



Avoiding theft at school requires thoughtful approach

Page 4

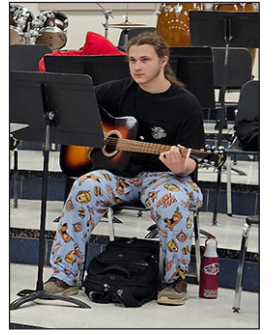
The Quill

Wed., Feb. 25, 2026

Vol. 62, No. 6

Music Cafe class shifts focus toward teaching students to play guitar

Page 5



Robbinsdale Cooper High School

chs.rdale.org/families/the-quill

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

ALSO INSIDE

News



Blood drive hits donation goals

According to event organizer Amanda Lieser, 32 participating students, staff members were able to successfully give blood

Page 2

News

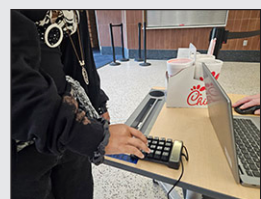


Catch Up days deemed beneficial

Special schedule designed to help Hawks complete missing work, engage in social activities ran two weeks before end of first semester

Page 3

Opinion



Open lunch should be for all grades

Freshman, sophomore students who meet certain eligibility requirements would benefit from extra fifth period freedoms

Page 4

Variety



Specialty groups seek musicians

No matter their year in high school, Hawk performers have many ways to get involved with Cooper's band program

Page 6

Sports



Cooper alumnus returns to teach

Onte Burns, who graduated from Cooper in 2018, joined the physical education department during first semester

Page 8

ICE PROTOCOLS REMAIN DESPITE END OF SURGE

The reduction of forces announced on February 11 does not mean ICE is leaving Minnesota



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Cooper students and staff participated in a "walk-in" during eighth period on January 21 to protest ICE actions in the area.

By ROSE VANG-LOHNES
Quill staff writer

The increase of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity not only in Minnesota but around the Robbinsdale School District prompted administrators to develop protocols for how to address the situation if ICE ever

comes to a school. When school is in session, the building grounds are private property, so the district gets full control over who can and cannot be on the property. "If we notice ICE on the property, we will be making an announcement to inform our staff and students that we see them on

the property," Head Principal Shaunece Smith said.

According to the district's protocols, if ICE comes into a school building with or without a judicial warrant, they will go to the front office and the front office staff will notify the building administration, call 911 and let our student resource officers (SROs)

know that ICE is in the front office.

When administration comes, they will assess the situation. After doing so, they will notify the district's Assistant Superintendent and Senior Director of Teaching and Learning. Until the Assistant Superintendent and Senior Director of Teaching and Learning

arrive, the administration will delay any further action. ICE agents will then be placed in a secure area away from classrooms in the main office to wait.

"As the administration team, we are not giving anyone up. We are not going to make that final decision. We're calling for support," Smith said.

In the event that ICE agents leave the front office without permission, the school will be put on "hold." Both students and teachers will be required to stay in their classrooms until administration believes it is safe. Curtains will be closed and doors will be locked.

During the hold, classes may continue, but students will not be allowed in the hallways. If students are in the hallways when the hold is announced, they are advised to go to the nearest classroom and stay in there until the hold is over.

"We would handle it the same way as if we had an intruder in the building," Smith said.

Additionally, if ICE comes during dismissal time, students will be informed, and if they do not feel safe, they are welcome to stay in the building.

ICE PROTOCOLS continues on page 3

Winter musical enters its final performances

Tickets are still available for the final pair of shows, which take place this Friday at 7 p.m., Saturday at 2 p.m. in the Cooper auditorium

By MARIAH WASHINGTON
Quill staff writer

Cooper's winter musical, *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, opened on February 19 and runs through this Saturday.

According to director Alondra Alamilla, this is a "family-friendly musical" that is based on the *Peanuts* comic strip characters. Alamilla said the show is designed to appeal to audiences of all ages and that was a primary reason why the school decided to do this musical.

"Rather than following one main storyline," Alamilla explained, "the musical is made up of short vignettes that explore childhood questions about friendship, happiness and growing up. Many scenes and songs are inspired by classic *Charlie Brown* specials, creating a strong sense of nostalgia reflected in the colorful sets and costumes."

Rehearsals began just before winter break in December 2025, making the process of preparing for the musical fast-paced. Students played a major role in building and painting the set during weekend tech days, which even allowed cast members to get involved with the behind-the-scenes responsibilities.

Although the script includes only six main roles, Alamilla said they decided to expand the cast by adding other recognizable *Peanuts* characters in order to create a large ensemble with roles for more Cooper performers.

Given the fact that the show features singing, an orchestra pit and choreographed dance numbers, Alamilla brought in additional collaborators to help guide the students, including Cooper choir teacher Jen Rowan and former Cooper theater teacher Gretchen Wurzer.

"The process of putting together the musical is a bigger puzzle with different pieces coming together over time," Alamilla said.

Despite the challenges of a short preparation and rehearsal schedule,



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

The show, *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, is based on the *Peanuts* comic strip.

Alamilla said these various puzzle pieces have been successfully assembled.

"The experience has been rewarding and I hope the audience can come out to support the large cast and enjoy a fun and nostalgic production," Alamilla said.

The remaining performances of *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* take place on February 27 at 7 p.m. and February 28 at 2 p.m. in the Cooper auditorium. Tickets for the event cost \$5 for students and \$9 for adults.

IB program ending at Cooper following next school year

Members of the Class of 2027 are the last Hawks to be able to take IB courses, qualify for the full IB diploma

By TESSA LENOCH
Quill staff writer

The Robbinsdale School Board voted on January 5 to eliminate the International Baccalaureate (IB) program for students in grades K-11 beginning in the 2026-2027 school year and for grade 12 beginning in the 2027-2028 school year. Current juniors who are in the IB diploma program or who signed up to take IB classes during their senior year will still be able to do so.

"These decisions are part of the district's required Statutory Operating Debt (SOD) plan, which must be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education by January 31, 2026, and are aligned with the long-term direction established through Reimagine Rdale: Vision 2030," the district said in a January 5 press release.

When the district announced that the IB

program is being eliminated, many Cooper students were confused about what that actually means for their future schedules. According to Cooper IBMYP Coordinator Andrea Obranovich, the school is not going "to leave students hanging." Hawks who will be seniors in the 2026-2027 school year can still take IB classes, while younger students will have other options for advanced classes.

"There will still be plenty of challenging classes to choose from: college-prep, career-focused and a lot more AP [Advanced Placement] options than we had before," Obranovich said.

According to Obranovich, the impact of the change really depends on what grade a student is in. Current juniors who were already in the IB track get to finish it next year since IB is a two-year commitment. For these students, not much will change. For current ninth and tenth graders, however, it means no more registering for IB classes.

According to Head Principal Shaunece Smith,

it is her hope that expanding class options for future students will help fill the gap left by the elimination of IB.

"IB has more of an international, whole-student approach, but AP is still just as rigorous, and colleges recognize both," she said.

For ninth- and tenth-grade students who originally planned on doing the IB pathway, the school is offering different options for AP classes beginning next school year. In fact, interested students can even work toward the AP Capstone Diploma, which is AP's version of the full IB Diploma.

"A lot of people have already taken AP classes in ninth or 10th grade, so the transition should feel familiar," Smith said.

According to Obranovich, counselors are also stepping in to help students understand how to adapt to this change. Counselors plan on coming

IB PROGRAM continues on page 3

District welcomes new chemical health specialist

Alicia McCabe started her new role with Robbinsdale in early January

By DIANA VANG
Quill staff writer

The Robbinsdale district welcomed Alicia McCabe as its new chemical health specialist at the beginning of January 2026. Her role is focused on supporting students' well-being through education, connection and compassion. While her job title might sound clinical, McCabe said her work is centered on students as they navigate the complicated realities of growing up today.

"To me, this role is really about education and connection," McCabe said. "Whether it is meeting with a student who has some questions or concerns about use, theirs or someone else's, or meeting with a student who violated and is recommended to meet with me, I believe my role is really about connecting with students and being a safe and non-judgmental space to talk about chemical health."

McCabe's path to this position was not a straight line. Before entering the chemical health field, she spent nearly a decade working as a photographer. While creative and engaging, McCabe said the work eventually stopped feeling fulfilling.

"I was a photographer for almost 10 years and just wasn't happy with the work anymore," she said. "I wanted to do something that felt more meaningful."

That desire for meaning is deeply personal. McCabe said she grew up in a home affected by chemical dependency, an experience that shaped both her understanding and her motivation to help others.

"As a person who grew up with chemical dependency in the home, helping others in similar situations felt like a great avenue to go down," she said.

Before coming to the district, McCabe worked primarily with adults. Over time, a pattern emerged in her conversations with clients that stuck with her.

"A common thread for my clients has been, 'I wish there was someone to talk to when I was younger. I wish I knew then what I am learning now,'" McCabe said. "Hearing this over and over, I thought it would be cool to become a resource for youth today."

The idea to be the person adults wished they had earlier in life led McCabe to school-based work. When the opportunity opened up in the Robbinsdale district, the decision felt natural.

"I live in the area and want to help support the community I am a part of," she said.

In a school setting, McCabe's role touches many parts of student life, from discipline-related referrals to voluntary conversations initiated by students themselves. She works across both the middle schools and high schools, traveling between buildings each week to meet with students where they are.

One of the biggest challenges McCabe sees students facing today is social pressure, particularly when it comes to vaping and THC use.

"I think social pressure is a big challenge for youth when it comes to chemical health," McCabe said, "especially around vaping and THC."

She also points out that substance use is often connected to stress and emotional challenges rather than just curiosity or rebellion.

"Being a teenager comes with a lot of challenges," she said. "It can be hard to find ways to manage these challenges in healthy ways. Chemicals sometimes become the coping mechanism."

That is where McCabe's work connects closely with mental health support. While McCabe is not a therapist, her role overlaps with emotional wellness by giving students a place to talk openly about what they are dealing with.

"I am here to chat about stressors in their lives, help them find healthy ways to cope and potentially reduce or stop any chemical use," she said. "At the end of the day, [I want to provide] a place to vent and feel safe and supported."

For some students, just knowing that such a space exists can make a difference. McCabe emphasizes that reaching out does not require a crisis or a serious problem. Students can connect with her through their guidance counselors or administrators, or by emailing her directly.

"They can send me an email at

CHEMICAL HEALTH
continues on page 8

January blood drive meets donation goals

According to event organizer Amanda Lieser, 32 participating students, staff members were able to successfully give blood

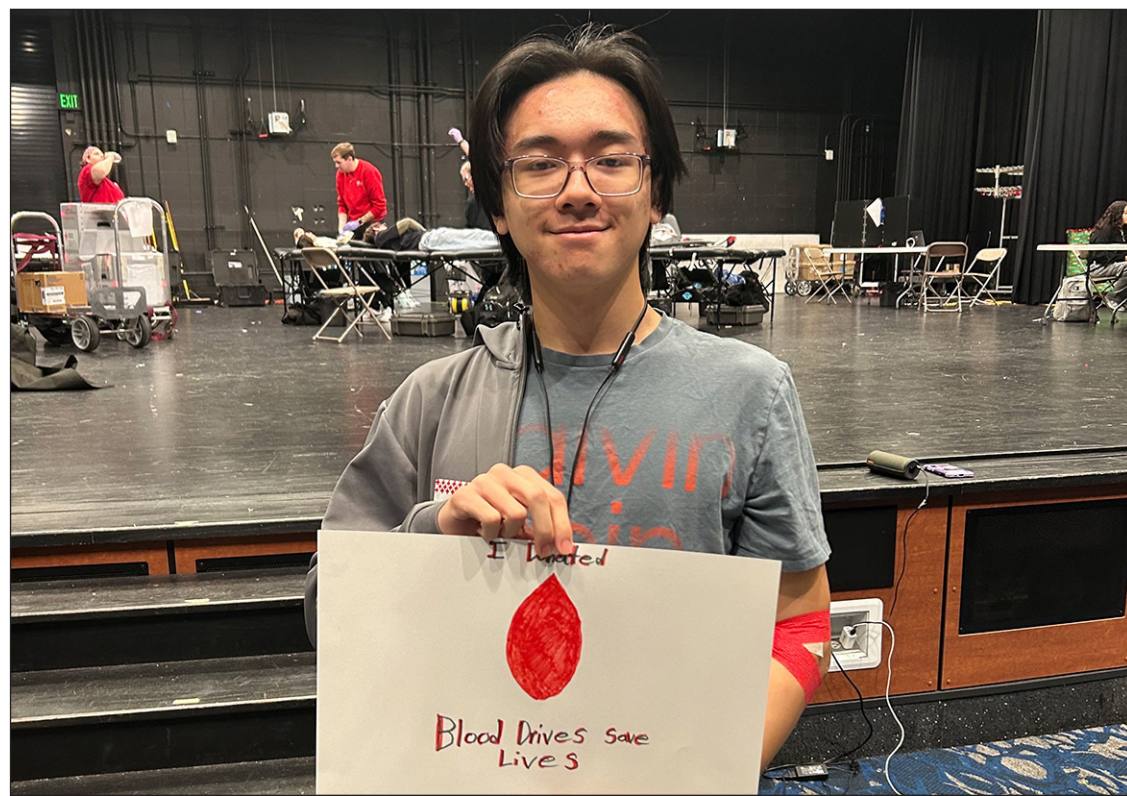


Photo by AMANDA LIESER

The January 9 event, which took place in the Cooper auditorium, was overseen by the American Red Cross.

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

Cooper held its second blood drive of the school year on January 9. The event was made possible by the American Red Cross. About 60 students, teachers and staff members registered for the drive, and among them, 32 people were able to successfully donate their blood.

According to AVID coordinator Amanda Lieser, who organized the event, Cooper first started hosting blood drives many years ago when a former teacher reached out to area blood dona-

tion organizations. Lieser said that blood drive events require a lot of organization and that she has to start planning each one many months in advance.

"We get all the dates scheduled the May before, so for this year, we scheduled everything in May 2025 for the 2025-26 school year. We usually need five-to-six weeks before to recruit donors, organize iron-rich treat bags for donors, get passes out, get volunteers signed up, etc.," Lieser said.

Some benchmarks have to be met to be able to give blood. The participants must be 16 years old with a parent or guardian form and meet certain weight

and height requirements.

"Finding enough students, making sure they have high enough iron and are healthy the day of the drive are all different challenges," Lieser said.

Throughout the day of the drive, the donors came to the Cooper auditorium, all driven by good reasons for giving.

"At first, I donated blood a while back because I wanted to try it out. After I found out my blood can help many people, I decided to start donating blood at our Cooper blood drive events to help others who may need blood," Jayden Nguyen (11) said.

Also donating was Maddie Halupnick (10), who said she was inspired by the chance to help other people.

"I decided to donate blood because I myself and many members of my family have chronic health conditions and I know how important it is to have blood available for trials and transfusions," Halupnick said.

Included in the group providing donations were several Cooper teachers, including Craig Sevick from the special education department.

"Blood cannot be manufactured or created. It can only come from other people. If I don't donate, who will? It feels really good to know my blood can save someone's life or could be used to treat a painful disease. It's kind of like being a superhero for regular people. It warms my heart to help like that. With a few exceptions, almost anybody can be a lifesaving superhero by donating," Sevick said.

For most participants, this was not their first time volunteering. For many, donating blood at Cooper was the easiest way to help.

"Going to a donation center isn't hard, but donating at school is easier than carving out a set time during a regular day and driving somewhere else. And, if you're a student, you can get out of class for a short amount of time too," Sevick said.

Another staff member who donated blood was EL teacher Brenda Rossow.

"I have donated blood at local drives and here at Cooper for their two blood drives. I have to say, the blood

BLOOD DRIVE
continues on page 7

District cuts transportation for Minneapolis students

The elimination of out-of-district busing, which goes into effect next school year, is a cost-savings measure

By TESSA LENOCH
Quill staff writer

The Robbinsdale District has voted to eliminate transportation for students who open enroll at Cooper from Minneapolis. This change officially goes into effect for the upcoming 2026-2027 school year. The elimination of transportation is the latest in a series of cost-reduction moves the district has been making in light of the \$21 million deficit that was discovered last school year.

Cooper Head Principal Shaunece Smith said that the loss of transportation for Minneapolis students is entirely a financial decision.

"The district is looking for ways to save money. They looked at multiple factors and, unfortunately, cutting the busing will save hundreds of thousands of dollars," she said.

Student counselor Salinee Hough said this change will be impossible to ignore for students from the Minneapolis area.

"If students still plan to come to Cooper, attendance really can be impacted negatively if transportation isn't provided. Poor attendance can significantly impact school performance. As far as students who are no longer able to come to Cooper, there are other school options, but losing the connection to Cooper could have an impact on their mental well-being," she said.

Jayden Tolliver (11) and Jazlyn



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Minneapolis students are now considering whether or not to continue at Cooper.

Gilbert (11) are two students who will be affected by the busing cuts and will no longer will have transportation to Cooper in the upcoming year.

"I felt completely blindsided and, honestly, pretty unimportant. It was like the district hadn't even considered how this would affect students like me. It was a clear message that my needs weren't a priority," Tolliver said.

Feeling a similar level of frustration is Gilbert.

"My initial reaction was frustration. I was also very annoyed. It seemed like a big decision that wasn't well thought out. It felt like I wasn't being considered," Gilbert said.

This change will impact many

Cooper students who now are facing having their high school careers uprooted.

"This change is going to make everything much harder. Right now, I don't participate in extracurricular activities, but this would affect my daily routine because I use the bus to get to and from school," Tolliver said.

From an administrative perspective, Hough said it will be challenging for students and families to decide what to do next year.

"Since I have juniors this year, a lot of them are worried they won't be able to finish their high school careers at Cooper and I don't blame them. This makes me so sad too. Many of them have put

their entire educational career in Robbinsdale, or at least their high school career, and now they have to move. Many of them have made plans for their senior year at Cooper to prepare for life after high school," Hough said.

Students who are without transportation are scrambling to figure out their futures.

"Me and my parents haven't made any final decisions yet. Me and my parents both want my senior year to be at Cooper," Tolliver said.

Similarly, Gilbert is unsure what next year will look like for her.

"I want the school administrators to understand that these changes could have a big impact on students. It's making it harder to get to school. I wish they'd understand our frustration," Gilbert said.

At the Cooper level, Smith said adults in the building understand the tough decisions students now face.

"I understand the frustration, especially if you've been at Cooper for the first half of your high school career. We love all our students and we would love for everyone to be able to return, but I understand if that's not possible for all families," Smith said.

The school is currently unequipped to support students losing the transportation resource. As a result, the responsibility falls to students and their

TRANSPORTATION
continues on page 3

NHS members in middle of active 25-26 school year

Students in group take part in school, community activities revolving around pillars of scholarship, service, leadership, character

By DIANA SANCHEZ MORALES
Quill staff writer

Students in Cooper's chapter of National Honor Society (NHS) are spending the 2025-2026 school year organizing events and volunteering in order to make the community inside and outside of the school a better place.

NHS is an organization established in 1946 to recognize individual student academic achievement in American schools. Membership in the group has several requirements and the activities students engage in can benefit participants in many ways.

According to NHS advisor and social studies teacher Sharon Kilsdonk, getting involved in NHS can be a good opportunity since it recognizes a student's academic achievements and

builds good character, leadership and service skills. Kilsdonk said that students selected for the group must meet certain benchmarks.

"Students are invited to join in their sophomore and junior year after semester one grades are finalized. Students that have a 3.6 or higher GPA are invited to join and are required to fill out an application," she said.

Motivation is a big part of joining NHS since membership in the organization signifies one is driven by more than just grades. According to Breana Beenken (12), who is part of NHS, the desire for self-improvement, learning and the development of new skills are part of what inspired her to join the group.

"I was motivated to join by the fact that I wanted to be more involved

in school-run events, helping people as a whole within my community and adding more onto my college applications as I didn't really have any other extracurricular activities," she said.

School and community volunteer projects and activities are a big part of NHS. These projects and activities are designed to turn the abstract values that NHS upholds into tangible actions. Kilsdonk said the group has been enhancing the school's connection to the wider community with the work done by its student members this year.

"We help host three Red Cross blood drives, complete staff appreciation thank you notes, and assist Robbinsdale-area school carnivals and New Hope and Crystal community events," she said.

Connecting these many activities

is their relevance to the four pillars of NHS: scholarship, service, leadership and character. Scholarship is about committing to learning and growth in both personal and educational situations, while service is about connecting to society and school through acts of service. Next up is leadership, which relates to being responsible and taking ownership of one's own actions. Finally, there is character, which includes demonstrated ethical and moral behavior. According to Beenken, these pillars convinced her to join NHS despite her original perspective that getting involved would be overwhelming.

"Before NHS, I used to think volunteering was a daunting task that would

NHS MEMBERS
continues on page 5

Catch Up and Relish returned in January

Special schedule designed to help Hawks complete missing work, engage in social activities ran two weeks before end of first semester



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

One popular leisure activity for students who were caught up with their work was playing volleyball in the gym.

By DIANA SANCHEZ MORALES
Quill staff writer

Cooper students took part in the Catch Up and Relish program on January 7 and 8 as the school entered the last two weeks of first semester.

Catch Up and Relish is designed to be an opportunity for students to get caught up in class work. During each class period on a Catch Up and Relish day, targeted academic support is provided to help struggling students catch up, while enrichment and relaxation activities are available for those who are doing well in class.

According to Assistant Principal Ned Nelson, a chance for achievement is a big part of this program, especially since it helps boost student motivation and creates a positive feedback loop for learning.

“We started Catch Up and Relish around eight years ago. We found that many students that struggled to

get to school regularly fell behind in class and could not get caught up. Before Catch Up and Relish, we used to pull students that were behind in classes out of class to get their work done. However, that process became more about the student completing work than the student learning the material. In short, we hope that students that are falling behind have an opportunity to relearn material and retake summatives in a supportive environment with their own teacher,” he said.

Catch Up and Relish helps support both academic accountability and student well being by providing dedicated time and space for completing missing work and expanding learning. Nelson explained that the system is intended to prevent students from falling behind by addressing the whole student, academically, emotionally and socially.

“With a focus on relearning and retaking summatives with teachers

that are experts in the subject, we are able to prioritize academics over work completion. Students that have earned relish time get a chance to learn the importance of self-care and practice taking care of their social-emotional needs as well,” he said.

Cooper teachers have positive opinions about the program. Many see it as a good tool to help students when they are behind in their work or have any questions. According to science teacher Sandy Hawkinson, Catch Up and Relish makes a big difference in student grades and can have a positive effect on their connection to class.

“Catch Up and Relish has helped create checkpoints for students to think about their academic standing in class. For students who are close to passing, Catch Up days can provide time to work on missing work, which can have a positive effect on their grade. It can also make grades more

visible and real to students,” she said.

Completing missing work is a big part of Catch Up and Relish. English teacher Michelle Kope said having structured time to complete missed assignments can reduce academic stress and allow teachers a chance to offer targeted support. As a result, students can regain confidence and develop organizational skills that prevent them from falling further behind.

“It provides a small-group setting where kids are held accountable for their grades. It reminds them that there is a consequence for not doing the work, which is doing the work,” she said.

Students find Catch Up and Relish worthwhile as well. Breana Beenen (12) said it is a way to release stress and have fun with friends if a student does not need to catch up on a lesson or make up assignments.

“I usually take part in the movies or go to the cafeteria or Media Center to hang out with friends. I enjoy these two options because then I’m not worried about schooling as much and can relax overall,” she said.

While students generally enjoy Catch Up and Relish, some have ideas about how to change the program. According to Anisha Yang (12), shifting the days of the week when it is offered might be a better fit for students.

“Make it Friday and Thursday, not Wednesday and Thursday,” she said.

Overall, Catch Up and Relish has not just relieved stress, it has helped students do better in their first semester classes, which helps them earn their credits toward graduation.

“We usually see more students passing classes and earning credits when we compare the data to the quarter grades. We also see students get excited to be at school and plan their Relish days with their friends. Any time students can experience school in a positive way is a win for Cooper,” Nelson said.

Engineering field trip took Hawks to Dunwoody

Students in aerospace engineering class are getting feedback from experts while working on NASA Hunch project

By MANAL BARE
Quill staff writer

Brian Seyb Ensmann took his aerospace engineering class to Dunwoody College of Technology on December 12, 2025. The students visited the college as part of their NASA Hunch project, a program integrated into the class that is supported by NASA.

The field trip included students presenting their work to engineers and receiving criticism on their projects. The goal, according to Seyb Ensmann, was “to see what it was like, but to also win.” In fact, students whose projects are chosen eventually get the opportunity to present to NASA engineers in Houston, Texas.

The engineering students spent time in class working on these projects and preparing for the field trip.

They prepared through video conferences with three NASA engineers and also through meetings with engineers in December 2025 and again this February to present their projects.

For example, Chaokhang Vang (11) and his group presented a project called “Nano Lab.” Vang explained the purpose for the Nano Lab is “to help NASA study how porous media, such as plants, function in low-gravity environments.”

“We’re not growing food, but rather building a lab,” Vang said.

According to Vang, the experience of presenting to professional engineers was both nerve-racking and helpful.

“I enjoyed presenting it, but it was also helpful and a little stressful because they gave us so many tips, and those tips made us realize more problems our design had,” he said.

One question from the engi-

neers that stood out to Vang was “Can your functions work within five seconds?”

“Of course, having many things work in or under five seconds is challenging, but that’s what NASA is about: a challenge,” Vang said.

Another Cooper group presented a project titled “Making Chess From Trash.” Group member Bernie Barthel (12) explained that the purpose was to “use recycled materials from an assortment of packages or waste off-put from the process of sending people and resources into space.” Barthel said that presenting to engineers was stressful but also important.

“Interacting with professionals is always intimidating, but they were very kind and helped us refine our design,” Barthel said.

According to Barthel, the most impactful advice he received from

the engineers was to “think beyond what the project must do and consider what [he] wanted it to do.” Barthel said this advice changed how he approached the project moving forward.

Seyb Ensmann said that having professional engineers review the projects benefits his students in multiple ways. Not only do students gain the knowledge, but they also learn how to have professional conversations. He compared the experience to a science fair, mentioning that many students have never had this type of professional interaction before.

The Dunwoody field trip is one of many trips connected to the NASA Hunch program. In February, students will present their projects again at the University Medical Center, where they will also tour the facilities and continue developing their projects.

ICE PROTOCOLS REMAIN DESPITE END OF SURGE continued from page 1

Smith said it is also important for students to know that there are tools to help themselves if they feel safer at home. Teachers will be making sure that lessons and assignments are available to students on their Schoology page so students are able to access them remotely.

According to Smith, it is highly recommended that students email their counselors and teachers to let them know if they are going to be staying home. This is so the teacher knows what is going on and can help the students in any way they can.

“It is advised that parents or guardians call in their child so their attendance can be excused,” Smith said.

If parents are not comfortable with their students leaving the home, Robbinsdale Virtual Academy, or RVA, is an enrollment op-

tion as well.

Ultimately, Smith said it is the goal of the district and of Cooper administrators to focus on student well-being.

“We will not engage with ICE but we will keep the students safe in the building,” Smith said.

IB PROGRAM ENDING AT COOPER FOLLOWING NEXT SCHOOL YEAR continued from page 1

into classrooms during registration season to explain the differences between IB and AP and how this affects things like college applications.

“Since seniors will finish the program they started, most won’t need to explain anything at all.

Younger students can just show that they took the highest-level classes available to them,” Obranovich said.

Even though Cooper staff members are trying to make the shift away from IB smooth, both Obranovich and Smith acknowledged that this change is tough.

“Many students feel disappointed or unsure about what this means for their academic future, and honestly, that makes sense,” Smith said. “But students shouldn’t feel like they’re losing their chance at rigorous classes or college opportunities.”

Smith encouraged students to talk to their counselors or Obranovich and ask questions if they are feeling stressed about the IB decision.

“Change is hard, but you still have options, support and a path forward,” Smith said.

DISTRICT CUTS TRANSPORTATION FOR MINNEAPOLIS STUDENTS continued from page 2

families to find a solution before the next school year rolls around.

“Unfortunately, we don’t have any resources at this time,” Hough said. “I hope in the spring we will have some, or know of some, to offer. For students, I think it would be

helpful to start making a plan sooner rather than later. If setting up transportation is possible, start planning for it. Maybe groups of kids can create carpool groups. I know some students are talking about expressing their concerns to the district so that should

happen sooner than later. Also, in cases of students who need to switch schools, I’d recommend looking into the options in Minneapolis ahead of time.”

For students like Tolliver, the bus is not just a means to an end, it is

a pathway to opportunity.

“I want them to understand that this isn’t just about transportation. It’s about access, opportunity and feeling valued. It sends a message that students like me don’t matter as much. It’s very frustrating,” Tolliver said.

Part Two of Two

Lunch period use can look different for every teacher

The half of fifth period set aside to eat is used by staff members in a variety of ways

By DIANA VANG
Quill staff writer

By the time the fifth-period bell rings, most students are thinking about food, friends and a brief pause in the school day. For teachers, however, the 30-minute lunch break is often a carefully balanced mix of eating, recharging and squeezing in as many tasks as possible before the afternoon classes begin. From grading and lesson planning to quiet reflection and quick conversations with colleagues, teachers’ lunch routines vary widely, but they share the common themes of time management, multitasking and the need to reset.

For many teachers, lunch is far from a full mental break. Science teacher Stephanie Diamond describes her lunch as a nonstop stretch of necessities and responsibilities.

“I usually spend my 30-minute lunch going for a bathroom break, eating a quick lunch and then doing tasks that need to get done,” Diamond said.

Some of the tasks Diamond tackles include “replying to emails, grading, making copies, running papers down to the Nest, setting up or cleaning up lab supplies, and helping students or coordinating with colleagues.” In fact, Diamond estimates that about “50-75 percent” of her lunch break consists of doing school-related tasks.

Like many other teachers, Diamond said she usually eats in her classroom or a nearby room.

“This is mostly because I need to complete work tasks during this free time from students,” she said.

Sharing a similar approach to lunch is math and AVID teacher Tim Darsow.

“I am usually doing work while I have my lunch,” Darsow said. “Very rarely am I just eating lunch and not working at the same time.”

Darsow said that about 75 percent of his lunch period is spent working on “school-related things” in his own classroom. Additionally, he said students usually stop by to spend time in his room during HLL.

For English teacher Kate Foster, lunch is one of the only flexible moments in the day.

“Lunch is one of the only times of the day when teachers get to choose what they’re doing and where they’re doing it,” Foster said.

While she sometimes socializes or plans lessons, Foster said she values the freedom to decide what she needs most in a given moment. Still, she said that she works through lunch “a couple of days a week” and almost always checks email at lunch time.

Where teachers eat lunch often reflects what they need most: conversation or calm. Spanish and AVID teacher Kate Limbeck intentionally uses lunch as a social break.

“I really try to keep my lunch as a break away from school work and enjoy the time to eat and talk with my colleagues,” Limbeck said.

Limbeck said she prefers the teachers’ lounge as an eating spot because it gives her “a chance to talk with other colleagues” that she normally does not get to see.

While Limbeck does sometimes need to use the lunch period for work, she said tries to protect this time.

“Otherwise, I don’t spend any time on school-related tasks,” she said. “That is my time.”

On the other end of the spectrum are teachers who seek solitude. Physical education and AVID teacher Brooke Schaffer said she recently switched from the lunchroom to her office.

“I teach first through fourth hours and HLL, so I need a little down time to check my email and sit in quiet in the middle of the day,” she said.

While Schaffer said that about two-thirds of her lunch time is spent on work, the quiet environment helps her reset.

English teacher Grace Fremont also values solitude by lunchtime.

“By the time lunch rolls around, I’m usually a bit tired and overstimulated

LUNCH PERIOD continues on page 5

Bus exit times leading to stress for Cooper riders

Some Hawks must sprint to catch their rides due to location of eighth period classes

By BEN KENYON
Quill staff writer

There has been a simple yet prominent issue in the back of my head that I have been encountering pretty much every day since the start of the school year. If you rely on the school bus to get home from school, you have probably experienced and taken notice of it too. From the moment when the eighth period release bell rings at 3:15 p.m., to the time when the fleet of school buses departs exactly at 3:20 p.m., there is simply not a sufficient amount of time for students to comfortably make their way to their buses. In effect, all bus riders live with the daily fear of being left behind.

At the heart of the problem is the fact that there is only a five minute window for you to make it to your bus, no matter where you are in the school during eighth period. I consider myself lucky to have an eighth period class in the English circle, which is a location relatively close to Cooper's front entrance. Nonetheless, I have still found it to be quite a challenge to make it to my bus, and I usually arrive with little time to spare.

The main issue that I am always finding myself dealing with are the crowds of slow-walking people and congregating socializers in the hallway. If you want to make it to your bus on time, you have to rigorously speedwalk and weave between other people constantly; otherwise, you will naturally get stuck behind them and the buses will be gone before you can exit through the main doors. I do not even want to imagine the kind of daily rush that students farther away in the building must face. People with eighth period classes somewhere on the third floor or in the far reaches of first floor have to go through even more obstacles and travel a greater distance in order just to go home for the day.

Crowds of people spilling into and clogging up the halls are not the only issue with trying to make it to the buses on time. Sometimes, there is inconsistency in the parking order of buses or the position of obscurely marked replacement buses that can cause students to panic. Since you only get five minutes to make it outside, what should you do when you get to the usual spot for your bus only to find the wrong one sitting there? What about when your bus seemingly is not there at all because a replacement bus is being used and the only way to identify it is through a tiny piece of paper taped to one of the vehicle's windows? Due to the five minutes allotted, you do not have time to go back and look for where the correct bus may be. At this point, the driver has already switched from park to drive, and the wheels have begun spinning out of the parking lot. I know for a fact that I am not the only one that is facing this issue. On many days, as I look out the windows when the bus I am on is heading away from the school, there are always a few people running frantically up to the side door, trying to get on board at the last second.

BUS EXIT TIMES
continues on page 7

Theft at school is an avoidable issue

Whether it is leaving valuables at home or doing a better job of securing them, there are easy ways of deterring theft

From the Editors

Theft is something we all think about. No one wants to be the victim of a theft, especially at school. However, because there are so many people in a small area when you are at school, it is easy for others to have quick access to your items when you are not paying attention. There are ways you can avoid being a victim of theft at school by taking precautions and making sure you keep a close eye on your belongings.

The first way to avoid theft is to not bring certain items to school. Many people make the mistake of bringing their favorite items to school, which in some cases can set them up to be the victim of a thief. If you do not want to lose the items you love, make sure you minimize the things you bring to school. You do not want to bring so many electronic items that you cannot keep track of all of your possessions. If you bring fewer things and only the items you need for your education, not your entertainment, you will have less of a chance of having those things stolen.

When it comes to essential items such as car keys, cell phones or your wallet, you should make sure to put them in your locker. Using a locker is your best bet to avoid having these types of items taken from you because you are the only person who has access to the locker. Related to this is the importance of not sharing a locker at school. Everyone should have their own place to keep their personal items safe. That way, you are the only one responsible for your items and cannot blame the loss of items on someone else.

Another method for avoiding theft is never leaving your things unattended. Even if you know the atmosphere you are in very well,



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Students who have school lockers are sometimes inattentive to the fact that they forget to fully close them.

it is important to keep a close eye on things and have things near you at all times. Try to keep your bag closed and keep it around you at all times. Likewise, leaving items on a desk in a classroom or out in an open area like the school cafeteria is not a good idea.

If you do end up losing something and think you may have been

the victim of a theft, the first thing you should do is remember the last place you were and try retracing your steps. If that does not help, you can go down to the office to see if anyone has turned in your missing item. If they do not have it, the possibility exists that it was stolen. In this case, you should try to connect with the police liaison

officers near the main office.

Hopefully, by following the tips provided above, you can avoid being the victim of theft in the first place. The school clearly cannot be responsible for every student's personal items, so it is up to each and every one of us to handle them and protect them more responsibly.

Open lunch should be accessible to all four grades

Freshman, sophomore students who meet eligibility requirements would benefit from extra fifth period freedoms

By JA'LAYIAH MCCLINTON
Quill staff writer

Open lunch is a system that allows juniors and seniors who are on track to graduate the ability to leave school grounds during fifth period to get food. While this privilege is a welcome one for Hawks in 11th and 12th grades, it is not available to students in grades 10 and 11. That raises the question of whether or not open lunch such be accessible to students in all four grades.

Open lunch can be a fun way to make connections outside of

school with your friends. It gives students the opportunity to spend time with people they do not normally see during the school day. During open lunch, students can get some fast food or simply relax for one hour out of the school day, which can be a nice break from classes and school stress.

Given the benefits of open lunch, I do not think it should just be for a few students in grades 11 and 12. All students who are on time to class and who are passing their classes should be able to have open lunch because they are showing responsibility and effort

in school. Open lunch should be something all students can earn by doing what they are already expected to do, instead of being limited to only a small group of juniors and seniors.

While I think students in all four grades should have access to open lunch, I also believe that freshmen should have only modified access. Since they still will be experiencing the transition to high school, ninth graders should not get access to open lunch until the second semester of their first year in high school. The first semester is an important time for freshmen to

adjust to schedules, expectations and being on time to class. Waiting until the second semester allows them to get used to high school before having the responsibility of open lunch.

Overall, open lunch can be a fun and relaxing part of the school day and it should not be for just a few students. Students who are on time to class and passing their courses should have the opportunity to leave the building during fifth period. Meanwhile, freshmen should wait until after their first semester to make sure their transition into high school is successful.

Bad Bunny performance was much-needed moment of positivity

Despite efforts by president, right-wing pundits to provoke hatred, the Super Bowl halftime show embraced all Americans

By CAMILARODRIGUEZLAZCANO
Quill staff writer

Super Bowl LX took place on February 8. While most viewers watched the game to be entertained by the eventual victory of the Seattle Seahawks over the New England Patriots by a score of 29-13, many viewers tuned in because of the controversy surrounding the halftime acts. Every year, the Super Bowl

halftime show turns into a whole argument online and in social media. No matter which performer or group is selected to perform, people will complain. However, with the decision this year to have Bad Bunny as the headliner and Green Day as the opening group, there was a lot more to talk about, particularly when our country's president decided to get involved.

Bad Bunny is one of the biggest performers in the world right now. He

is from Puerto Rico, which is a territory of the United States, making him an American artist. Despite that, most of his music is in Spanish and people all over the world love it. When it comes to Bad Bunny's music, you do not need to understand every lyric to enjoy it because his music is for everybody. Choosing him as a headliner struck me as a great decision for a sporting event that has viewers across the globe.

Another reason I liked the choice of Bad Bunny relates to his messages as an artist. He has spoken up about police violence, Puerto Rico being ignored and the way Hispanic communities get treated in the U.S. President Trump has spent years attacking immigrants and Latinos, so seeing a Spanish-speaking artist headline the

BAD BUNNY
continues on page 8

The Quill

Leadership Staff

| | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Editors-in-Chief | Tessa Lenocho |
| | Rose Vang-Lohnes |
| News Editor | D. Sanchez Morales |
| Features Editor | Ja'Layiah McClinton |
| Opinion Editor | Ben Kenyon |
| Variety Editor | Tyler Goodman |
| Sports Editor | Manal Bare |
| Copy Editors | Tessa Lenocho |
| | Rose Vang-Lohnes |
| Advertising | Braylon Nix |
| Circulation | A. Jarquin Ramirez |

Staff Writers

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Manal Bare | Lakayla McGary |
| Johanna Gonzalez | C. Rodriguez Lazcano |
| Tyler Goodman | D. Sanchez Morales |
| Chandler Hunter | Ella Van Massenhove |
| Angel Jarquin Ramirez | Braylon Nix |
| Carlie Jones | Diana Vang |
| Ben Kenyon | Juria Vang |
| Tessa Lenocho | Rose Vang-Lohnes |
| Ja'Layiah McClinton | Mariah Washington |

Support Staff

| | |
|---------------|------------------|
| Photographers | Tyler Goodman |
| | Rose Vang-Lohnes |
| Advisor | Eric Zuccola |
| Principal | Shaunece Smith |

Letters to the Editor

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

Advertising

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

Editorial Policy

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

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



Music Cafe class shifts focus to guitar

Band teacher Markus Hahn hopes all students consider learning a new instrument by enrolling in this revised course



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Hawks who sign up for the rebranded class will have access to guitars provided by the school.

By MANAL BARE
Quill staff writer

Cooper's Music Café course, which is taught by band instructor Markus Hahn, is in the process of being renamed as "Guitar."

According to Hahn, when the class was first created, there was no guarantee that guitars would be avail-

able, which is why the name was more general. Now that guitars are provided, Hahn said the class is fully focused on learning how to play the guitar rather than covering music in general.

Hahn said he chose to focus on guitar because it is "an accessible instrument that is relatively easy to learn the basics of." Additionally, Hahn said

he believes that learning an instrument like guitar is important because it helps students have a break from computer screens during the school day.

Most students enter the class with little or no experience playing guitar.

"The majority of students are true beginners," Hahn said.

To cater to different skill levels,

Hahn said the assessments in class are designed around the specific skills a student already has. If a student is more advanced, they can be given a more challenging version of the same assessment during each unit.

According to Hahn, a typical day in the class starts with students grabbing their guitars and reviewing their existing skills. After that, the class moves on to that day's material, focusing on skills such as notes, chords, power chords and reading tabs. Hahn explained that the class spends the entire period working through these tasks and practicing them.

Although there are no formal performances currently scheduled for the class, students still have opportunities for something in the future. Hahn shared that students learn songs they enjoy playing and assessments can be connected to each student's personal choice of songs.

Additionally, Hahn said collaboration is encouraged in class. He allows students to engage in assignments with partners, which he said helps create a supportive learning environment.

By the end of taking this class, Hahn said he hopes students realize they are capable of learning an instrument. His goal is that students leave knowing that if they wanted to, they could buy a guitar, practice at home and be "on the right path to learn to play and read chords of their favorite songs."

LUNCH PERIOD

continued from page 3

from morning classes," she said.

In light of this, Fremont said that eating in her classroom allows her "a brief bit of quiet and solitude," especially on days when she needs to get work done.

For social studies and AVID teacher Mandy Wineberg, the balance between eating alone and being social is intentional.

"Four days a week, I eat alone in my room, and one day, I eat with my friends in the staff lounge," Wineberg said.

Wineberg said the days on which she eats alone stem from the fact that, by fifth period, she often needs "a few minutes of silence."

Across departments, teachers emphasized that lunch is about more than food, it is about taking care of themselves.

"This is my only consistent, kid-free time," English teacher Annika Peterson said.

While she enjoys spending time with colleagues, Peterson also values the chance to reset by herself.

"I love our students but it feels important to take a moment for myself," she said.

Social studies teacher Sharon Kilsdonk uses lunch in a very different way.

"I go for a walk outside almost every day," she said.

According to Kilsdonk, this daily habit helps her feel "refreshed, recharged and refocused," especially after a busy morning of classes. She emphasized the importance of "getting fresh air, sunlight and space from interaction" before returning for the afternoon.

For English teacher Michelle Kope, a basic need comes first during lunch.

"I can finally go to the bathroom," Kope said.

Additionally, the lunch period offers a rare moment of quiet for Kope, even though part of it is spent supervising.

"Half of the lunch period is spent supervising, either the hallway or an HLL session," Kope said.

During the remaining time, Kope said she retreats to her office.

"I eat in my office because it's my safe space," she said. "I have time to reflect and just be quiet."

While some teachers protect lunch as personal time, others accept that work is unavoidable. Social studies and AVID teacher Chris DiSalvi said he has a consistent lunch routine.

"I use the staff bathroom and go get my lunch from the staff lounge. Most days, I eat at my desk while listening to a podcast while I try to get some easy work done," he said.

DiSalvi estimates that 5-10 minutes of lunch goes toward work, but he still sees the break as essential.

"I need a break from students," DiSalvi said. "I need to take care of my own needs before I can take care of my students' needs."

Despite their different routines, nearly every teacher agreed on one thing they would like during lunch: more time.

"I would love to have a little bit longer of a lunch period, maybe 45 minutes," Diamond said.

Diamond added that, with hallway duties and transitions, "the 30 minutes really feels cut short."

A similar sentiment was shared by Peterson.

"I wish our lunch period was longer," Peterson said. "It can feel difficult to manage basic needs."

Also citing the drawbacks of a short lunch period was Fremont.

"Thirty minutes can fly by, especially if there's a line for the microwaves and bathrooms," Fremont said.

In fact, Wineberg fondly remembered a longer lunch in the past.

"We used to have a 45-minute lunch period and that was incredible," she said. "It allowed for open lunches, more work time or even quick trips out for food."

Beyond a longer time span, other teachers had specific wishes for changes to lunch. Limbeck said she would bring back "a drink vending machine" in the teachers' lounge, while Schaffer wished for "a teacher's lunchroom right off the main lunchroom with its own special line for access to school food."

As their many observations about the lunch period make clear, lunch is not just a pause in the daily schedule, it is a vital checkpoint that helps teachers manage stress, stay organized and show up fully for afternoon classes.

"Teaching is high emotion, high stress and high demand," Forster said. "That makes even a short lunch break essential."

Way of Water an enjoyable entry in Avatar franchise

The second *Avatar* film, which was released in 2022, is a must-watch for audiences interested in seeing 2025's *Fire and Ash*

By ANGEL JARQUIN RAMIREZ
Quill staff writer

Avatar: The Way of Water is a science fiction film written, directed and produced by James Cameron that was released on December 6, 2022 by 20th Century Studios. This movie is the sequel to Cameron's original *Avatar*, which was released in 2009, and it precedes *Avatar: Fire and Ash*, which came out in 2025. At the time, *Avatar: The Way of Water* was the most expensive movie ever made with a budget that was estimated to be between \$350-460 million. Ultimately, the film made more than \$2.3 billion to become one of the most successful movies in history, much like the other two *Avatar* films. Outside of these many interesting statistics, the great thing about *Avatar: The Way of Water* is that it is an entertaining movie.

Avatar: The Way of Water takes place 16 years after the Na'vi repelled the Resources Development Administration (RDA) from Pandora in *Avatar*. Jake Sully is now chief of the Omatikaya clan and raises his family with Neytiri: sons Neteyam and Lo'ak, daughter Tuktirey and adopted daughter Kiri, born from Dr. Grace Augustine's inert avatar. Miles "Spider" Socorro, son of the late Colonel Miles Quaritch, frequently visits Jake and Neytiri's children while



Photo by 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS

Groundbreaking special effects make *Way of Water* memorable.

being raised by human scientists who have stayed on Pandora. Unfortunately, the RDA begins a renewed effort to locate Sully and defeat the Na'vi, which causes the main characters to flee to an oceanic region of Pandora to seek refuge with the Metkayina clan.

One element of *Avatar: The Way of Water* that will capture viewers is its effective characterization and character development. Specifically, I love the way Neytiri comes across in the movie. Played by Zoe Saldana, Neytiri is fearless and always willing to fight on behalf of her people and family. Neytiri represents the emo-

tional cost of loss and the impact colonization has on the people whose land is colonized.

Another interesting character is Neteyam, played by Jamie Flatters. The oldest child of Jake and Neytiri, Neteyam is a natural athlete and noble like his father. Neteyam holds himself to a high standard and is always trying to prove his worth to his father. In fact, these very character traits contribute to a tragic incident in the plot that has an impact on all of the central characters and on the viewer. Ultimately, Neteyam represents the concept of bravery and his journey connects to

the importance of family and protecting one's siblings.

In contrast, one character I was less impressed by is Spider, who is played by Jack Champion. Spider got his nickname from his natural ability to climb. When he was a baby, he lost both his parents in the battle of Hallelujah Mountains. Spider stayed on Pandora and was adopted by a human family in Hell's Gate. Eventually, he spent more and more time with the Sully kids, which is why he gets screen time in *The Way of Water*. Overall, I do not really understand why he is in the movie given the lack of relevance the character has to the unfolding plot. It feels like they are unnecessarily trying to force this character into the movie.

Despite that one shortcoming, I love everything else about *Avatar: The Way of Water*. I enjoy witnessing the way the Na'vi people try to protect their land against the "sky people" from Earth. If you really think about it, we are the sky people, our planet is Pandora and we are killing it slowly. If you have not seen any of the films in this series, it is best to watch them in order, starting with the original *Avatar*. If you can get through that movie and *Avatar: The Way of Water* fast enough, you can move your way up to *Avatar: Fire and Ash* while it is still in theaters. I give *The Way of Water* and the other two *Avatar* movies five out of five stars.

Uptown Girls is a feel-good trip to early 2000s filmmaking

The 2003 Boaz Yakin movie may not have won any awards, but it will win your heart if you are in the mood for a light comedy

By CAMILARODRIGUEZLAZCANO
Quill staff writer

I love movies and shows from the early 2000s. They never fail to bring me joy. One good example of this is the 2003 film *Uptown Girls*, directed by Boaz Yakin. This is a funny but sweet movie that will appeal to a wide audience.

In the film, Brittany Murphy plays Molly, who is a fun and messy adult. There is a specific scene in which she makes herself a hair clip that viewers will not be able to forget. This sequence captures the playful, charming and goofy aspects of the character and

proves to be a highlight of the film.

The film also features Dakota Fanning as Ray, an independent and responsible eight year old for whom Molly becomes a nanny. Ray is smart and way too serious for her age. The movie ultimately focuses on the developing relationship between Ray and Molly. As Molly helps Ray have a childhood, Ray helps Molly learn how to grow up.

The best part of the movie is the depiction of this central relationship. Murphy's performance as Molly is so full of life, and the things her character does will make you laugh. Meanwhile, Fanning

makes you feel for Ray and hope that things will work out for her in the end.

While the characters are interesting, the plot of the film is not anything special. Some parts are super predictable and Molly's irresponsibility can be a bit too exaggerated to remain believable. However, that seems to be the point of the movie: it is not too serious or too deep. Ultimately, it is a feel-good, sweet 2000s movie.

Even though it is not the deepest movie, *Uptown Girls* does hit on some themes that were common in early 2000s movies. Probably the biggest is that life is messy.

NHS MEMBERS IN MIDDLE OF ACTIVE 25-26 SCHOOL YEAR

continued from page 2

be pretty overwhelming and time consuming, but it's the opposite. It's fun to place some of my time into helping the community as I get to meet people and give benefits into the community like when I helped with bagging food for Feed My Starving Children," she said.

Kilsdonk said the NHS officers at

Cooper are essential to the success of the organization. This year's leadership team includes co-presidents Alania Niswander (12) and Pha-A-Thit Nongsoury (12), vice president Cecilia Nguyen (12), secretary Adeline Peterson (12) and treasurer Eden Carling (12). These students dedicate their time to organizing meet-

ings, planning service projects and supporting the other NHS members.

"Their hard work and positive leadership help create a strong sense of community within the chapter," Kilsdonk said.

According to Kilsdonk, students who want to be leaders in their com-

munity are encouraged to join the other like-minded students in NHS.

"If you want to make a difference in your local community by sharing your intelligence, diligence and time, this is the organization for you. Smart scholars make the world a better place with every deed," Kilsdonk said.

Premier Performers

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

Christina Xiong

By ROSE VANG-LOHNES
Quill staff writer

Christina Xiong (12) has been involved in orchestra for eight years.

"I started playing because I always found interest in playing an instrument and wanted to do something fun with my free time while in elementary school," she said.

What Xiong enjoys about orchestra is the practice and how engaged everyone is in her orchestra class.

"It's satisfying to hear your hard work," she said.

One main reason why Xiong is passionate about orchestra is because of the variety of music she gets to play.

"One piece can make you emotional and stick with you," she said.

Xiong's favorite memory of her time in orchestra is when they perform at the Halloween concert every year. She

said she loves the songs they perform and the spooky games they play with the little kids before and after the concert.

Outside of music, Xiong's favorite class at school is Functions, Statistics and Trigonometry.

"It actually makes me enjoy math more than I ever have and the teacher makes it easy to understand," she said.

When she is not at school, Xiong likes to play badminton, hang out with friends and play video games. Specifically, her favorite game is *Zelda: Breath of The Wild* because it is an adventurous game.

"I love the story line, all of the quests and exploration," she said.

After high school, Xiong is planning to go to the University of Minnesota, Duluth and major in dentistry.

"It's one of my dream schools and I like the nature there," she said.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Specialty band groups seek players

Hawk musicians have many ways to get involved with Cooper's band program



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Perhaps the most visible of the extracurricular band-related groups is Cooper's Marching Band.

By TYLER GOODMAN
Quill staff writer

Cooper has many specialty band programs led by Markus Hahn that students in Freshman Band and Concert Band can join. Assuming you already have an instrument, these band programs are open for any musician to join.

Marching Band

The Marching Band is a specialty band that not only deals with music but also with physical performance. The Marching Band uses these skills to perform halftime shows at football games. The Marching Band also performs street marches every year at the Minnesota State Fair. In fact, the band marched at the 2025 state fair and managed to score the most out of the other marching bands that day, which shows how talented and dedicated the group is.

"It also takes a lot of energy to parade. I appreciate the toughness that it builds in students," Hahn said.

The Marching Band also goes to the March Along the Chippewa competition, which takes place in early October. A lot of marchers have said that their favorite part of that trip are the pies that you get to buy after marching. Every marcher said that it is definitely something that new members do not want to miss.

"The pies at Chippewa Falls are some of the best pies I have ever had," Zach Cummings (10) said.

Agreeing with Cummings is Raiden Southwell (11).

"Racing to the concessions stand before the banana cream or French silk got sold out is truly nostalgic to me and I will cherish those memories when I graduate," he said.

Marching Band begins before the school year starts to properly prepare participants for the fall foot-

ball halftime show because the band members need to learn how to not only play together but also move together.

The 2025 Marching Band season had the theme of "Music From the 2010s" and they played a total of four songs for their shows. Each song had its own movements and one even had the Marching Band singing and dancing, which they did for every halftime show.

Every Marching Band season ends with an indoor concert that includes their show songs but also some songs recommended and voted on by the marchers.

"The indoor concert is great. It's the culmination of everything we have done in Marching Band that year and it's where we can show it off to everyone," Zane Halstead (11) said.

Jazz Band

Cooper has two jazz groups: Jazz 1 and Jazz 2. Jazz 1 is an advanced jazz group that requires those interested to audition. Jazz 1 starts early in the school year and, unlike other band groups, practices early in the morning before school starts and during HLL. Because Jazz 1 starts earlier in the year, they often play Christmas music in the front foyer of the school during the holidays. Additionally, since they are higher level, they are the jazz band that represents Cooper at conference and community events.

"Jazz 1 is about work ethic and integrity. The students in there are killing it and willing to work and play at a super high level," Hahn said.

Jazz 2 is the group for those new to playing jazz. However, for Jazz 2, students do not need to play the same instrument they would for other band classes. For instance, many clarinet and flute players are now

playing saxophone in Jazz 2. Jazz 2 starts the week after winter break. Every Thursday, Jazz 2 has rehearsals during the entire lunch period and they only have seven rehearsals to get the music right before their concert.

"Jazz style is generally more aggressive than a musician uses in the classical setting. Jazz 2 is where we learn to jam with friends; Jazz 1 is where we dominate," Hahn said

Wind Ensemble

Wind Ensemble is similar to Jazz 1 in that students need to audition for the group. Auditions for the group take place near the end of the current school year for the next school year. Students who are accepted will have a Wind Ensemble class during the next school year.

"It has changed my view of working as a group of musicians: playing to each other rather than playing for myself. It's also taught me a good deal of music theory just by trial and error," Joseph Watkins (12) said.

Like Jazz 1, Wind Ensemble is an advanced group. Wind Ensemble is like Freshman Band and Concert Band but they play more challenging music and try different things. For example, the December 11, 2025 Wind Ensemble concert had what Hahn described as a "screaming electric guitar solo in one of the songs."

Students interested in finding out more information about Wind Ensemble or any of these band groups are encouraged to see Hahn or speak to students currently participating in one of the specialty groups.

"I encourage everyone to learn an instrument, even singing, as music speaks where words cannot. Playing an instrument is not as hard as many people think and it's never too late to start," Watkins said.

Eliana Chilson

By CHANDLER HUNTER
Quill staff writer

Eliana Chilson (12) has been involved in choir since elementary school. Prompting her to get involved with music was her mother, who sang at their church.

"I started choir back in fifth grade and had been really excited to sing," Chilson said. "I was raised singing and really enjoy it."

What keeps Chilson coming back to choir year after year is both the music and the people.

"I absolutely love to sing high notes," she said. "The people I sing with are another huge reason I love to sing in a group."

One moment stands out as especially meaningful in Chilson's choir journey.

"When Ms. Rowan convinced

little ninth grade me to join Bella Voce," Chilson said. "I'm really glad to have joined and gotten the chance to experience more of choir."

While Chilson does not hold a formal leadership role in choir, she said she still finds ways to contribute.

"I try to help out wherever I can," she said.

Beyond music, Chilson's favorite subjects include psychology, physiology and English, which she said give her creative freedom and help her better understand people. Outside of school, Chilson enjoys reading, writing, drawing and observing nature.

"I especially like the really small things," she said, "like how tree branches look getting blown by the wind."

After graduation, Chilson is considering either programming or a biology-related field.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Adeline Peterson

By CHANDLER HUNTER
Quill staff writer

Adeline Peterson (12) plays the viola in Cooper's orchestra. In fact, she has been involved in the district's music program since she first picked up the instrument in fourth grade.

"I started playing because my older sister used to play and I thought it would be fun," Peterson said.

One of Peterson's favorite parts of being in orchestra is the variety of music she gets to experience. Exploring different styles has helped keep orchestra engaging and fresh year after year, even as her skills have continued to develop.

"I have enjoyed getting to play different types of music, not just classical," Peterson said.

Peterson's most memorable music

experience came outside the classroom.

"My favorite memory was our trip to Chicago when we played at the Field Museum in the lobby," Peterson said.

According to Peterson, performing in such a unique and public space made the trip unforgettable and highlighted the opportunities that come with being part of the orchestra program.

Academically, Peterson is drawn to subjects that encourage critical thinking.

"My favorite classes in school are history and orchestra," she said.

Outside of school, she spends much of her time reading and keeping up with current events, interests that align closely with her future goals. Specifically, Peterson plans to attend college and study political science and psychology after graduating.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Maria Castaneda Ramirez

By CHANDLER HUNTER
Quill staff writer

Maria Castaneda Ramirez (12) is a violin player in Cooper's Symphony Orchestra.

Castaneda Ramirez is now in her eighth year playing violin and her fourth year with the high school orchestra program. She first picked up the instrument in elementary school, inspired by family.

"I initially joined in elementary school with the intention of being a part of something as my older brother was in band as a flute player," she said.

While her journey has not always been easy, supportive teachers helped Castaneda Ramirez discover her passion for music.

"I've had amazing directors who've helped me fall back in love with

performing," she said. "They've taught me to understand music and develop new skills."

What has kept Castaneda Ramirez involved is the sense of belonging that orchestra provides.

"I've enjoyed being in orchestra because it provides a sense of familiarity and appreciation for the arts," she said.

Some of Castaneda Ramirez's favorite memories came during last year's orchestra trip to Chicago.

"We got the opportunity to perform at the Field Museum," she said. "Also, we got the chance to see the Chicago Symphony Orchestra perform."

After graduation, Castaneda Ramirez plans to pursue a nursing degree with hopes of becoming a nurse anesthetist. Additionally, she plans to keep music in her life.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Music training has positive impact on other skills

Learning how to play, read music can benefit brain development, classroom performance

By TYLER GOODMAN
Quill staff writer

Cooper offers many band, choir and orchestra classes designed to help students improve as musicians. What those students may not realize is that their music training also helps them do better in their other classes.

Research has shown that learning music can help the brain in more ways than one. According to the National Library of Medicine, children who learn how to play music perform better in global language-related classes when it comes to issues such as pronunciation. This may be due to the fact that learning music is like learning how to read another language. Musicians have to learn notes and how to play those notes, which is similar to learning a language because you have to learn the word and learn how to say it.

"Music classes helped me realize what a learning process feels like and how to stick with learning something I may not be good at yet," Joseph Watkins (12) said.

Another beneficial facet of music training is sight reading. Because sight reading music requires you to

take in a large amount of information in a short amount of time, it makes the musician "work all quadrants of the brain at the same time," according to music teacher Markus Hahn. Hahn added that learning and playing music literally helps the brain grow.

"Career musicians typically have a larger corpus callosum than non-musicians because of all of the work their brain has done communicating," Hahn said.

According to Hahn, he has seen throughout his career a correlation "between those who are good at rhythm and good at math." This means that students who are good at music are likely good at math. However, Hahn added that you do not have to be good at one to be good at the other. In fact, he said learning music is easy and he encourages people to join music classes like band because it is both "concrete" and "abstract."

In addition to music helping teach or improve skills for other subjects like math, Hahn said it also helps with the ability to face obstacles.

"It takes effort to get better. A lot of people get frustrated because, as a

teenager, you know what good and bad are. 'I'm terrible. I'm going to give up.' Music pays back the effort you put in, in multitudes," Hahn said.

Learning and playing music also is rewarding when it comes to issues related to teamwork. Hahn said that learning music is "group work and solo work at the same time." When doing a solo or being the only person with a saxophone part, it can feel rewarding and teach students something in the process when played right.

"There is an accountability that isn't there in other activities," Hahn said.

Music classes can also help in life after graduation. In fact, it can help in the college entrance process.

"Music is the second-highest major accepted in medical school because musicians have been dealing with direct feedback their entire lives. Therefore, college counselors know they are more resilient," Hahn said.

In these many ways, music training helps students perform better in different academic subjects, learn teamwork and prepare themselves for life after high school.

Goldmine a gorgeous love letter to glam

Todd Haynes' underrated 1998 release leans heavily on its killer soundtrack, lush art direction, extreme costuming



Photo by MIRAMAX FILMS

Christian Bale (left) plays a music journalist working through his own obsessions with the glam rock era.

By TESSA LENOCH
Quill staff writer

Todd Haynes' 1998 film *Velvet Goldmine* was originally written as a biopic of glamorous musician David Bowie, except after one read, the out-of-this-world popstar threw it out and put a big fat denial stamp on Haynes' request to use Bowie's music in the film. Despite this, Haynes moved ahead with the script anyways, melding bits and pieces of Bowie's life into the music-filled, glittery mess that is *Velvet Goldmine*. Instead of being designed like a history textbook about the glamrock movement, the movie is really more akin to fan fiction. But who doesn't like a bit of

that from time to time?

Velvet Goldmine is glamrock's *Citizen Kane*, structured as a reflection back on a bygone era and a bygone performer named Brian Slade (Jonathan Rhys Meyers), who was once the king of the music scene. Dressed in extravagant rhinestone outfits, sporting spiky, electric blue hair, and made up in firetruck red lipstick, Slade would emerge onto the stage every night ready to change the lives of London's youth for good. Soon, he gets too sick of the kingdom he has built for himself and fakes his own death, thereby throwing his teenage fan group into peril. Eventually, the truth behind Slade's demise is discovered, he is exposed as a fake

and glamrock suffers a painful death when all the kids grow up.

Investigating this scandalous tale is reporter Arthur Stuart (Christian Bale), who traverses the grey and glum streets of 1980s London seeking the insights of the people who lived through the glamrock era. As he uncovers more about Brian Slade, Stuart is able to reconnect with his own true self by looking back on these early days of carefree self-expression.

As a dizzying glimpse into the ever-evolving world of pop music, *Velvet Goldmine* is the perfect encapsulation of the 1970s era if you are not too worried about the accuracy of the details. It may not be the best history

teacher when it comes to understanding Bowie or glamrock music, but at the very least, it looks realistic enough. Take some glitter, throw it on a music video, add in some high-heels and space references and you are close enough for most of the general public. While I am sure that many Bowie fans would turn their nose up at this film, as someone who never really found an interest in that singer's personal life, the movie is more than watchable as its own standalone piece of art.

You may be asking yourself: if the story cannot teach you much about the era and it is the movie equivalent of celebrity fan fiction, what is the purpose of even watching *Velvet Goldmine* in the first place? The answer is simple: you are given a pathway to feel the same feelings that brought glamrock to the throne in the first place. In *Velvet Goldmine*, Haynes maps out a world stretching from Oscar Wilde to Ronald Reagan, chronicling the rise and fall of creativity and self-expression. He shows the authentic and passionate world of creating art and how art can be so easily corrupted and commodified, especially when young people grow up and lose their passions and intensity to the drag that is adulthood. If nothing else, you will walk away from the movie with a couple new songs to add to your playlist, a newfound appreciation for music video direction and at least a couple of questions about yourself.

Velvet Goldmine is a fun watch for fun people. Fans of colorful, quirky movies are sure to enjoy it, while more pretentious watchers can get behind its web of storytelling and commentary on self-expression. It is a movie I personally could watch on loop for days. I give it a five out of five stars.

Campy dramedy Housewives is binge-worthy TV

Although it ended its run more than a decade ago, *Desperate Housewives* still feels fresh

By CAMILARODRIGUEZLAZCANO
Quill staff writer

Desperate Housewives is a TV show that aired for eight seasons stretching from 2004 to 2012. The show was originally supposed to be named *The Secret Life of Housewives*, which describes the focus of the plot perfectly. The show takes place in the suburban neighborhood of Wisteria Lane in the 2000s. One reason I enjoy this show is because of its mix of humor and drama. Watching the show keeps you so entertained that you suddenly realize that you are already seven episodes in. Although this show is not for everyone, most viewers would absolutely love it.

The show follows a group of women living in Wisteria Lane, all of whom have intertwined lives and secrets. The central characters include Susan (Teri Hatcher), the hopeless romantic; Lynette (Felicity Huffman), the hardworking mother with too much on her plate; Gabby (Eva Longoria), the ex-model; Bree (Marcia Cross), the perfectionist; and Eddie (Nicollette Sheridan), the one that lives like she is still in her 20s. Each of them face different situations ranging from love affairs to family turmoil while trying to put on the illusion that their suburban existence is perfect.

One of the strongest parts of *Desperate Housewives* is the acting. The cast is amazing and each performer makes the full range of their character's experiences believable. For instance, Hatcher consistently nails the awkward-but-lovable nature of Susan, while Huffman makes Lynette come across as the quintessential overwhelmed mother. Meanwhile, Cross is convincing as the raging, controlling perfectionist Bree, who eventually transforms into a character with whom audiences will sympathize. Finally, Longoria brings a great deal of charm and vulnerability to her portrayal of Gabby. All of them together make the show so much fun to watch. They also make it easy to get invested into the lives of the characters.

One element of the show that is impressive involves the overarching plot. In the first episode, they hook you with a big mystery that involves all of the central characters, but as the series continues, that mystery goes on the back burner and the viewer is able to get more invested in the individual lives of the central characters. This important shift is courtesy of Marc Cherry, the show's creator, and the rest of the talented writing and directing team, who do a great job of finding the right balance between drama and humor.

Overall, *Desperate Housewives* is a fun, binge-worthy series that is great to put on at the end of a long day. Although I felt like I never wanted it to end, I am glad that it did and they did not drag the show out like they have with *Grey's Anatomy*. *Desperate Housewives* deserves five out of five stars.

BUS EXIT TIMES continued from page 4

The chief takeaway here is that it is always an uncomfortable rush for some bus riders to catch their ride on time. For me, it is an annoyance, but for other students, it can be uncertain whether they will make it home or not. Based on the wide variations of where a student may be in the building for their eighth period class, the amount of time should be lengthened before the buses can leave. Students should always be given a sufficient time span to walk at a normal pace from the most remote part of the building to the very farthest bus without having to worry. This is one of the most basic asks, is it not?

Disco Elysium brings existential ideas to gaming

Instead of shooting at digital foes, the game asks players to focus on character interactions, critical thinking

By MANAL BARE
Quill staff writer

Have you ever woken up and felt like you completely lost control of your life? That is the strange feeling *Disco Elysium* gives you almost immediately off the bat. *Disco Elysium*, which was developed by ZAUM and released in 2019, is nothing like a typical video game. There is no real combat, no fast action and no clear answers. The game focuses on interactions, critical thinking and dealing with the consequences of your choices. I chose to review this game because it feels different and I think people should play it because it forces you to sit with uncomfortable thoughts. Overall, *Disco Elysium* is a powerful and meaningful game that stays with you.

One of the most interesting parts of *Disco Elysium* is how the game uses your character's mind as part of the gameplay. Different parts of your personality speak to you as voices in your head, each representing skills like logic,



Photo by ZAUM

Race and identity issues play key roles in the unfolding plot of *Disco Elysium*.

empathy and authority. These voices influence your decisions and sometimes argue with each other, making every choice feel personal but unstable at the same time. The game is deeply psychological, as if you are not just controlling a character, but sharing a mind with

him.

The setting and art style also play a huge role in how the story feels. The city the game takes place in is called Revachol, and it is a gloomy and worn-down town with political tension all around. The visuals add to it by looking

like an old painting, which gives the world a complex look. Everything in the environment feels intentionally detailed, making the city feel like a character of its own.

The game also explores race through its setting and characters. Revachol is a city shaped by colonialism and occupation, and many characters carry lots of resentment, pride and trauma connected to that history. Through the dialogue, the game shows how race and identity influence the power dynamics and belonging of the individual characters.

In the end, *Disco Elysium* is not for everyone. If you are looking for action gameplay, this probably is not the game for you. However, if you enjoy games that deal with heavy topics like identity and race, and if you like to think deeply while playing, it is a worthwhile game. I would definitely recommend *Disco Elysium* to anyone who enjoys story-driven games that are not afraid to challenge them as players. *Disco Elysium* earns four out of five stars.

Horror film The Deliverance strives for realistic approach

The Netflix-exclusive release, which was directed by Lee Daniels, was inspired by a real family that experienced paranormal events

By ANGEL JARQUIN RAMIREZ
Quill staff writer

The Deliverance is a Lee Daniels-directed horror film that came out on August 16, 2024. This movie is inspired by true events. The plot revolves around Ebony Jackson, who moved her family into a rental home in November 2011. Along with her was her mother and three kids ages 12, nine and seven. After moving in the house, Ebony starts noticing weird things, such as hordes of flies and phantom footsteps. Soon after this, her kids begin acting differently. They speak in guttural voices, fly across the room and climb up the walls. These paranormal activities are witnessed in person by a doctor,

nurses, social workers, police officers and a Catholic priest. The realistic depiction of these many events is one reason why I enjoyed this horror movie and encourage others to watch it as well.

One element of the film that is done well is the special effects. There is a scene in which Ebony, who is played by Andra Day, and her mother Alberta, who is played by Glenn Close, are on the porch and get their first sense that something is wrong in the house. Specifically, large black flies start appearing in the screened-in porch. The pair kill the flies but more and more keep coming. The special effects used to create the flies make the scene more disturbing, which helps raise the tension for the viewer.

Another filmmaking element that is important in *The Deliverance* is sound effects. As the movie goes on, the paranormal activity in the house increases quickly. Ebony and her family are often awakened right after midnight to sounds of footsteps walking back and forth and down into the basement. When they investigate, Ebony and her mother find no one on the stairs. Although it is a simple sound effect, the footsteps make these sequences scarier and add to the horror aspect of the movie.

Helping make the more fantastic elements of the movie more believable are the performances. Especially good acting is shown by the people playing Andre (Antony B. Jenkins), Nate (Caleb McLaughlin) and Shante

(Demi Singleton), Ebony's three children. When the paranormal incidents increase in the film, the children begin speaking in deep voices, their mouths twist in a terrifying smile and their eyes bulge out of their heads. While child actors are not always good, the trio of performers playing the kids in this film are excellent.

Overall, *The Deliverance* is a horror film that delivers genuine scares in a way that is rooted in reality. Along with an interesting plot, the film's special effects, sound and acting are among the elements that make *The Deliverance* memorable. For fans of horror or good moviemaking in general, I recommend watching *The Deliverance*. This movie earns five out of five stars.

JANUARY BLOOD DRIVE MEETS DONATION GOALS continued from page 2

drives here are pretty cool. I get snacks and a shirt," Rossow said.

According to Lieser, the collaboration between Cooper and the Red Cross has run smoothly over the years.

"There is a person at the Red Cross who is my direct contact support. Whenever I have questions, need help,

etc., they are who I work with," Lieser said.

The Red Cross staff is qualified and follows all the safety rules. During the actual event, Lieser said some extra help from members of the Cooper National Honor Society is also utilized.

"Something we do to help is have National Honor Society members sign up to volunteer to run the check-in table, volunteer at the canteen and also escort students back to class to make sure everything runs smoothly," Lieser said.

The next Cooper blood drive will be on March 13. Lieser said that they

will be looking for more donors.

"Donors are able to donate every 56 days and blood is always needed. In the U.S., blood is needed every two seconds. If people donate for the first time when they are young, they can continue to donate throughout their life," Lieser said.

Hawk alumnus returns to teach

Onte Bums, who graduated from Cooper in 2018, recently joined the physical education department



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

The classes Bums teaches include Team and Lifetime Sports, Recreation and Leisure, and Net and Racquet Sports.

By CHANDLER HUNTER
Quill staff writer

Cooper alumnus Onte Bums is currently in his first full semester as a physical education teacher at the school. For Bums, the journey back to Cooper after graduating from the school in 2018 is more than just a job opportunity; it is a full-circle moment rooted in his interest in athletics and being a mentor.

According to Bums, he did not always plan on becoming an educator. In fact, his path into teaching started with a simple conversation.

"A former teacher from Cooper asked if I was interested in teaching," Bums said. "I gave it a chance and now I love it."

That initial encouragement planted the seed for a career that now allows Bums to work with students in the same building where he was once inspired by other teachers.

After graduating from Cooper eight years ago, Bums attended Southwest Minnesota State University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in exercise science. His educational background reflects his long-standing interest in fitness and the human body, interests that were shaped by his own experiences as a multi-sport athlete. Growing up, Bums stayed busy competing in basketball, football, track and lacrosse.

Before returning to Cooper, Bums worked as a physical education teacher at Robbinsdale Middle School. There, he gained valuable classroom and gym experience that helped shape his teach-

ing style. Now back at his alma mater, Bums said the transition has been both exciting and meaningful.

"I love being a teacher here," he said. "It's cool seeing the same teachers from high school that are now my co-workers."

Currently, Bums teaches a wide range of physical education classes, including Team and Lifetime Sports, Recreation and Leisure, and Net and Racquet Sports. The variety allows him to reach students with different interests and athletic abilities. Whether a student is a varsity athlete or someone who prefers casual activities, Bums aims to make his classes engaging and inclusive.

At the core of Bums' approach to teaching is a philosophy that goes beyond the games and drills one typically finds in a physical education class.

"I would say my philosophy is trying to get my students to learn the importance of physical fitness regardless of what sport or activity we are doing," he said. "I enjoy molding my students to be productive and influential people in society."

For Bums, physical education is not just about staying active during the school day, it is also about building habits and mindsets that last a lifetime. He hopes students leave his classes with a new perspective on fitness and the role it can play in their future.

"I hope they learn that fitness can be fun," Bums said. "I hope they know that they reach their goals if they put in the effort. Lastly, I want them to know

there is more to life than just stress. I want them to live life free and with discipline to achieve their dreams."

In his free time, Bums said he likes watching television, playing video games and hanging out with friends. However, staying active also remains a priority for him outside of his job.

"I like to play basketball on the weekends," he said. "I need something to keep me in shape because Coach Bums is getting old."

Although basketball is his favorite sport to play, Bums said that football is his favorite to watch. Bums' connection to football goes beyond being a fan. He also coaches varsity football at North High School. This hands-on involvement in sports reflects his belief in leading by example and staying connected to the athletic community.

Given his own interest in being physically active, Bums said he has some straightforward advice for how other people can keep themselves fit throughout their lives.

"Do an activity that you like," he said. "The hardest part about having an active lifestyle is showing up. Just show up and find a reason to be active. Your body will change as you get older. You control how healthy you can be."

Beyond his involvement in athletics and his focus on fitness, there are some things about Bums that he said might surprise students. One of them is his musical side.

"I was in Concert Choir from sophomore to senior year at Cooper," he said.

DISTRICT WELCOMES NEW CHEMICAL HEALTH SPECIALIST continued from page 2

alicia_mccabe@rdale.org," she said.

As the district's chemical health specialist, McCabe is still shaping what programs and resources will look like long-term. She is honest about the fact that not everything is set in stone yet.

"To be honest, this is [to be determined] in a lot of ways," she said. "I am here to provide knowledge and support and have a bunch of ideas that I think will take time to unfold."

That openness reflects McCabe's overall approach: listening first, then responding based on what students actually need. Collaboration plays a big role in that process, but McCabe is careful to respect student privacy and comfort.

"How others are included in the work I do with individual students will largely be up to the student," she said. "I do have to notify a parent if I plan to talk with a student, though what is shared with the parent is on a need-to-know basis and will be discussed with each student."

McCabe said she hopes to work alongside teachers, counselors, administrators and families when appropriate.

"I hope to collaborate with whoever can be a support to the students as long as they are comfortable with that," she said.

Part of McCabe's work also involves challenging misconceptions about chemical health and substance use, misconceptions that can prevent people from seeking help.

"I think there is stigma around chemical health or substance use, that only certain types of people use or that seeking support can make you look weak," she said.

According to McCabe, there is a common belief among teens and adults alike that some substances are "better" than others simply because they are legal.

"I think there is a belief that because substances are in different classes and some are legal and some are not that some substances are better than others," McCabe said. "The reality is all substances impact the user's brain in similar ways and all substances have impacts for the user over time."

When it comes to discussing these topics with students, McCabe prioritizes

respect and trust. She understands that conversations about substance use, family situations or mental health can feel overwhelming.

"I come from a place of non-judgment and compassion," she said. "I want students to know that it is okay to talk about hard or difficult things."

McCabe encourages students seeking help to share at their own pace.

"Encourage students to share what they are comfortable with and respect what isn't ready to be shared," she said. "Once I get to know you, I might throw some humor in if it feels like a laugh might be needed after a heavy conversation."

Looking ahead, McCabe's goals for her first year are centered on relationships rather than checklists.

"My goals this year are to get to know students, let them know who I am and learn how I can support students in the best ways for them," she said. "I hope to find new ways to connect with students and staff and share the experience and knowledge I have."

BAD BUNNY PERFORMANCE continued from page 4

biggest American stage feels like an important statement.

I also loved that they picked Green Day as the opening act. The members of this band are not shy about how they feel politically, especially when it comes to their dislike of Donald Trump. Their music has always been about calling out the government, fake patriotism and people in power who do not care about the common person. People angry with the choice of Bad Bunny because they wanted an "American artist" certainly got more than they bargained for

with Green Day. Having these two both perform at the Super Bowl feels like an important move at this time in American history.

Many people say that we should keep politics out of the Super Bowl or other sporting events. However, these days, everything is about politics. The Super Bowl is one of the most-watched events in this country. Acting like an event of this importance should be neutral is naive. Choosing performers who stand for something is way better than hiding and pretending like everything in America is sunshine and

rainbows right now.

A Bad Bunny and Green Day halftime show is not just a dream concert for music lovers, it is a representation of some messages that Americans need to hear right now. The Super Bowl has emerged as one of this nation's huge, patriotic moments during the year, but it has often played it safe in the past when it comes to messaging. This was a perfect time for the NFL to use the halftime show to acknowledge the problems in our country right now and refuse to stay silent on those issues.

Cooper Competitors

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

Nengshia Vang

By ROSE VANG-LOHNES
Quill staff writer

Nengshia Vang (12) is part of the Cooper wrestling team. He joined the squad this year because he "wanted to really test" himself and it seemed "fun to ragdoll people."

What Vang enjoys most about wrestling is the "adrenaline rush" he gets while competing. On a related note, Vang said his favorite wrestling memory is when he was able to get a proper takedown for the first time.

While Vang does not have an official leadership role, he said he loves to help anyone who is confused about proper wrestling moves because he sometimes experiences the same issues.

When it comes to school, Vang said his favorite class is Film Study.

"It's so cool to just watch movies with my friends and text about it," he said.

Vang's enjoyment of Film Study also extends to his personal hobbies. Specifically, he said he loves to watch movies in his free time. Additionally, he also said he works on bettering himself by being alone.

"I don't mean to isolate myself, but my self-consciousness makes me," he said.

After graduating, Vang plans to go to Minneapolis Community and Technical College for two years before going to a university. Vang still is not sure what he wants to major in, but he said that film does hold a special place in his heart.

"I want to make a movie just as great as Sinners," he said.

In the future, Vang said he is planning to remain involved with sports.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Mathilde Klausen

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

Mathilde Klausen (12), a Norwegian exchange student, joined the Cooper Nordic skiing team this winter. She has practiced skiing since she was five years old, so she was already familiar with the sport.

Klausen's decision to take part in the Cooper squad was driven by the desire to ski with friends who are also on the team. Additionally, she said she wanted to meet new people.

Klausen likes challenging herself. However, she emphasized that the moments she enjoys the most in Nordic are those when she can ski on the trails with her friends while the sun goes down.

According to Klausen, she has already made tons of great memories during her time on the team.

"My favorite memories are seeing deer run across the track. Being so close to nature and its wonder is very rewarding as well as seeing my exchange friends try cross country skiing for the first time and watching them get better for each day," she said.

Outside of school, Klausen said she likes listening to music, hanging out with her friends and shopping.

After leaving Cooper at the end of this school year, Klausen plans to study abroad. She said she is still deciding between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States for her next destination.

"I think criminal psychology is very interesting and I'm taking psychology right now and loving it. However, a dream of mine has long been to become a writer. More specifically, I want to be an author like Stephen King," she said.

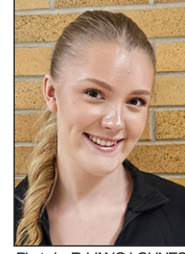


Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Christian Espinoza Astorga

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

Christian Espinoza Astorga (12) has recently joined the Cooper wrestling team. Wrestling is a winter sport that Espinoza Astorga has now been involved with for the past two years.

As a Spanish exchange student, Espinoza Astorga said he was quickly able to adapt to the team environment. Additionally, he said that he truly enjoys the energy that the sport of wrestling brings.

When it comes to key aspects of being on the team that he enjoys, Espinoza Astorga said that competing and bonding with his fellow wrestlers are highlights.

"My favorite memories are all the tournaments and hanging with the team," Espinoza Astorga said.

Although he does not hold an ac-

tual leadership position on the wrestling team, Espinoza Astorga believes that he still plays an important role. Being the oldest member of the team, he said he feels a certain responsibility to support and encourage his teammates.

During the upcoming spring season, Espinoza Astorga said he is planning to join the track team in order to stay active.

"I have hopes on making it to state," he said.

In school, Espinoza Astorga's favorite class is Weight Training because it helps him prepare physically for sports.

Outside of athletics, Espinoza Astorga has a strong interest in social activities. In fact, he said one of his favorite things to do is spend time with his friends.

Espinoza Astorga hopes that he will be able to continue participating in sports after high school.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Rafael Sandiero Vazquez

By CHANDLER HUNTER
Quill staff writer

Rafael Sandiero Vazquez (12) is at the start of a new chapter in his athletic journey. As a first-year wrestler, Sandiero Vazquez decided to step out of his comfort zone and try a sport he had never played before.

"This will be my first year playing a winter sport," Sandiero Vazquez said. "What made me choose wrestling is I heard wrestling conditioning helps you with creating more stamina [and] works on your reflexes."

Although he entered the season with no prior wrestling background, Sandiero Vazquez has quickly found positives in the experience.

"What I enjoy so far about wrestling is I get to socialize with new people around the school that also enjoy the

sport," he said.

Sandiero Vazquez did not participate in any fall or spring sports in the past. However, he has always been focused on working out and staying fit.

"My hobbies outside of school [are] going to the gym and working on myself physically and mentally," he said.

In addition to his exercise time, Sandiero Vazquez said he enjoys going to the skate park to do tricks on his BMX bike and skateboard.

In the classroom, Sandiero Vazquez said he enjoys classes that make use of his creativity.

"My favorite class is clay because it is calming," he said. "I get to sculpt vases, teapots and mugs, and I also got to make a replica of an apple."

After graduation, Sandiero Vazquez plans to attend Hennepin Technical College to become an automotive technician.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES