



Four-day school week has numerous advantages, drawbacks

Page 4

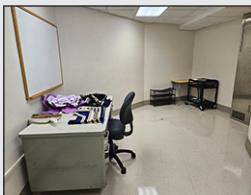
Chamber Singers bring cheer by caroling at staff member homes

Page 6



ALSO INSIDE

News



Prayer room meets needs of students

Hawks can access the dedicated space in the back of room 248 to observe their religious practices during the day

Page 2

News



Good diet choices benefit future health

Being thoughtful about food choices, using resources like MyPlate among the strategies young people can employ to eat better

Page 3

Opinion



Turning work in late is a negative habit

Students who normalize the idea that due dates have no meaning are setting themselves up for a difficult future after graduation

Page 5

Variety



Holiday film *Life* is hard not to like

Frank Capra's famous 1946 release *It's a Wonderful Life* has aged well thanks to its iconic performances and ageless themes

Page 7

Sports



Early snow helps Nordic ski team

After two dry winters in a row, members of the Hawks Nordic squad have been able to strap on their skis right away this year

Page 8

IB DIPLOMA CANDIDATES SUBMIT EXTENDED ESSAYS



Photo by ERIC ZUCCOLA

The diploma candidates celebrate their achievement with staff members Andrea Obranovich (far left) and Jodie Meyer (far right).

By CHANDLER HUNTER
Quill staff writer

While most Cooper students were counting down the days until winter break, a group of seniors arrived in the Media Center after school on December 5 to celebrate something not related to the holidays: the submission of their International Baccalaureate (IB) Extended

Essays (EE) during the Silver Platter Day event.

Silver Platter Day marked the end of an Extended Essay journey that began more than a year earlier, when students first developed a chosen subject and research question for the 4,000-word paper that is required in order to be eligible for the IB Diploma.

On Silver Platter Day, stu-

dents submitted their essays to their supervising teachers atop a literal silver platter. Families, friends, staff members and district leaders gathered to cheer them on as each student finalized their work.

"Silver Platter Day is a celebration for diploma students finishing their Extended Essays," Andrea Obranovich, Cooper's IBMYP Coordinator

and one of the event's primary organizers, said. "They present their final copies of their essays to their supervisor on a silver platter."

The students recognized this year for completing their Extended Essays were Gladys Arasa (12), Alpha Combay (12), Debra Gbidi (12), Faith Johnson (12), Folake Olusesi (12), Julia Pha (12) and Pha-A-Thit Vong-

The 4,000-word project is one part of being eligible for the full IB diploma

soury (12).

According to Obranovich, the preparation for the Silver Platter Day event begins well before the first student steps up to the microphone.

"We put together a slideshow with each candidate's research question, set up the room so that students can use the podium and screen behind them, and, of course, set out a spread of treats to celebrate with afterwards," she said. "Behind the scenes, we also make sure that all candidates have their papers printed out so that they can hand them over on the platter."

According to Obranovich, the purpose of Silver Platter Day is to honor the hard work and resilience of students pursuing the full IB Diploma, which involves many months of research and writing on top of the regular coursework, internal assessments (IAs), extracurriculars and college applications these students must complete.

"This is a rare opportunity for the diploma candidates to be celebrated in their cohort," she said. "There is a lot of attention put on IB testing and preparing for IAs, but this time is set aside just for those who are pursuing the diploma."

One central aspect of Silver Platter Day is its focus on connecting with the community.

"I think that students and

ESSAYS continues on page 7

Program helps Hawks earn missed credits

The after-school credit recovery opportunity takes place in Cooper's Media Center on Mondays, Wednesdays

By DIANA SANCHEZ MORALES
Quill staff writer

Cooper offers an after-school credit recovery program that was created to give students a second chance to earn required credits they may have missed for a variety of reasons. The program runs Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:20-4:30 p.m. in the Media Center.

Working with students in the program are social studies teacher Chris DiSalvi, English teacher Julie Eisfelder, science teacher Caroline Sutliff and math teacher Garrett Bruce. According to DiSalvi, the program takes a supportive approach to helping students move forward.

"The goal is to give kids another chance to earn required credits for graduation. Students may not have earned credits for a variety of reasons, so we take a non-judgmental approach to giving kids an opportunity to get that credit back so they can graduate on time with the skills they need to be productive citizens," DiSalvi said.

DiSalvi explained that the program is designed specifically for students who did not pass a class. However, he added that the reasons behind those failures are often complex and do not always reflect a student's potential or effort.

"It could have been due to many absences, a lack of engagement in class, family circumstances preventing kids from focusing on academics and many other reasons," DiSalvi said.

With the credit recovery sessions taking place in the school's Media Center twice a week, participating students receive a structured but supportive environment after the school day ends. On each day of the program, students follow a clear routine designed to encourage responsibility and steady progress. As students work through the material, they occasionally encounter assessments that must be completed under supervision.



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Math teacher Garrett Bruce is one of the staff members overseeing the class.

When students struggle to understand the material, additional instruction is provided rather than allowing them to fall further behind.

"Students sign in when they arrive," DiSalvi said. "They generally pick up where they left off in their electronic curriculum on Edgenuity and make progress until they have earned a credit. Occasionally, a student may encounter a test. Students must have their tests monitored by a staff mem-

MISSED CREDITS continues on page 8

Sophomores explore areas of interest through Personal Project

Dozens of tenth graders are working with Cooper staff members on a self-chosen topic that allows them to earn an elective credit

By TESSA LENOCH
Quill staff writer

Fifty Cooper sophomores are currently working on their International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Program (MYP) Personal Projects. Through this project, students are able to earn an elective credit by exploring a topic of their choosing for an extended period of time, allowing them to focus on their personal interests.

"Students complete three major pieces to the project: a process journal, a report and then their actual project. Projects could range from writing, playing an instrument, writing a song or making an art piece to something less tangible like learning a language. The entire project really isn't about the product itself, but rather what you learn about yourself and your learning style along the way," IBMYP Coordinator Andrea Obranovich said.

According to Obranovich, the IB personal project challenges sophomores to go above and beyond their normal classwork.

"Motivation tends to be hard, as it is for all of us. Like any passion project, we start out with a lot of enthusiasm and then sometimes lose steam along the way. Since all students need a staff supervisor for their project, it can also sometimes be hard to coordinate time to meet with them since we all have such busy schedules," Obranovich said.

Students work on the Personal Project over the course of many months. Despite the long process and the busy school schedule they already have, participating students still find the Personal Project to be rewarding from beginning to end. One student enjoying the process is Ellen Hakala (10), who is working on a Personal Project focused on ancestry.

"The overall theme is going to relate to how all of my ancestors who came before me have shaped who I am today. I went about choosing this topic be-

cause it was strongly recommended by my teachers, but I was also very interested because I never really knew anything about any sort of family history in my family before this," Hakala said.

While Hakala has faced the same stress Obranovich mentioned, she ultimately decided the process itself was worth it.

"I have faced some stress doing the report at the end and wanting all my responses in the process journal to be perfect. It's much harder than I thought to find the time to sit down and work on the project while also being wrapped in school work. For future students working on their Personal Projects, I would recommend to relax about the process journal and really take in what you are learning. Although it may be stressful or challenging sometimes, it's only going to help you," she said.

Through the Personal Project, Hakala has

PROJECT continues on page 2

Muslim students find community in new group

The MSA is designed to create a safe space for Cooper's Muslim population

By MANAL BARE
Quill staff writer

The Muslim population is small but strong at Cooper. In order to support one another, Muslim students established the Muslim Student Association (MSA) as a Cooper club last school year.

The MSA was founded with the goal of building a space where Muslim students feel represented, supported and fully themselves. It also was established to serve as an activist group that brings Muslim students' concerns to the attention of school officials.

Every Friday, in Room 330 during HLL A and B, students come for weekly MSA meetings. They pray together, share conversations and participate in activities and lectures that explore their faith, shared experiences, identity and community. In the past, MSA has welcomed guest speakers, hosted meaningful discussions and created a unique space of its own at Cooper.

"When I talk to other MSA students, I notice we all have similar shared experiences, which makes us closer," MSA member Naimo Aden (12) said.

The journey to creating a space for Muslim students has not always been easy. MSA President Muna Omar (12) said students did a lot of work to bring the group into existence.

"It took a year to get approved for our club and another year alone to have our own proper prayer room and place for our meetings," Omar said.

Over the past year, the MSA board has advocated for integrity and fairness from the school regarding prayer accommodations. Specifically, they pushed for a prayer room, a dedicated place where students can fulfill their daily religious obligations without feeling rushed, uncomfortable or overlooked. At MSA, the mission is simple: every student deserves the ability to practice their faith with respect at Cooper.

MSA has also pushed its efforts beyond Cooper. Last year, the group collaborated with Armstrong on a podcast aimed at improving district policies and helping Muslim students across the district feel safe, heard and supported.

Even though the Muslim community on campus may be small, MSA has successfully created an environment where students can gather and know they are not alone. Looking ahead, the group hopes to continue this growth. Future plans include celebrating holidays together, collaborating with other high schools and universities, and hosting events to strengthen their community. It is hoped that these initiatives will help the group achieve its core mission.

"I love how well-connected and tight-knit our small community is," Hamdi Abshir (12) said.

PROJECT

continued from page 1

been able to discover facts about her family history.

"I've learned stories about ancestors I had never even been aware of until now, and received so many pictures and articles from my grandma," she said.

Obranovich encourages students thinking about completing a Personal Project to do so, citing the lessons it teaches as the ultimate reward.

"I think that students learn a lot about themselves and what it looks like to learn independently and to take on something big and persevere through that," she said. "Don't be afraid to reach out when you're losing motivation or struggling. We want to see you succeed in this and are always willing to help make that happen."

