULT ON ALL AMERICANS

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is being left on people and families is unforgivable. Someone being here illegally is not an excuse for treating a human being in this way. Simply being in the U.S. without authorization is only

a civil offense while crossing the border without inspection is a misdemeanor. Neither of these actions constitutes a felony. As the increase in ICE enforcement started, Trump claimed that he

was going to “deport the criminals.” It is important to point out that 65-71 percent of the people detained by ICE have no prior criminal convictions. What ICE is really doing is separating families and causing

more harm than good to our communities. The moment school-aged children are scared and are in fear for themselves and their loved ones is the moment we know that we have gone too far as a society.

Weight program helps Hawks

Any student can make use of the weight room after school on Mondays through Thursdays



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Under the guidance of David Connors and David Hammelman, athletes can work on fitness goals.

By JOHANNA GONZALEZ
Quill staff writer

Every Monday through Thursday after the final bell rings, backpacks are zipped shut and students begin clearing out of the hallways, one room at Cooper comes alive: the weight room.

On those four days of the week, the weight room is home to the after-school fitness program, which is open to all Cooper students. According to physical education teacher David Connors, who oversees the students in the weight room along with football coach David Hammelman, the after-school program is designed for far more than just building muscle.

“The main goal is for students to have an opportunity to address their health goals and needs,” Connors said. “Many are looking to better their health while others are using it as a resource to enhance their performances for their sport teams.”

At Cooper, the weight room is not treated like a secret facility reserved for varsity athletes or seasoned lifters. Instead, it is a space intentionally designed to welcome everyone, from first-time freshmen to competitive juniors chasing new personal records.

“Students from all backgrounds can come in Monday through Thursday to exercise,” Connors said.

While the atmosphere in the weight room is social, the program itself is structured with real purpose. For students who are part of sports teams already using the facility, there is usually a plan in place related to that team.

“Teams that use the space will have a program for their team already set,” Connors said.

Meanwhile, for others who come in individually or with friends, Connors makes sure to help them develop a plan that will lead them to their fitness goals.

“We use our Teambuildr software for the students to follow and record their workloads so we are able to monitor their progress

over a period of time,” Connors said.

That digital monitoring is more than a modern touch; it is also a way to keep students safe and steadily improving. In fact, safety is something Connors refuses to compromise on.

“Students are reminded not to ego lift for safety. We will respect all weight as if it were a very heavy weight,” he said.

What is more, before students can add weight, they must show that they can move well.

“Good form and technique is required before loading up heavy, regardless of experience level,” Connors said.

Beyond correcting lifts and demonstrating movements, Connors builds workouts around longevity, not just short-term strength. That includes work on balance, stability and controlled tempo training, three elements students often overlook but soon come to appreciate.

“I tend to show them how to do basic movements that will challenge them just as much as doing an advanced lift that may put unwanted stress on their joints,” he said.

According to Connors, students coming to the after-school program tend to gravitate toward some of the same equipment.

“Bench press stations and barbells are two of the most popular stations used,” he said. “Students love to bench press and perform the back squat.”

Another popular station in the weight room is the pull-up bar.

“Students are passionate about successfully performing a pull-up,” Connors said.

While enjoying certain stations can attract students to give the after-school weight program a try, attending regularly is key if students want to see changes in their physique.

“Motivating them to stick with the gym and training is the biggest challenge,” Connors said.

“I tell them all the time to fall in love with the building process and really commit to lifts and movements that challenge them the

most. It will eventually become your favorite lift.”

Connors also tries to remind weight room users that the benefits of weight training do not happen overnight.

“Everyone starts from the ground. We build a foundation that suits them and we will build from that point,” he said.

For students who use the weight room after school as part of their participation in Cooper sports, Connors said the impact of that training can be seen in their performance when competing.

“There is a dramatic difference in performance after a student has committed themselves for a year. Their overall performance is way ahead compared to those that don’t train in the off season,” Connors said.

One multi-sport athlete who has made use of the weight room after school is Robert Nichols (12). As a Nordic skier and cross country runner, Nichols uses the weight room to prepare for both of these physically demanding sports.”

“I enjoy the weight room during the Nordic season because skiing uses all of your muscles,” he said. “Weight training is one of the best ways to prepare for the season other than cardio.”

Nichols credits the weight room with helping him develop strength he could not build elsewhere.

“The weight room has allowed me to train muscles that would be hard to do otherwise,” Nichols said. “It has also taught me how to push through those moments where it feels impossible to finish.”

According to Nichols, more Cooper students should take advantage of the after-school program, even if they are not in a Cooper sport.

“I would encourage others to use the weight room after school because it is a free way to explore fitness,” he said. “It offers students many opportunities to improve their health and it costs nothing, so there is no downside to trying weight training.”

Cooper Competitors

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

Robert Nichols

By DIANA VANG
Quill staff writer

Winter season is the time when Robert Nichols (12) gets to put on his skis and head out into the snow. A dedicated member of the school’s Nordic skiing team, Nichols has spent the past four years mastering a sport that started due to a family connection.

“I started my freshman year because my brother was doing it, so I thought I would give it a try,” he said.

That one decision has since turned into a passion.

“The part I have enjoyed most about Nordic is the community,” Nichols said. “Everyone is so supportive and is always ready to answer a question or give advice.”

This year, Nichols is taking on a new challenge as one of the team captains. Along with leading workouts, Nichols

helps organize equipment and keep things running smoothly. He said he is proud to take on these leadership responsibilities during his final year of high school Nordic.

“It’s going good so far,” he said. According to Nichols, team trips to Hayward, Wisconsin are among his favorite Nordic memories.

“My favorite memories from Nordic skiing are the long days of skiing on the Birkie trails,” he said.

During the fall, Nichols runs cross country. In fact, he cut his personal-best time in the 5K by three-and-a-half minutes this season. In spring, he plans to run and roller ski.

When it comes to school, Nichols said he enjoys his orchestra and EMT classes. During his free time, Nichols likes riding his motorcycle.

After graduation, Nichols plans to pursue carpentry through a trade school or an apprenticeship.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Ray Heiland

By DIANA VANG
Quill staff writer

Ray Heiland (12) is part of the Hawks football squad. According to Heiland, this sport has been a lifelong passion.

“I’ve been playing since I was four,” he said. “It’s just always been a part of my life.”

The love of football runs deep for Heiland, who said what he enjoys most about the sport is seeing hard work pay off on the field.

“It shows the things you learned with your team during practice, and it shows

all on the field,” he said. “Every game is a chance to see teamwork, effort and energy come together.”

Some of Heiland’s favorite football memories do not come from his games under the Friday night lights, but from

the moments that occur at practice.

“The times we all compete doing board drills and seven-on-seven is what sticks with me,” he said. “I enjoy having a blast at practice.”

While Heiland does not hold an official leadership title in football, his presence on the team is undeniable.

“I feel like I’ve got a big heart for the team and I bring the energy to the Hawks,” he said.

Off the field, Heiland enjoys working out, spending time at home and working part-time jobs. As for his after-high school plans, Heiland said he doubts he will continue playing football, but he is focused on some possible career paths.

“I want to take classes that will help me to become a firefighter,” he said. “If that doesn’t work out, my second option is trade school.”



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Canon Terry

By DIANA VANG
Quill staff writer

Canon Terry (12) is part of the Hawks basketball team. Inspired by his father’s passion for the sport, Terry picked up a ball at a young age and never looked back.

“Dad always played basketball and I would always watch him play,” he said. “That encouraged me to give it a try.”

Now a key member of the Cooper basketball team, Terry has developed a deep appreciation for what the game represents beyond the scoreboard. For Terry, the bond formed on the court is as rewarding as any victory.

“I enjoy being able to spend time with my teammates and work as a team,” he said.

Terry’s favorite basketball memory

goes back to his introduction to the sport.

“My first ever season of basketball was special,” he said. “That’s when I really fell in love with the sport.”

As a senior, Terry has stepped into more of a leadership role this year.

“I make sure my teammates give it their 100 percent,” he said. “My goal is to set the tone both in practice and during games, pushing everyone to improve together.”

With graduation approaching this coming spring, Terry said he is focused on making this basketball season his best yet.

“I look forward to improving this season,” he said.

Off the court, Terry’s favorite class is AVID, which he said helps him “prepare for the future.” That future includes attending college, where Terry plans to major in sports management and, hopefully, continue his athletic career.

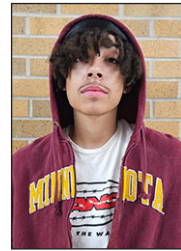


Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Abel Nason

By DIANA VANG
Quill staff writer

Abel Nason (12) is a two-sport athlete who plays football and basketball.

“I’ve been playing football since fifth grade and basketball since third grade,” he said. “It’s something I’ve always loved doing.”

Over the years, Nason has found that the best part of competing is not the wins, but the relationships.

“Working out and creating a bigger bond with my coaches and teammates is what I’ve enjoyed the most,” Nason said.

Those connections have shaped Nason into not only a better player, but a team leader. As captain of the football team, Nason embraced the responsibility that came with guiding his teammates. The leadership experience taught him how to motivate others while

staying focused on his own goals.

“Being able to lead our team and get people in the right places and spots is rewarding,” he said.

When it comes to his favorite sports memory, Nason recalled a highlight from last football season.

“The Armstrong sections game during my junior year was memorable,” he said. “A lineman came to pull to my side, and I hit him on the ground and made the tackle.”

This winter, Nason is turning his attention to basketball, with big ambitions for the season.

“I hope to win a lot of games and win state,” he said.

Outside of sports, Nason enjoys being in nature, spending time with family and playing video games. In the future, he plans to major in journalism, combining his love for storytelling and athletics.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

SENIORS STARTING SEARCH FOR SCHOLARSHIPS continued from page 7

arships where your GPA has to be a 2.6 and above and I’ve applied to the Burger King Foundation scholarship,” she said.

As Bivona pointed out, one difficult aspect of applying for scholarships is writing the required essays. Tlaseca said she has been working through this challenge.

“During the application process, they ask a lot about why you deserve money, and there’s no really good way of saying why,” Tlaseca said.

Echoing this sentiment was Xiong.

“I think the hardest part of a scholarship application process is writing an essay for a specific prompt, only because it’s the most consuming part of the application compared to other sections,” she said.

Having to write essays for scholarship applications is tough to fit into an already busy final year of high

school for seniors. Lule Herrera said she does a lot of planning to balance out her many commitments so she can get everything done.

“I have PSEO, so I have a free period,” she said. “I try my best to finish scholarship applications during those periods.”

According to Xiong, fitting in scholarship work outside of the school day has been beneficial to her.

“If you have a study hall or work time during class, use that time to work on college essays or schoolwork. I would advise doing scholarships in your free time, whether it’s after school or during the weekend,” she said.

Now that she is well into the process of applying for scholarships, Tlaseca encourages her peers to spread a wide net when looking for scholarships.

“The ones with smaller amounts

count just as much as the bigger ones because they really do add up,” she said.

Tlaseca also pointed out the importance of looking into the scholarships offered directly by the schools you are applying to.

“The schools that give out scholarships are ranking higher on my list because the FAFSA only covers so much, and besides savings, scholarships are going to help me out a lot,” she said.

Ultimately, Xiong said seniors who have been unsure about pursuing scholarships should do so given the financial help they can provide.

“I would say that scholarships are a lifesaver,” she said. “Information about yourself and 500-word essays can take you far when going to college. It makes you consider which schools align with you financially and academically.”