School nurse now covering multiple schools

In addition to Cooper, Mattie Melin oversees Armstrong, Highview, Robbinsdale Transitions Center, Robbinsdale Virtual Academy



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Mattie Melin started in the district six years ago by coordinating the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

By JA'LAYIAH MCCLINTON
Quill staff writer

Mattie Melin is the new head nurse at Cooper starting this school year. She came into this role following last year's budget cuts, which resulted in her overseeing the nurse's office at multiple district schools on different days of the week.

Melin has spent six years in the district, five of which have been at the high school level. She began at Robbinsdale Spanish Immersion and Neill Elementary School before moving to Armstrong High School. Now, she supports all the

district's high schools.

"My role has changed a lot. When I first started, I was in charge of the COVID-19 response. That meant I was contact tracing and educating staff on guidelines. My role has also expanded. I am now overseeing five programs: Highview, Robbinsdale Virtual Academy, Robbinsdale Transitions Center, Cooper High School and Armstrong High School," she said.

The school nurse's day involves far more than handing out ice packs. Melin said she creates health plans, trains staff, manages immunizations, evaluates student needs and helps shape

long-term district health policies. She explained that school nurses work almost like doctors in an emergency room.

"We treat everyone. We don't have previous health information, there are emergency events, and we are without any of the equipment or tools that can make treatment happen then and there," Melin said.

Many of the issues Melin sees come from exhaustion, lack of sleep and anxiety. These issues can cause headaches, stomach aches and fatigue. In fact, Melin estimates that 50-70 percent of unscheduled visits to the nurse's office could be prevented with better sleep and

consistent meals.

"[Many of these visits] wouldn't happen if you got a good night's sleep and ate breakfast and lunch," Melin said.

Even with its challenges, Melin said she finds her job rewarding. She enjoys talking with students and helping them figure out what is going on with their health. She also works closely with teachers, counselors, social workers and parents to make sure students get the support they need, especially when the healthcare system makes that difficult.

"We are all a team. I love how this district has created a culture of collaboration. If there is a student that I see and suspect there is something beyond health at play (home stress, school stress, etc.), I am quick to ask the student if I can loop in the counselor of social worker. Parents ultimately are the ones who make decisions regarding their child's health, so I do my best to be a bridge between the student's needs and wants and the parents' needs and wants," she said.

Outside of school, Melin enjoys reading, biking, running and spending time with her dog, George, and her husband. She sings professionally in the evenings and recently completed her second marathon.

What is more, Melin said she enjoys staying informed by reading. In fact, Melin has read 167 books so far this year, many focused on health and medicine.

Melin's central piece of advice to students is simple: be kind to yourself and reach out for help when you need it.

"Life is hard enough without you beating yourself up. Try to say something kind to yourself every period and be sure to reach out for help when needed," she said.

Room gives Muslim students chance to pray at school

Hawks can access the dedicated space in the back of room 248 to observe their religious practices during the day

By JOHANNA GONZALEZ
Quill staff writer

Cooper is now offering an Islamic prayer space located in the back of room 248 so the school's Muslim students have a dedicated area to observe their religious practices during the day.

"We have a large number of Muslim students at Cooper," performance electives teacher Rachel Fettig, who helps organize the room, said. "One of the five pillars of Islam is Salah, or prayer, and this includes praying five times a day. Prayer times change throughout the year, but two of these prayers, Dhuhr (midday prayer) and Asr (afternoon prayer) often fall during the school day. Because it is a requirement for Muslim students to pray at these times, it is critical that they have a dedicated, quiet space in which to do so. Muslim students at Cooper have done a great job advocating for themselves and their needs with respect to the prayer room, which is how it got its start."

According to Fettig, the establishment of the room shows the commitment of Muslims students to their religion as well the appreciation the school has for the diversity of its students and their traditions.

"Cooper supports freedom of religious expression for all students, and making a prayer room available to students is in keeping with this



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Students making use of the prayer room must follow multiple guidelines.

practice," Fettig said.

When making use of the prayer room, there are rules that students and teachers need to follow.

"Teachers are informed of the prayer times each week. If a student requests a pass to the prayer room for these times, teachers must provide one. Students are allowed 10-15 minutes to get to the prayer room, pray and return to class. Students are responsible for any work that they miss while in the prayer room," Fettig said.

Access to the prayer room is available during the day, which means it is important for the room to be situated in a central location that students can easily reach.

"The prayer room is in the back of the Climate and Culture Room, and it is supervised by [David] Kek and [Ebony] Rich. If they are absent, students can ask hallway staff to open the room for them. There is a secondary prayer room in room 330 that is available as an overflow room," Fettig said.

During the current school year, Cooper administrators, teachers and staff have made an increased effort to raise awareness about the prayer room.

"Students often find out about the prayer room from other students or from [the administrative staff]. Staff learn about the prayer room from staff

meetings and weekly newsletters from [Head Principal Shaunece] Smith," Fettig said. "The existence of the prayer room space, as well as the Muslim Student Association, has done a lot to educate students and staff about the unique experiences and needs of Muslim students at Cooper."

According to Kek, who is one of Cooper's Climate and Culture Specialists, the prayer room is a necessary feature of the school.

"It's imperative that we have a dedicated prayer room to accommodate our Muslim students," Kek said. "Recognition of the strengths within our students is an essential core value of our district. Religion is one of the related factors to these strengths."

Kek said students using the prayer room have several guidelines they need to follow once they arrive at room 248.

"Prayer time should not exceed 10 minutes, there is a max of six students at a time, it can only be used for prayer and only during prayer times," Kek said.

The students making use of the Islamic prayer room have expressed their appreciation that Cooper has made a space like that available to them.

"I consider it a really nice and

CHANCE TO PRAY
continues on page 6

Get Ready guides Hawks toward post-graduation plan

Program coordinator Ka Siab Yan said interested students can get help with exploring colleges and careers

By DIANA SANCHEZ MORALES
Quill staff writer

Questions about college, careers and life after high school become more urgent for Cooper seniors as graduation approaches. The Get Ready program, operating out of College and Career Center in room 211, has become a central resource for students trying to navigate those decisions.

The program's coordinator, Ka Siab Yan, describes Get Ready as a support system designed to guide seniors through the transition to life after Cooper.

"Get Ready focuses on supporting seniors in their pursuit of college and career after high school," she said. "The goal is to

help students move forward with confidence."

Choosing a path for life after high school can feel overwhelming to high school students. Get Ready aims to make that process clearer by offering information, tools and guidance tailored to each senior's needs. According to Yan, the program exists to help students make sense of the choices available.

"The program is designed to help students understand what their options look like after high school," she said.

Although Get Ready has been part of Cooper for several years, Yan said awareness of its presence has grown significantly among students in recent years.

"Get Ready has been around for a while, but has been the most active in the last three-to-four years. It has definitely changed in terms of how we provide services to our students, but the mission remains the same. For example, we have started to focus on school-wide events rather than targeted, one-on-one discussions with students, though we still provide that service when needed," Yan said.

While the broader approach focuses on more school-wide events such as fairs, workshops and classroom visits, Yan added that one-on-one advising still remains available for students who want personalized support.

According to Yan, the in-

creased outreach appears to be making a difference. She reported a noticeable rise in students' participation, especially following the program's placement in the College and Career Center.

"We have definitely seen an increase with students interacting with the College and Career Center and being more confident when it comes to their plans after high school," Yan said.

For seniors and juniors looking for more direct support, Yan said the Get Ready staff are at Cooper every Monday and Wednesday to provide drop-in help for students working on applications,

GET READY
continues on page 5

Teens need help maintaining good diet

Being thoughtful about food choices, using resources like MyPlate among the strategies young people can employ to eat better



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

The daily school lunch period is one time during which student food choices are especially important.

By DIANA SANCHEZ MORALES
Quill staff writer

Teen eating habits are always a topic of conversation for high school students. With busy class schedules, involvement in sports and other activities, and a limited time for lunch, many students find it hard to make consistent, balanced food choices. Health experts say the eating habits teens build now can influence everything from energy levels to long-term wellness. Fortunately, there are easy ways for busy teens to access healthier breakfasts, lunches and snacks.

When it comes to teen nutrition, experts agree that it is important to include a variety of foods that provide a combination of protein, dietary fat, carbohydrates and fiber to help them feel satisfied but also have energy throughout the day. One online resource that can help with this is MyPlate Kitchen, which provides recipes and information to

support building healthy and budget-friendly meals. The site also includes nutrition analysis for each recipe to help consumers choose meals that meet nutrition goals. According to Bill Rooney, a health teacher at Cooper, MyPlate can be a helpful tool.

“It can be difficult to eat healthy as a teen if there aren’t good food choices in the house. If there are good food choices, plan meals following the MyPlate initiative. Half your plate should be fruits and vegetables and the other half protein and carbs,” he said.

Beyond the importance of diet, sleep, stress and screen time can also affect eating habits for teens. Research has shown that lack of sleep, high levels of stress and an abundance of screen time can throw off natural hunger cues and lead to more cravings for sugary or high-carbohydrate foods. When teens are tired or stressed, they are more likely to snack for comfort,

and heavy screen can encourage late-night eating and unhealthy food choices. All together, Rooney said these factors make it harder for teens to maintain balanced, healthy diets, which can lead to negative health outcomes.

“Issues like stress and screen time often lead to poor choices like more sugary, high-carb foods, especially late at night, due to hormonal changes, disrupted hunger signals, emotional eating and mindless munching while distracted by screens, ultimately increasing obesity risk,” he said.

In order to avoid this cycle of issues, teens should focus on developing a healthy diet. A balanced teen diet focuses on steady energy, not restriction, and should include a mix of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and healthy fats throughout the day. Additionally, teens need regular meals and snacks that keep them fueled. According to Rooney, it is less about

perfect eating and more about getting a variety of foods that support growth, mood and activity.

“A balanced teen diet should follow the MyPlate initiative. My suggestion would be to eat more protein than is recommended and a little less carbs, but make sure you eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day,” he said.

Another critical part of a healthy diet is drinking water. Water plays a huge role in concentration, mood and athletic performance for teens. Even mild dehydration can make it harder to focus in class and can lead to irritability or low energy. For teen athletes, staying hydrated keeps muscles working properly prevents fatigue and supports faster recovery. Rooney said that water is just as important as food and sleep for overall health.

“Water is crucial for the brain. Dehydration impairs memory, attention and energy, while consistent hydration boosts mental clarity, task performance and mood. Drinking plenty of water can help an athlete by preventing fatigue, regulating body temperature and maintaining endurance. Athletes need to drink before, during and after exercise, replacing fluids lost,” he said.

By eating in a healthy fashion, students will be better able to balance sports, jobs and extracurriculars. That is because their bodies and brains need steady fuel to keep up with demanding schedules. Regular balanced meals help maintain energy, support focus in class and prevent burnout during practices or long shifts. Rooney emphasized that when students eat well, they recover faster, stay more alert and can perform better in everything they are involved in.

“The teenage years are a time for rapid development, so eating well-balanced meals every day instead of snacking will be beneficial to the teen. Eat the correct amount of nutrients for strong bones, muscle development and cognitive function,” Rooney said.

Part One of Two

Teachers utilize lunch period in different ways

Grabbing a bite to eat is not always the main focus of the 30-minute break

By DIANA VANG
Quill staff writer

The lunch period can be a predictable routine for students: wait in line, sit with friends, finish homework and try to squeeze in a little downtime before class. However, for Cooper teachers, the same 30 minutes look very different. As this first part of a two-part series will show, some teachers spend lunch working through piles of grading, others guard the time as a rare mental break and several eat surrounded by students seeking a quiet place to be.

For art teacher Claire Mielke, lunch is less about food and more about recharging. She almost always eats either in her own room or in fellow art teacher Madeline McNeil’s classroom.

“I do not eat in the teachers’ lounge,” Mielke said. “I need quiet and dim lighting with few people to recharge my social battery and be ready for the afternoon.”

Like many teachers, Mielke uses the first few minutes to complete small tasks, such as checking email, running to the restroom or mentally planning for the next class. But the most important part, she said, is the silence.

“I find the downtime and quiet to be most valuable in the middle of the day,” she said. “Putting my brain on rest mode is really helpful to feel ready and excited to see my students in the afternoon.”

Mielke said she wishes one thing could change about lunch: having more time.

“I wish lunch periods were longer for everyone, including kids,” she said.

English teacher Julie Eisfelder shares the same desire for quiet. She typically eats at her desk or in her office, carving out time for stillness after a busy morning.

“I usually eat where there are no students,” Eisfelder said. “I just need a little down time, a more quiet time without students to kind of re-energize for the afternoon.”

Eisfelder said she tries her best to make lunch a true break.

“I eat lunch and try to not do work,” she said.

However, she added that deadlines sometimes win.

“If I am in a bind, I do use my lunch period to make copies or quickly catch up on some grading,” she said.

Protecting the lunch break typically pays off for Eisfelder.

“I try to protect it for myself as a mental health break,” she said. “I enjoy my afternoons much more if I can not do work over my lunch period.”

Fellow English teacher Kristen Prillwitz usually spends her entire lunch working, something she said changed when she became a parent.

“I spend my lunches working now,” she explained. “I used to take a break and eat with colleagues; however, since becoming a mom, I use my lunches to work so I have less work to take home.”

Prillwitz almost always eats in her classroom while catching up on emails, grading and planning. However, she said she appreciates the small slice of quiet that lunch brings.

“It’s nice to have a few quiet moments to get a bit more work done,” she said.

One floor above Prillwitz and Eisfelder, science teacher Anne Johnson tends to spend lunch working. She eats at her desk, partly for quiet and partly for ef-

Climate trends promising active winter weather

After two warmer and drier years, forecasters are expecting a return to cold and wet weather in winter of 2025-2026

By TYLER GOODMAN
Quill staff writer

The 2025-2026 winter season is expected to be colder and snowier than normal.

The National Weather Service reports that people should expect temperatures that are below average, which means temperatures most likely lower than 20 degrees Fahrenheit in the Twin Cities area. Additionally, higher precipitation is expected, which may be a good thing for those Minnesotans who have missed the snow due to the lack of winter precipitation over the past two years.

Predicting these long-range forecasts takes a lot of work. According to the World Climate Service, long-range forecasting uses boundary conditions to create its predictions. Boundary conditions are the ocean surface temperatures and how much ice surface is exposed to the atmosphere. These boundary conditions can affect the atmosphere for weeks or months. However, while both ice surface and ocean temperatures are



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Snow and ice became a fixture around school thanks to early winter storms.

what make up boundary conditions, conditions are ultimately more affected by oceans.

La Nina and El Nino also have a big role in what kind of climate people will experience around the Pacific and in North America. According to the National Ocean Service, El Nino is what pushes warm water toward

the U.S. west coast, usually around December due to its weakening winds. When this happens, northern areas in both the U.S. and Canada become warmer and dryer. However, if the winds do not weaken, it leads to colder and wetter northern regions.

La Nina has the opposite effect of El Nino. When a La Nina event is

occurring, it pushes more warm water toward Asia, which brings more cold and more nutrient-rich water to the surrounding areas.

For Minnesota, this winter will have a lot more snow and cold compared to the past two years. According to KARE 11, the 2024-2025 winter had so little snow that as of January 23, 2025, the Twin Cities area had gained only 1.7 inches of snow. In contrast, southern states got significantly more snow last January, including Florida, which had already received 9.8 inches of snowfall.

According to the National Weather Service, the predicted snowfall for this winter is ranging between 30 and 50 inches of snow. Temperatures are also predicted to be lower than average, which may mean it could get colder than the -20 degree temperatures from January 21, 2025.

The snowier weather may mean good things for sports like Nordic skiing. However, the colder temperatures may mean that some school days could shift to E-Learning and some school events could be canceled.

Avoiding common mistakes can ensure health in winter

Being more mindful about what to do, not to do when the weather turns frigid can impact your well-being this season

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

The winter months have arrived with full force in Minnesota. With the cold temperatures and the snowy weather conditions, it is often hard to stay healthy. That is why it is important to adopt certain habits to avoid falling into a negative spiral that leads to illness. Fortunately, there are some effective ways to stay healthy in the wintertime.

1. Stay rested

The first way to stay healthy is to keep a regular sleep schedule. Indeed, having regular sleep

2. Stay hydrated

Another way to stay healthy during the winter months is to stay hydrated. According to the

3. Stay on top of hygiene

Having a handwashing routine and covering coughs are good strategies to stay healthy. By doing both things, you reduce

4. Stay active

Another good tip is to take

ENSURE HEALTH continues on page 8

LUNCH PERIOD continues on page 7

Starting new year with resolutions not always smart

Putting undue pressure on oneself to change in some way can be counterproductive

By ROSE VANG-LOHNES
Quill staff writer

Every time the new year comes around, the most common thing people do is make a new year’s resolution. Personally, I have never seen the point of making a new year’s resolution. From what I hear, a lot of people either forget them or give up on their goal halfway through the new year. Despite these realities, there are many reasons why people continue to make new year’s resolutions.

The most common reason for a resolution relates to self-improvement. A lot of people use the start of a new year as a base line to motivate themselves to improve in some way. However, it is often the case that they might get a bit too far ahead of themselves, take on more than they can handle and then get overwhelmed by the resolution. I think that also plays a big part in people giving up on their new year’s resolution: they get too ambitious and bite off more than they can chew. When humans get too overwhelmed, they tend to give up on their goals. Now, I am not faulting anyone for being optimistic, but it is important when making resolutions to take one step at a time instead of leaping from one step to another. If you are not methodical, you are going to get burned out and overwhelmed quickly.

Another reason that people make a new year’s resolution is because it is a symbolic opportunity to start fresh. This reason is interesting because people are inclined to make a big deal out of a symbolic event like the start of a new year. However, if we take away the “new year’s” part of the phrase, it would literally be a day like any other day. Ultimately, if we never made new year’s day such a big deal, people would stop making new year’s resolutions because the symbolic nature of the day would lose its importance. It is extremely interesting how we give so much meaning to a single day. Yet, when that single day has passed and no longer holds meaning, we forget or disregard anything related to it, including our resolutions.

The final reason why some people establish a new year’s resolution is because they feel pressured to do so. Sometimes, people feel like they have to do something when everyone around them is doing it or tells them to do it. As a culture, the idea of a new year’s resolution is so ingrained that we all know that phrase and tradition. Therefore, it is completely understandable when people who felt pressured to make a list of resolutions do not even attempt anything on that list. A resolution loses its meaning when you do not feel inspired or motivated to do something that is meant to help you improve.

Overall, everyone has their own reason for making or not making new year’s resolutions. It may range from a desire for self-improvement to receiving pressure from one’s peers. But it is important to understand that whether or not you achieve your new year’s resolution does not define you as a person. As long as you do your best and achieve some of the things on your list, you are doing better than many other people.

Moving to four-day week has pros, cons

Budget issues have prompted some districts in Minnesota, other states to reduce the number of school days each week



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

The morning bus routine would be seen fewer times each school year in districts that decide to reduce the number of weekly contact days.

By BEN KENYON
Quill staff writer

I have heard the idea of a four-day school week being tossed around from time to time. It always struck me as being some burned-out student’s far-out dream of going to school less often that would never actually be implemented. My thought about it remained this way until I eventually got more curious, decided to make a quick Google search, and came across the data that some 2,100 individual public schools in the United States make use of this shortened-week system, including several in Minnesota.

You mean to tell me that this is actually a thing in practice? If I was a student in one of these

other districts, I could have more time to be by myself or with my family? Like me, I am sure the vast majority of Cooper students would not kick up a fuss if we only had to attend four days of school each week instead of five. Just think of what it would be like to have an entire extra day’s worth of time to do whatever you would like to do.

This grand attractor, if you will, is what got me interested in doing some more surface-level research on the topic. Unsurprisingly, it turns out that there are quite a few factors to be considered before making a monumental decision like changing the number of school days. Some issues to consider include the potential for learning loss, childcare challenges for parents working full-time

jobs, families who are reliant on meals at school and challenges in the academic performance of younger children who may not benefit from the possibility of having an extra day off. All of these things need to be thoroughly talked over before jumping the gun on this sort of fundamental change to the school schedule.

On the other hand, there are a number of credible advantages that I have read about which give legitimacy to the idea of a four-day school week. First off, what is beneficial to the schools as establishments is that an extra day off each week adds quite a bit back to the school’s budget and it makes working there more attractive to teachers, who will enjoy a more favorable work-life balance. With regard to how students gain

from this revised system, districts which use the four-day school week can expect to see an improved school culture, improved student mental health, a more balanced learning experience, and greater rest thanks to the extra day off.

All told, it is with certainty that I can say that the shortened school week is not a one-size-fits-all deal, and that I am not exactly for it nor against it. I think that the proposal for a four-day school week should be handled on a case-by-case basis and that the representatives and the community of school districts considering it should sit down and have an in-depth discussion about whether implementing it would be the right decision for them or not.

Digital pass system seems to be working at Cooper

The convenience of not having to carry a physical object in order to exit a classroom offers more benefits than the old system

By JA'LAYIAH MCCLINTON
Quill staff writer

Walking through the halls used to feel like a guessing game with regard to who was supposed to be there and when they were supposed to be there. However, with our school’s new digital hall pass system, that confusion is clearing up. This upgrade is not just about adding technology; it is about creating a safer, more organized campus where students can move around responsibly and staff can focus on supporting us rather than tracking us down. Far from being a burden, the digital pass offers a simple, modern way to keep our school running smoothly.

Digital passes have improved how people move around during the school day. Instead of searching for a wooden block or a paper slip, the process is quick and organized with just the click of a button. In contrast, physical passes are easily dropped, for-

Bathroom (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)	Locker (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)
Water Fountain (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)	Nurse (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)
To Another Classroom/Teacher (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)	Resource Room/SDC (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)
Main Office (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)	Coaches Corner (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)
Full Service Community Schools (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)	Athletic Office (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)
Counselors Office (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)	Media Center (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)
Social Workers Office (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)	Cafeteria (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)
Prayer Room (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)	Bathroom (Co-Teacher) (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)
Health Mentor (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)	Get Ready (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)
TRIO (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)	Culture and Climate Room (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)
Math Lounge (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)	College and Career Center (2025-26 Robbinsdale Cooper Hig)

Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Teachers create and assign passes using a system in Infinite Campus.

gotten in classrooms or mixed up between students, which can slow everything down and cause unnecessary disruptions.

Digital passes make things smoother because once a teacher approves the pass, the timer starts

automatically. There is no guessing or keeping track by hand when it comes to the teacher’s responsibilities. It just feels more efficient to allow the teacher to focus on teaching and not on personally timing each student who

leaves the room.

Digital passes also solve the constant problem of lost hall passes. Wooden blocks can break or get left in random places like bathroom stalls, and paper slips can fall out of pockets or be accidentally thrown away. A digital pass cannot be misplaced, which cuts down on interruptions and confusion.

Finally, the digital pass system helps with safety. Staff in the hallways can easily see who is out of class, which keeps the school more aware and organized. It also makes it easier for them to notice unfamiliar people or anyone who enters the building without authorization.

Overall, digital passes are cleaner, quicker and more reliable than physical passes. The new approach helps make the school day run better without the drama of old-school hall passes. It is a system worth keeping as the school continues to modernize and improve.

The Quill

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Turning in work late is a habit to avoid

Students who normalize the idea that due dates have no meaning are setting themselves up for a difficult future



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Meeting deadlines for formatives and summatives is a life skill that will pay off for students after high school.

From the Editors

The end of each quarter and semester are times when every student is scrambling to turn in their assignments in order to earn a decent grade. These are also times when some students take advantage of their teachers’ tolerance of late work as a way to turn in their assignments after their posted due dates in hopes those teachers will cut them a break. Unfortunately, when teachers tolerate late work, it causes students to turn in their work whenever they feel like it, which creates a negative cycle that hurts student learning.

One type of assignment where

late work seems to be an issue is formative assignments. These are the day-to-day assignments students have to do to demonstrate their learning and develop the skills they need to eventually do well on the summative. Many teachers are lenient about submitting formatives on time, so students learn that they can turn them in late. What happens in this case is that students try to finish up all of the late formatives right before the summative, which does not help them learn or demonstrate their skills. As a result, their performance on the actual summative tends to suffer because the student truly is not ready for it.

When a majority of students in a class gets in the habit of turning in their work late, it causes the teacher

to slow down his or her lesson plans. That is because teachers cannot move on with a new lesson when half of the class is behind on turning in materials from the old lesson. While this situation must be frustrating for the teachers, it is even more annoying to the students who make an effort to fully complete all of their work on time. Now, they are forced to slow down, which may cause them to become disengaged from class. One can see how this quickly turns into a cycle that it is hard to escape from.

Another bad aspect of turning in work late is that it eventually has an impact on the summatives in class. In some cases, students will rush at the last minute to finish all of the for-

matives before the summative, but this rush does not help them learn the necessary content or skills to do well on the summative. Instead, it is often just a student copying the answers from another student’s sheet. It is important to remember that work completion is very different from actual learning, and students who are more concerned about the former are doing themselves a disservice.

Making matters worse is that many students are taking advantage of the chance to complete their summatives at the last possible minute. If they learn that teachers will take formatives late, they assume the same thing will apply to summatives, so students will procrastinate and take care of the final assignments well after the due date, usually suffering a reduction in points as a penalty. Much like finishing the formatives at the last minute, late work on summatives also tends to be of low quality and does not properly reflect one’s skills and learning.

Clearly, late work is a problem at every school and Cooper is no different. While it is definitely the case that many students have jobs and other responsibilities outside of school that sometimes keep them from working on their assignments for class, not turning in work on time holds the entire class back and takes away learning time from students who want to go forward. The only way to solve this problem and get students to start turning in their work on time is for teachers to start setting stricter rules on when work will be turned in by students. If teachers decide to no longer accept any late work after its due date, it will encourage students to keep up with their school work.

Facing loss is a central step in moving on

Not dealing with the heavy emotions connected to grief can cause larger issues later

By ROSE VANG-LOHNES
Quill staff writer

Losing someone you know and love is never an easy thing to deal with. All the memories and time you had with them are constantly on your mind. It hurts the most when you realize that they are not coming back. While I have never lost someone I know due to death, I have lost people from them leaving and never returning to my life again. No matter the reason for someone being absent from your life, grief about that loss is bound to result. It is how you cope with that loss that can have a considerable impact on you as a person.

The most important thing you have to do when dealing with loss is accept your emotions. You have to acknowledge that you did, indeed, lose something important to you. Avoiding that fact and feeling will only drive you deeper into your sadness and grief. Using any form of substance, partying every night, drowning yourself in work or scrolling on your phone all day in bed is not going to change what happened. While I am not saying that you cannot take time for yourself to deal with your emotions, there is a difference between distracting yourself and productively processing the feelings you are facing.

It may be hard to reach out for help, but it is important that you have a support system to keep you afloat when dealing with loss. Sometimes, we may tend to hide and isolate ourselves as we deal with our grief, but you should not shut out the people who care about you. It may be hard, but you need to let people in and comfort you. It does not mean that you are weak if you ask for support. Instead, you need that time to be around people who not only care about you, but also make you happy. You have to let yourself feel those positive emotions even in a time of grief. Humans need connection and love to thrive in their time of need.

I cannot stress enough the importance of being patient with yourself when facing loss. Do not get mad at yourself for crying randomly or that you are not moving on fast enough. You are allowed to be human. Losing someone or something important to you is going to have an impact on you. Let yourself cry, let yourself grieve and let yourself feel your emotions. Anyone who shames you or belittles you for that should be ignored. If you are not hurting yourself or anyone else, then there is no need for anyone to be harsh to you.

Ultimately, no one should try to rush or ignore grief because that will hurt you even more. People are allowed to sit in their emotions and deal with their grief however they need to. If someone you know is dealing with a loss, be there to support them and be with them when they need you. If you are the person dealing with a loss, reach out to those who love you and do not hide yourself away. Dealing with grief is not an easy process, but that does not mean that you will never be able to move on.

Choosing one's post-graduation path can be stressful

While college seems to be the most talked about option, there are many other ways to take the next step in life

By ANGEL JARQUIN RAMIREZ
Quill staff writer

As graduation approaches, many seniors find themselves facing one of the biggest decisions of their lives: whether or not to go to college. Attending a four-year college or university has long been considered the natural next step after high school, but rising tuition costs, alternative career pathways and growing skepticism about the value of a degree have challenged that tradition. With apprenticeships, gap years, trade schools and immediate entry into the workforce becoming increasingly appealing, the question of what comes after senior year has never felt more open-ended.

For many seniors, going to college remains the most familiar post-graduation path. College can offer a wide range of benefits. For example, no matter what you are interested in, there is almost always a program or major that fits your goals. By completing a college degree, students also increase their chances of establishing a stable career. In fact, college graduates not only have lower unemployment rates, but they are also more likely to earn a higher salary than people without a degree. I personally plan on going to college because, with the right program, I can work toward becoming a radiologic technologist.

Going to a trade school or en-



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Mr. Rosenblum in the College and Career Center can be a critical resource.

tering an apprenticeship program instead of attending a traditional college can be a viable option as well. Trade programs often cost significantly less than four-year universities and many programs can be completed in one or two years. Students learn specific, hands-on skills that lead directly to careers in fields such as plumbing, cosmetology, HVAC, electrical work, automotive technology and more. Apprenticeships provide the added benefit of allowing students to earn money while learning the trade. As a result, students gain real-world experience without the burden of large student

loans. For students who prefer hands-on learning or want a more direct path into the workforce, trade schools and apprenticeships can offer both stability and opportunity.

Another option some seniors consider is taking a gap year or going straight into a job after high school. A gap year can provide time to save money, travel, explore interests or simply take a break before committing to a long-term plan. It can also help students gain clarity about their goals so they do not end up spending money on classes they are unsure about. However, a gap year also

comes with challenges. Without a structured plan, it can be easy to lose momentum or delay decisions indefinitely.

On the other hand, working immediately after graduation allows students to start earning income right away, which can be especially helpful for those who need to support themselves or their families. Still, jumping into a job without further training may limit long-term career options unless students later pursue additional education or certifications.

Ultimately, there is no single right answer to the question of whether going to college is the best choice after high school. For students with specific career goals that require a degree, college may be the most direct path. For others, entering the workforce, starting an apprenticeship or attending a trade school may offer a quicker and more affordable route to a stable career. Meanwhile, for students who need time to figure things out, a gap year can be valuable if it is properly planned.

Regardless of the ultimate path, what matters most is having a plan. After all, graduation is not just an ending but the beginning of whatever comes next. Whether you choose college, a trade, a job or time to explore your options, what is important is choosing the future that feels right for you.

Conferences still serve a useful function for high schoolers

Bringing all stakeholders in a student's success together for a meeting can be a great way to make sure everyone is on the same page

By ANGEL JARQUIN RAMIREZ
Quill staff writer

Several times each semester, parents flock to Cooper for the familiar routine of parent-teacher conferences. However, as online grade portals and email updates from teachers become part of everyday school life, some students, teachers and parents are beginning to wonder whether traditional conferences are still necessary. For some, conferences offer meaningful conversations that technology cannot replace; for others, conferences have become an outdated formality in an already packed school calendar. It is important for us to consider the

role parent-teacher conferences play and whether they are truly helping students succeed.

As a student, I believe conferences are necessary. Parents deserve to know how students are doing in school. For every parent, knowing the truth about whether their child is failing classes or not is important. This can help parents know if they should be celebrating your successes or grounding you until you get your grades up. Without conferences, getting accurate information is more challenging.

One reason some students do not like conferences is because they are made to accompany their parents to these meetings. I certain-

ly know that I do not like going to conferences with my parents. At the same time, I think it is still important for me to attend with my parents so we all know how I am doing in school and everyone is on the same page. Ultimately, attending conferences makes it unlikely you will lie to your parents about your grades because your teachers will tell them the truth.

Conferences also are important because they can create high-value opportunities for learning, connection and visibility. Conferences can help you learn different things to do in order for you to get your grades up. For example, your teacher can take you through the school work

you need to complete and help you come up with a plan to stay on track. Having your parents there to participate helps make them part of the plan as well.

In the end, while modern communication tools make it easier than ever to share grades and updates, nothing replaces the value of a real conversation between the adults who care most about a student’s success. Parent-teacher conferences create space for deeper understanding, clearer expectations and the kind of teamwork that will not happen through a screen. If our goal is to support students academically and personally, then these meetings are a necessity.

GET READY
continued from page 2

essays or career exploration.

As seniors prepare for life after Cooper, Yang said Get Ready continues to serve as a key support system, one designed to make the transition out of high school clearer, more accessible and far less stressful.

“Students are not required to participate in the Get Ready program but should be aware that all events and services are available to them at all times. We encourage students to visit us and the College and Career Center if they ever have any questions or are unsure of where to start,” Yang said.

Premier Performers

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

Isabelle Atkins

By TYLER GOODMAN
Quill staff writer

Isabelle Atkins (12) is a member of Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Strings. Atkins said her passion for string instruments can be traced back to her childhood.

"I have done orchestra since fourth grade. I joined because my grandfather played instruments and I wanted to be like him," she said.

That early inspiration has carried her through many years in music, including her decision to join Chamber Strings in 10th grade. What keeps her committed, she said, is the rigor of performing.

"I enjoy the challenge that Symphony and Chamber Strings can provide," Atkins said.

Alongside the hard work, Atkins has collected plenty of moments that remind



Photo by R. VANG-LOHINES

her why she loves performing.

"My favorite memories are the Halloween concerts," she said. "I enjoy the costumes, creativity and excitement that fill the stage each year."

Atkins also plays a role behind the scenes. She serves as secretary on the Orchestra Leadership Council, a position she will continue throughout the rest of the year.

When it comes to school, Atkins said she not only enjoys her music classes, she also likes her social studies courses.

"I like the challenge they provide," she said.

Outside of school, Atkins said she keeps her artistic curiosity alive by exploring new instruments.

After graduation, Atkins plans to attend the University of Wisconsin, River Falls as a biology major. She also hopes to continue with orchestra in college.

Julia Pha

By TYLER GOODMAN
Quill staff writer

Julia Pha (12) has been a dedicated orchestra student since freshman year, starting with no experience and steadily practicing to improve her skills.

"I learned how to play that year and slowly worked my way up and got into Symphony Orchestra in junior year," she said.

Pha said her love for classical music, inspired partly by television shows, led her to pick up the violin. In orchestra, Pha said she especially enjoys when the ensemble performs pieces from popular musicals, "especially when [they] play iconic songs from musicals such as *Wicked*."

Some of Pha's most memorable music moments came from performing at Trills and Thrills, the annual Valleyfair



Photo by R. VANG-LOHINES

trip that blends music and roller coasters. She also contributed to the program through Chamber Strings in her junior year, performing at the variety show and helping raise funds at community events.

In addition to music, Pha is an IB art student as part of her pursuit of the full IB Diploma.

"I learned to enjoy creating art as I got involved with the class and teacher," she said.

Outside of the arts, Pha enjoys weight training, volunteering and caring for her grandfather. Her academic interests lean strongly toward STEM-related classes.

"My favorite subjects are chemistry and math because it is fun when you understand the materials," she said.

After graduation, Pha plans to major in neuroscience or pharmacy and minor in music.

Gavin Otero

By TYLER GOODMAN
Quill staff writer

Gavin Otero (12) has participated in Band, Marching Band and Jazz Band for four years.

Otero said he joined band because he "needed something to do." However, he did not expect it would be something he would love.

"I wouldn't be the person I am today if not for the people that inspired me to improve," Otero said.

Otero has not only enjoyed being a part of the bands he has been in, he has also enjoyed "the community and consistency that comes with practicing and improving." According to Otero, his favorite part of being part of the various bands in which he has played was the performances.

Otero's involvement in these many



Photo by R. VANG-LOHINES

bands has led to him taking on a leadership role. In Marching Band, Otero was a section leader. As section leader, his role was to guide marchers by teaching them and helping them improve on their playing and marching skills. Otero stated that, as a section leader, he is managing his section and "helping them improve."

Otero said he enjoys thinking and challenging himself, which are things he has to do in his favorite classes, which include math and band.

"They make me think and expand my comfort zone in order to learn and improve," he said.

After high school, Otero plans on going to college. Specifically, he is looking at the University of Minnesota to explore his interest in mechanical engineering. Additionally, he wants to continue his band career.

Simon Hagge

By TYLER GOODMAN
Quill staff writer

Simon Hagge (12) has participated in music-related activities such as Band, Marching Band and Jazz Band. Hagge has been doing Marching Band and Jazz Band for four years, while his Band career has been going on for eight years.

Hagge joined Band in high school because he started playing in fifth grade and did not want to give up his career. Meanwhile, he joined Marching Band because "it sounded cool" to him, which is similar to why he joined Jazz Band.

"I joined Jazz Band because I like jazz music and the rhythms in it," he said.

Hagge said that his favorite thing in Band was "going to the Fall Music Festival at Orchestra Hall." As for Marching Band, Hagge said he not only enjoyed



Photo by R. VANG-LOHINES

"getting to do the field show at the half-time" of football games, he also liked "going to D.C." for the Marching Band trip in summer 2025. In fact, he said that was his favorite part of Marching Band.

When it comes to Jazz Band, his favorite performance was in December when they played "Christmas music at Lunds and Byerlys." Meanwhile, his favorite aspect of that band is the songs they play.

"I enjoy the wide variety of the music in jazz," Hagge said.

Hagge has a leadership role in Marching Band. As a section leader, he has to guide the trumpet section to help them improve on their skills.

After graduating, Hagge plans to attend the University of Minnesota, where he hopes to major in mechanical engineering and play in their marching band.

Singers carol at teachers' homes

Students in the Chamber Singers group continued their annual caroling tradition in 2025



Photo by TESSA LENOCH

After deciding on their chosen staff members, students drive themselves from house to house to sing.

By CHANDLER HUNTER
Quill staff writer

While most students and staff across the Cooper community were settling in for a cold winter night of sub-zero temperatures on December 12, the sound of familiar holiday music echoed through the neighborhoods of many people connected to the school. Instead of coming from radios or televisions, the music was performed live by students in Chamber Singers, which continued one of their most cherished traditions that evening of singing Christmas carols at the homes of selected staff members.

Led by choir director Jen Rowan, the Chamber Singers visited the homes of selected staff members who signed up earlier in the month. Beginning at 6 p.m. on December 12, Rowan said the group traveled together across the Twin Cities area to sing festive favorites and spread "good cheer" in a way that goes far beyond the concert stage.

For the students involved, the caroling tradition has become one of the most meaningful events of the season. Alene Lor (12) said the experience was unforgettable, not just because of the music, but because of the people listening.

"My favorite part of caroling was seeing all of their kids smile," Lor said. "A lot of the houses we went to had children and they were super smiley and so excited to listen to us sing for them."

Unlike formal choir concerts, caroling places students directly in front of their audience, with no stage lights or director to rely on. That difference made the experience both challenging and rewarding for the singers.

"To me, singing directly to the community was much more intimate and nerve-racking," Lor said. "When I'm on the stage, there is an invisible wall that disconnects me from the audience. When we were singing into the community, there was no conductor, there was no stage, it was just the carolers and the audience."

Lor said that performing without a director forced the group to trust one another.

"As a choir, without a director, it makes us have to really be together," she said. "We have to look at each other and we have to

be reliable."

Among the songs performed, one stood out to the singers who took part.

"We have a popular song called 'Jingle Bells,'" Lor said. "It's such a well-known song which makes everyone super smiley and they'll mouth along as we sing it for them."

Agreeing with Lor was Chason White (11), who noted the energy of the crowd during that song.

"I enjoyed singing 'Jingle Bells' the most because I loved everyone's energy during that song," White said.

White said the relaxed nature of caroling made it especially enjoyable.

"It felt good bringing the music to the community as it didn't feel formal, making it feel more fun," White said. "My favorite part about caroling at staff members' homes was seeing them enjoying the songs we sang for them."

For many students, the night was also a chance to reconnect with familiar faces. Both Lor and White mentioned that seeing former Cooper choir teacher Tyler Vidal was a highlight of the evening.

"A memorable part of caroling was seeing Mr. Vidal at a couple of houses because it felt like we, as a group, haven't seen him for a long time," White said.

Lor echoed that sentiment, calling the after-party at one of the carolers' homes a highlight of the night.

"We got to see our ex-choir teacher, Mr. Vidal, and it was such a great time," she said. "We all missed him so it was great to catch up and banter."

Staff members were selected for the event by members of the Chamber Singers group. For the chosen staff members, having students perform live in their homes was meaningful. English teacher Julie Eisfelder was one of the chosen hosts.

"To see the students lead themselves and maintain their poise and their pitch really shows how talented and dedicated they are to the success of the group," Eisfelder said. "It is a joyful experience for all who are lucky enough to see it."

Eisfelder said the setting

made the performance feel even more magical.

"It is always such a treat and a little bit magical to hear them sing, especially off the performance stage and in your living room," she said.

One moment stood out to Eisfelder the most during the event.

"The audience applause and genuine thrill to have the group initially show up and come in the house just had everyone in smiles," Eisfelder said.

Beyond the music itself, Eisfelder said the caroling tradition reflects something deeper about the Cooper community.

"I think it shows the authentic relationship-building that we foster at the school to see each other outside of school and still have that genuine happiness to see each other," she said. "The performers seem as excited as the audience. It is contagious."

The participating choir students agreed that the tradition serves a greater purpose than just celebrating the holidays.

"Traditions like this are so important for Cooper because, not only is there representation for the choirs, but also for the students," singer Adrianna Her (12) said. "Many teachers don't know the other activities students are in unless they mention it or if teacher see them actively participating in them. It really shows the commitment and hard work that students put into their educational lives. Things like these also give a chance for students and teachers to connect and build relationships."

Also citing the community aspect of caroling was Lor.

"I believe traditions like this are important because it keeps our community together," Lor said. "It allows growth for our choir and it allows us to show others the amazing things that we, as Cooper students, are capable of doing for the community."

In addition to building community, the caroling tradition is an important way for students to build memories, especially those seniors who will be graduating in June.

"I think traditions like this are important because it makes school more fun," singer Alexander Mathis (12) said. "It also helps us create more memories."

ROOM GIVES MUSLIM STUDENTS CHANCE TO PRAY continued from page 2

convenient privilege to have," Abdiladif Mohamed (11) said. "It tells me that the school takes into account the responsibilities we have as Muslims."

Agreeing with Mohamed is Manal Bare (12), who pointed out how necessary a prayer space is to Muslim students.

"Having access to a prayer space means a lot to me," she said. "In my religion, one of the fundamental pillars of being Muslim is prayer, which we perform five times throughout the day. To me, it means a lot beyond spirituality; it is part of the structure of my life."

One thing Bare pointed out is that the prayer space currently made available to students is a vast improve-

ment over the one she had access to during ninth grade.

"Back then, it was nothing like it is now," Bare said. "It was mainly a hallway used for storage and lockers. I didn't use it at the time because of the awkward space, so I typically used corners of the library or anywhere quiet enough."

Also citing the improvement in the prayer space is Hamdi Abshir (12). "It feels like it is comfortable and that most the people use it for its intended purpose," Abshir said. "In the past years, it might not have been accessible, but this year, it has been pretty good at being accessible for students."

Having a dedicated space has

been a critical part of making sure Muslim students can address the requirements of their religious practices while still at school during the day.

"It gives me a space to practice my religion and take a break from the stress of the school work," Abshir said.

In addition to the religious aspect of the prayer room, Cooper's Muslim students have pointed out that the room helps them feel accepted by the broader Cooper community.

"Having a prayer room impacts my sense of belonging heavily," Mohamed said. "Without a prayer room, I'd feel out of place, unwanted. A prayer room lets me know that I'm not alone and that there are people in the school who can support me."

Life remains a wonderful holiday classic

Frank Capra's famous 1946 release *It's a Wonderful Life* has aged well thanks to its performances, plot, themes



Photo by RKO PICTURES

His portrayal of main character George Bailey (center) cemented James Stewart's status as a major star.

By TESSA LENOCH
Quill staff writer

Wintertime rolls into Minnesota every year in the form of sub-zero temperatures and a seemingly everlasting layer of ice permeating the streets. Partly out of a necessity for safety, the holidays offer a small period of time in an otherwise busy year for friends and family to find comfort in staying home and engaging in their communities. Thankfully, this time spent together is not purely dominated by conversations that are prone to derailing, an experi-

ence already covered by Thanksgiving dinners in the fall. Instead, these get-togethers usually consist of watching a myriad of classic holiday movies.

One of the most famous of these movies is *It's a Wonderful Life*, a 1946 American Christmas classic directed by Frank Capra, which has now solidified its place in family traditions and cable TV programming. Though it adheres to the standard Christmas-time tale formula, *It's a Wonderful Life* stands out as one of the wittiest, funniest and heartfelt stories in Hollywood history.

It's a Wonderful Life follows the ad-

ventures of George Bailey (James Stewart), a humble man with great dreams of leaving his hometown of Bedford Falls. Despite his many attempts to escape, George's humble and helpful demeanor continues to hold him back. As George remains in his hometown, running his family business in direct opposition to the greedy banker Harry F. Potter (Lionel Barrymore), his dissatisfaction only continues to grow. As a result, George's Guardian Angel is sent down in order to bring back his will to live.

From a modern perspective, the film's lessons on greed and warnings

about corporate control are terrifyingly accurate. Although there is no doubt it will make an audience sentimental, in 2025, it may also make an audience pretty depressed. A 1946-based perspective of a scary, outlandish and evil future where money rules all feels uncomfortably familiar and accurate for the modern viewer. In the film, the nightmarish scenario George faces involves bank-sanctioned communities formatted in the equivalent to company towns. In this way, *It's a Wonderful Life* serves as a wake-up call for how far economic systems have evolved, for better or for worse.

In the end, though, *It's a Wonderful Life* is an inherently optimistic movie, despite its surprisingly dark concept. It rewards the characters who do good, encourages kindness and consideration, and ends on an incredibly positive note. The message is clear: everybody on earth matters. In this way, it is a perfect feel-good movie for the holiday season. At the same time, it is not tooth-rottingly sweet. Although it is a quaint little story, *It's a Wonderful Life* is able to create depth within its characters and plot, ensuring that it is not just a movie you throw on in the background for younger siblings.

While students and teachers alike enjoy the winter break season, I highly recommend taking the time to indulge in some holiday classic films. While many will prefer to start with childhood favorites or family comedies, *It's a Wonderful Life* is the perfect movie to keep in mind. For fans of humanity at large, it is a guaranteed hit. I rate it five out of five stars.

Mystery game fans will like *Elmwood Trail*

The plot of the game puts the user in the role of a detective who must investigate a seemingly unsolvable cold case

By DIANA VANG
Quill staff writer

An Elmwood Trail is a free mystery and puzzle-solving app game released in March 2023. The game was distributed by Techyonic and the primary developer was Sparsh Tyagi. I chose to review this game because of recommendations from my friends. People should play this game if they enjoy solving cases and slowly unraveling mysteries in a story. I think this game is good because it makes you have to think and be observant as you try to piece all the evidence together.

The plot for the first episode of the game is that you are a detective. You receive a text from an unknown number that tells you to solve the case of a missing girl named Zoey. Initially, you refuse because this case is impossible to solve and there is little-to-no evidence pertaining to the disappearance of Zoey. However, the person behind the text tells you that they have information about you that you do not want anyone else to know, so you have to comply with their demand to solve the case in return for

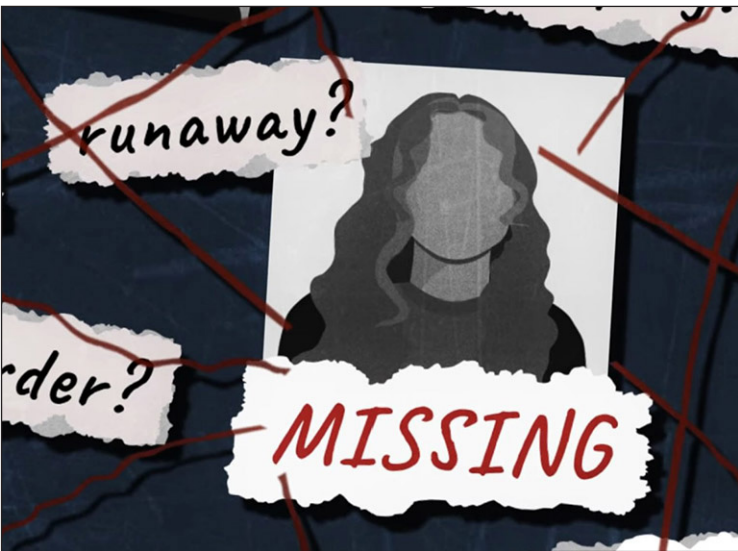


Photo by TECHYONIC

An Elmwood Trail makes good use of the features of the player's phone.

them never mentioning their information about you again.

An element of the game that makes it interesting to play is the solemn music. The music that plays while you are trying to search for clues creates a lot of tension. The dark tone of the music helps keep you on edge as you play the game.

The second game element that is amazing is the playability. For the first episode, you have to look through Zoey's phone to find clues related to her disappearance. You have to track down her contacts, scroll through her gallery to find a way to unlock her diary and work through a map where you plug

in coordinates to track her down. The mechanics are fun to play with and there is even an option to play an ad in order to receive a hint if you are stuck.

The aspect of the game that intrigues me the most is the story. The story is interesting as you do not know which characters to trust while you are trying to solve Zoey's case. For example, her friends Lily and Betty lie about where she has or has not been, even when the evidence says otherwise. In addition, Betty does not want you knowing what happened to her on the night of Zoey's disappearance. Eventually, you learn the life and personality of Zoey through messages with her friends and family, which leaves you even more confused and intrigued.

Overall, *An Elmwood Trail* is good because it makes you have to think and be observant as you try to piece all the clues together. The music adds to the atmosphere as you are trying to solve the case, the playability is consistently fun and challenging, and the story is deeply mysterious. You should play this game if you enjoy a mystery. *An Elmwood Trail* earns five out of five stars.

IB DIPLOMA CANDIDATES SUBMIT EXTENDED ESSAYS continued from page 1

families really enjoyed the event," Obranovich said. "Parents were so proud of their students and it clearly showed during the program. The students had fun making TikToks with photo props and eating treats afterwards. I'm sure they were happy to shake off some of the stress of getting their final papers done."

In addition to the students in attendance, Silver Platter Day also provided a chance to recognize each student's adult supervisor. Staff members who mentor students through the Extended Essay process, known as supervisors, play a critical role in supporting students through the rigorous, often overwhelming, research project. One of those supervisors was French teacher Joe Moravec, who guided student Folake Olusesi through an essay with the research question of: "How does understanding the Latin grammatical gender origin impact the process of French learning for language learners?"

"I've known my EE mentee for a few years, and it was exciting to see her take on a topic that was geared to what we have been learning in class," Moravec said.

For Moravec, celebrating academic milestones such as that focused on during the Silver Platter Day event is essential.

"The EE is an important process which produces a final work for the stu-

dent to be proud of. Silver Platter Day is to help show their hard work through celebration and see the acknowledgment of what they have accomplished," he said.

Another EE supervisor who enjoyed seeing his student mentee recognized at the Silver Platter Day event was David Kek, Cooper's School Climate and Culture Specialist. Kek worked with Julia Pha, whose EE answered the research questions of: "To what extent did foreign intervention caused by being allied with the American forces during the war of communism in Vietnam negatively affect the Hmong communities in the surrounding region of Laos?"

"The cognitive scaffolding that took place during the process is one thing I enjoyed because of the mutual benefit with the student," Kek said.

According to Kek, Silver Platter Day provides essential recognition for students.

"It's a laudable milestone to sum up the sustained commitment of our students in the Extended Essay process," he said.

Also in attendance at the event was science teacher Sandy Hawkinson, who supervised Pha-A-Thit Vongsoury's essay titled: "To what extent does weight impact the weight distribution of three types of columns: square columns, L- and T-shaped shape columns, and trian-

gular columns in determining the load bearing of the columns?"

"I really enjoyed seeing my EE mentee dive into a topic that he was truly passionate about," Hawkinson said. "It was fun to see him design an experiment and really use his creativity to troubleshoot unexpected challenges."

Like other supervisors, Hawkinson supports the intent of the Silver Platter Day tradition.

"Silver Platter Day is important because it gives students meaningful closure after a long, challenging process and celebrates a major academic accomplishment," she said.

For the IB Diploma candidates, Silver Platter Day represented the culmination of countless hours of reading, experimenting, writing, editing and revising. For Vongsoury, the day was especially meaningful.

"Offering the Extended Essays over to our supervisors is symbolic of relieving the stress due to the Extended Essay and presenting our hard work that we spent our blood, sweat and tears on," he said.

According to Vongsoury, his chance to work with Hawkinson on his essay helped him navigate the challenges of a complex topic and project.

"She helped when I was challenged by the time management needed to stay on pace with finishing my EE," he said.

Also citing time management as a challenge of the EE process was Alpha Combay. Combay's research topic was: "What makes the Kendrick Lamar rap album *DAMN* different from every other rap album for it to win the Pulitzer Prize?" He said he enjoyed the chance to celebrate his work at the Silver Platter Day event.

"This is a very hard part of the IB diploma process, probably the hardest part, so seeing all your hard work being praised in front of people will give you more encouragement to finish through," he said.

Another IB Diploma candidate who was happy to mark the end of the EE process was Gladys Arasa, whose research question was: "How does Toni Morrison use literary devices to explore the harmful effects of childhood trauma and racism in *God Help The Child* and *The Bluest Eye*?"

"What I enjoyed most about the Extended Essay was the ability to write the essay based on a subject that you like and also the fact that we had a lot of control over the writing process," she said.

According to Arasa, she appreciated the chance during Silver Platter Day to be recognized for her hard work.

"Silver Platter Day makes the whole journey of writing the EE special and it gives others a chance to celebrate us," she said.

LUNCH PERIOD continued from page 3

ficiency.

"I usually spend my lunch eating at my desk," she said. "While I am eating, I am either helping students or working on future lessons."

With science labs, prep work and grading, lunch is often more of a planning session for Johnson than a pause in the day. Still, her favorite part of lunch is the small moment of calm that falls between classes.

"It's nice to have a time where I can be calm," she said.

For business teacher Andrew Nau, the lunchtime dynamic is different: he usually has company.

"I'm usually in my classroom during the whole lunch period," Nau said. "I have a few students who don't eat lunch and like having a quiet place to relax."

Even though he keeps his room open, Nau rarely works through lunch.

"I like to keep my lunch hour separate from grading [and] planning," he said.

According to Nau, lunch is essential for resetting, both mentally and physically.

"It gives me time to reset and give myself a mental break," Nau said. "I don't know how well I'd function without a food break."

Nau's biggest wish for lunch is a better teacher dining space.

"The current staff lounge is not the most comforting place and most teachers don't use it," he said. "There isn't a sink to wash anything."

Down on the first floor, art teacher Jaime Molitor has a lunch routine that looks different from many other teachers.

"I usually need to spend the first few minutes cleaning messes in the clay studio or getting back from hallway supervision," he said.

After years of multitasking during lunch, Molitor said he has learned to prioritize real rest during lunch.

"I used to try reading and answering emails or grading while I eat," he said. "But I have learned that it is more important to get at least 15 minutes to slow down and catch my breath without the mental strains associated with the job."

Much like the teachers above, Molitor eats in his classroom.

"It takes too much time to walk across the school and back," he said.

On the topic of time, Molitor said he would like to see more added to the lunch period.

"Add another 30 minutes and it would shift the culture to allow teachers a guilt-free opportunity to truly relax and reset," he said.

One unique perspective on how lunch has changed over the years, especially in the teacher lounge, comes from, veteran social studies teacher Art O'Brien.

"The teachers' lounge has not been the same since they added the round tables," he said.

In the past, O'Brien said the long, rectangular tables created a single united space in the lounge.

"Everyone would talk to everyone," O'Brien said. "There would be trivia games and other things to break up the day."

Meanwhile, the smaller, grouped tables detracted from that community feeling.

"It was no longer an enjoyable place to eat lunch as all the fun stuff largely disappeared," he said.

Another element that changed about the lunch period in recent years is its shift from 45 to 30 minutes.

"At one point, teachers had a full 45 minutes," O'Brien said. "You could eat lunch and enjoy colleagues, then get some work done or take care of personal concerns. With that time taken away, I'm actually getting less done now."

Much like other teachers, O'Brien ends up working through most of lunch.

"Frankly, [I work through] most of it," O'Brien said. "It is very frustrating to feel you have to stay after school for hours to catch up."

Early snow aids Nordic skiers

After two mild winters, members of the Hawks Nordic team have been able to ski right away this year



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Trips to Elm Creek Park Reserve were among the December 2025 workout destinations for the squad.

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

The Nordic ski team had a positive start to the season thanks to the nearly 15 inches of snow Minneapolis received in December 2025. With the early snowfall, the athletes were able to ski at Cooper starting on December 1. The chance for the skiers to work out on snow this early is not usual after the dry winters experienced over the last three seasons.

“It’s the first time that there has been enough snow to ski at school for three years,” Jason Fauchier, who has been coaching Nordic at Cooper for six years, said.

According to team member Robert Nichols (12), one great advantage of the early snowfall is that it makes everybody improve faster. By starting to ski early, athletes can start working on their technique right away.

“The early season snow made it possible to use the fields for practice. This enabled us to be able to ski before the parks were open, which allowed more time for beginners to learn,” Nichols said.

After a full week of December practice at Cooper thanks to the snow, athletes were able to head to the local skiing parks that make their own snow, including

Elm Creek Park Reserve, Theodore Wirth Regional Park and Clifton E. French Regional Park. Usually, the first snow-making parks open during Thanksgiving week, but this year, the first one opened the first week of December because the temperatures were not cold enough sooner.

“Many team members are really enjoying the early snow. For instance, a new member, Charlie Grimes (10), is motivated and has done so good that he is already skiing varsity,” Nichols said.

Another impact of the early snow relates to the excitement team members have about the ability to actually ski so near to the start of the winter sports season.

“The snow has definitely affected our team morale,” Zane Halstead (11) said. “Many of us were very excited to see the snow this early, which led to making good memories as a team.”

At the same time, skier Jayden Nguyen (11) said the ability to ski earlier this season has a downside.

“The early-season snowfall limited the conditioning we could have done on dry land. However, it has helped us develop our skiing technique and learn how to ski earlier than in previous years,” Nguyen said.

Despite the significant amount of snow this year com-

pared to the last two years, some parks like Elm Creek still use artificial snow on their slopes.

“Real snow is always ideal because artificial snow is harder on skis, even if it’s faster,” Fauchier said.

Given the number of practices that take place at these off-campus locations to which the team has to travel several times a week, Nordic skiers have to do a lot of planning to balance practice, school and their personal lives.

“It has been a little difficult to balance academics, sports and a personal life,” Nguyen said. “Especially with finals coming in hot, I often think to myself, ‘Should I skip practice to get homework done?’ I usually end up going to practice because I realize that practice is where I can unwind from school or academics. However, the key to it all is time management, which I am currently working on myself.”

Ultimately, team members agree that everyone benefits when they can do the “ski” part of Nordic skiing.

“Having the opportunity to ski earlier than the previous years has allowed me to develop my skiing technique much more rapidly, especially because I develop my technique through observing peers and trying new things myself,” Nguyen said.

PROGRAM HELPS HAWKS EARNED MISSED CREDITS continued from page 1

ber. The student must keep taking the test until they pass. If a student is really struggling to master the content on the test, I will re-teach it to them to prepare for the test.”

The program currently offers credit recovery opportunities in several core subject areas that are essential for graduation.

“We offer math, social studies, English and science,” DiSalvi said.

To join the program, students must take the first step themselves by reaching out to their grade-level counselor for support. According to DiSalvi, this emphasizes the importance of students taking responsibility for their role in the process.

“Students need to communicate with a guidance counselor to sign up for this program,” DiSalvi said.

The credit recovery setting

operates with its own instructional approach that may be different than the one students experience in the classroom. DiSalvi acknowledged that this can sometimes create challenges for students who are used to a different teaching style or curriculum sequence.

“Our program runs independent of classroom teachers. Because it is based on the curriculum provided by Edgenuity, sometimes there are differences on what is taught in our classrooms versus what is taught by Edgenuity,” DiSalvi said.

DiSalvi noted that students may encounter material presented in a new way or in a different order than before. However, this difference also creates opportunities for students to revisit concepts with a fresh perspective and receive one-on-one support when needed.

AVOIDING COMMON MISTAKES CAN ENSURE HEALTH continued from page 3

part in activities that boost your mood, whether they are outdoors or indoors. It can be sports, social time, creative hobbies or merely spending time outdoors. It is important to avoid the sadness or negative feelings that are often felt during winter because of the shorter days and colder weather. Moreover, trying to remain active helps you to avoid isolation by seeing people, which is sometimes more difficult to do during the cold winter months.

5. Stay informed

It is essential to know that

some myths we learn about winter and health are actually false. One prevalent myth is that “cold weather causes colds.” In fact, according to the Citizens Hospital website, it is viruses that cause colds, not the temperature outside. Of course, the spread of diseases occurs faster in winter because people tend to stay indoors, which means that people are in closer contact with one another. As a result, the viruses spread more easily in those conditions, not because of the cold air.

Another false myth is the one claiming that you can catch

a cold from getting wet. In fact, the Citizens Hospitals website reports that getting wet can decrease body temperature only temporarily. However, if you dry off and warm up quickly, your immune system should cope just fine.

Overall, staying healthy during the winter months is not about avoiding the cold at all costs. Instead, it is about adopting simple habits that protect both your body and your mind. Winter may be challenging, but it can be turned into a season of well-being and vitality.

Cooper Competitors

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

Folake Olusesi

By CHANDLER HUNTER
Quill staff writer

Folake Olusesi (12) competes in three different sports: tennis in the fall, wrestling in the winter and track in the spring. However, she said it is wrestling that has shaped her the most.

“I started my sophomore year because a friend of mine told me to use my aggressiveness towards wrestling,” she said.

That decision led Olusesi to a tight-knit team she values deeply.

“I enjoy the bond I have had with the few girls that are on the team because of how small we are,” Olusesi said. “It makes the relationship closer and better.”

Some of her favorite wrestling memories come from her time at tournaments, especially the state meet last year.

“I enjoyed going to state with

[2025 graduate] Anna Delaney, watching matches and walking downtown the day before my match,” she said.

As a team captain, Olusesi works to support newcomers.

“I try to assist the newer wrestlers on what to do as they are often confused,” she said.

Her dedication to sports extends to other seasons as well. This fall, Olusesi competed in doubles at sections for tennis, a day she described as “fun and memorable.” Meanwhile, in the spring, she looks forward to improving in shot put and discus in track.

When it comes to school, Olusesi is an IB Diploma candidate and is in the AVID program. Next fall, she plans to major in mechanical engineering and wrestle in college.

“I want to join a team as I enter a new environment so I can have a sense of community,” she said.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Ajionna Jones

By CHANDLER HUNTER
Quill staff writer

Ajionna Jones (12) has been cheering for as long as she can remember. Jones cheers during both the fall and winter seasons and also competes in track during the spring. Her love for cheerleading started early, thanks to the movie *Bring It On*.

“It is a wonderful movie about cheer,” she said.

For Jones, one of the best parts of cheer is the positive energy she gets and gives through performing.

“I enjoy the compliments I get on cheering and flying,” she said. “I also love the little kids that I inspire.”

Some of Jones’ favorite memories come from cheering with her friends.

“We have so much fun together,” she said. “The laughter and camaraderie carries

us through practices and game days.”

This strong team bond has shaped her as both an athlete and a leader. Jones is currently captain of the 2025-2026 cheer team.

“It’s going well. I get along with the team and they seem to love me,” Jones said.

Before winter cheer, Jones also participated in the fall cheer season.

“I love being on the field for football,” she said.

As for the spring season, Jones plans on jumping for the first time in track.

“I think it’ll go well,” she said. “I can’t wait.”

Jones’ interests extend beyond sports. She said she enjoys dance, doing hair and singing. Academically, she likes her CNA, math and art classes.

After high school, Jones plans to major in radiology and possibly serve as a military reservist.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Desmond Goines

By CHANDLER HUNTER
Quill staff writer

Desmond Goines (12) plays basketball for the Hawks. In fact, he plays the sport year-round, using the fall and spring to keep improving his game for the winter season.

Goines started playing in eighth grade, encouraged by the people who knew his potential best.

“My friends and family told me to play basketball because of my quickness,” he said.

One of the early highlights of this season for Goines has been forming strong connections with the coaching staff.

“I’ve enjoyed the new coaches we have, creating those bonds with each other,” he said. “Coach Ron is a troll. We have a funny relationship.”

Among the many moments Go-

ines has experienced on the court, one memory that stands out involves a game against Armstrong.

“My favorite memory is playing our district rival and getting to my mid-range in crunch time,” Goines said.

Although he does not compete with Cooper in the fall and spring, he does train independently and competes in AAU basketball. His dedication to getting better extends beyond his time on the court. In fact, he said he enjoys going to the gym in his free time, calling it “a hobby.”

Academically, Goines said his favorite class is Work Experience.

“It’s an online class,” he said. “It gives me more time to do extra things.”

After high school, Goines plans to study health and physical education. He also hopes to stay involved in sports.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Amelia Gibbons

By CHANDLER HUNTER
Quill staff writer

Amelia Gibbons (12) has been part of the Nordic skiing team since freshman year, a decision inspired by friends and her love for cold weather.

“I knew when I got to high school that I wanted to join a sport and I have always loved winter sports since I was a kid because the cold doesn’t bother me,” she said.

What began as a willingness to “try something new” has grown into a defining part of Gibbons’ high school experience. Now a team captain, and the only girl among four captains, Gibbons plays a major role in shaping team culture.

“I always am helping our new skiers and giving them advice and tips on how to improve,” she said. “I make sure everyone on the team feels included and

doesn’t feel left out.”

Team bonding is a highlight of Nordic skiing for Gibbons.

“What I enjoy most is how well the team gets along,” she said.

Gibbons said her favorite Nordic tradition is their annual ski trip to Wisconsin, where they take on the Birkie skiing trails.

Prior to Nordic in the winter, Gibbons stayed active in the fall by running cross country and playing ultimate Frisbee. Ultimate also takes place in the spring, and the upcoming season will be her fourth on the team.

“I am very excited for the new season,” she said.

In her free time, Gibbons enjoys painting, biking and spending time with loved ones. Next fall, she plans to major in business or finance in college. Additionally, she hopes to continue playing ultimate Frisbee competitively.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES