

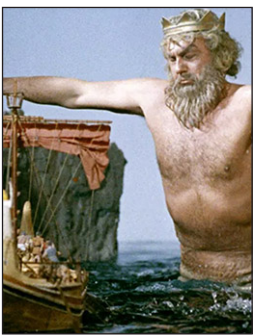


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Bidding farewell to Class of 2026

The wide-eyed ninth graders of the 2022-2023 school year are finally preparing to say goodbye to Cooper on May 29

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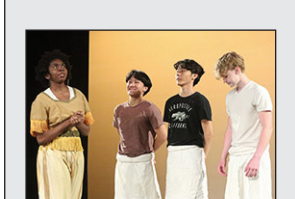


Hawks must end school year strong

Students in every grade level would benefit from the life skills one learns by giving full effort up to very end

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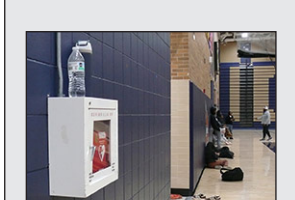


Performers shine in improv show

A Time to Remember combined the traditional spring theater show with an approach inspired by improvisational comedy

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AED equipment central to safety

Athletic trainer Karin Shelstad has spent several years expanding Cooper's collection of the devices that can help during cardiac emergencies

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DETAILS FINALIZED FOR GRADUATION CEREMONY



Photo by ERIC ZUCCOLA

Graduates begin the commencement process in a staging area where they line up by advisories before entering the auditorium.

By MANAL BARE
Quill staff writer

Cooper seniors are preparing for their long-awaited graduation ceremony, which takes place at the Minneapolis Convention Center on May 29.

Administrative Intern Josh Mahan said that “senior graduates are expected

to arrive on time at 5 p.m. in the ready room, located in Exhibit Hall B, ahead of the official ceremony start time at 6 p.m.” He also encouraged families to arrive early, noting that everyone will be required to pass through metal detectors, which may cause delays.

Each graduating student will receive six digital

tickets for guests. Those in need of more tickets may request up to two extra by completing a form. All tickets must be reserved through the HomeTown App using a QR code that was shared in Mahan’s slideshow presentation to seniors. Students are able to distribute tickets to friends and family members after claiming them.

“Tickets will only be available in digital form, and each QR code can only be scanned once for entry,” Mahan said.

Graduation attire will follow standard Cooper clothing guidelines. Students are allowed to decorate their caps as long as they remain appropriate. “Only approved aca-

The event takes place May 29 at the Minneapolis Convention Center starting at 6 p.m.

ademic honors such as medals, ribbons and cords may be worn during the ceremony,” Mahan said.

During the ceremony, graduates will sit with their advisory groups, while Student Council and Spirit Committee members will be seated with their designated groups. Students will receive diploma covers on stage, while official diplomas will be picked up at Cooper on June 1 and June 2 during regular school hours.

Seniors have a wide range of feelings about commencement. According to Lakariah Smith (12), graduation will be the start of the next phase in her education.

“I’m feeling very excited and scared as graduation gets closer. It means there’s no more high school for me and college is all that’s left,” Smith said.

Meanwhile, Ruthie Cabrera (12) said she is excited that high school is coming to an end.

“I’m extremely ready for graduation and can’t wait,” she said.

Another member of the Class of 2026, Folake Olusesi (12), said she is feeling reflective as the end of high school draws near.

“I am feeling ready

GRADUATION continues on page 8

Students wrapping up May IB, AP testing

After beginning April 28 with an IB physics exam, the testing season ends May 20 with an exam for students in IB French

By MARIAH WASHINGTON
Quill staff writer

Students enrolled in International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) classes at Cooper spent the month of May working through their external assessment exams. Testing started on April 28 and will wrap up on May 20.

“There are 87 students taking over 100 tests this spring,” IBMYP Coordinator Andrea Obranovich said.

Unlike many standardized tests that take place within school walls, IB students head off-campus for their exams.

“Students are testing at the House of Hope Church, around the corner from Cooper,” Obranovich said.

According to Obranovich, the change in location is intentional, offering a controlled and secure environment that meets IB’s strict testing requirements.

Preparation for the exams begins long before students sit down with their test booklets.

“All students in an IB class who were eligible to test this year were given registration forms in fall,” Obranovich said. “They could choose which tests they wanted to take and returned their test forms and payment to the IB office back in November to meet the IB test registration deadlines.”

Behind the scenes, the IB office has been working for months to ensure everything runs smoothly.

“After students are registered for the test, I have uploaded their IAs as needed and ordered test materials for them,” Obranovich said. “As the shipments of test materials come in, they need to be stored in a secure location until test day.”



Photo by ANDREA OBRANOVICH

The annual Wish 'Em Well Breakfast for testing students took place on April 22.

Once testing season finally arrives, there are additional logistical issues that Obranovich needs to address.

“Before each test day, the proper materials need to be collected to bring to the test day for each different subject,” she said. “It’s a process that requires precision and organization, ensuring that each student has exactly what they need at the right time.”

MAY IB, AP TESTING continues on page 2

Academic awards event recognizes student achievement

Two May 15 ceremonies celebrated seniors graduating with honors, Hawks in grades 9-11 excelling in classes

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

The Academic Awards Ceremony took place in the Cooper auditorium on May 15 during school hours. According to IBMYP Coordinator Andrea Obranovich, who helped organize the event, the ceremony was held during two different periods to accommodate all students.

“It [was] during second period for grades nine through 11 and fourth period for seniors,” she said. “This structure ensures that each group has its own moment to be recognized and celebrated.”

According to Obranovich, the purpose of the ceremony goes beyond simply handing out awards.

“This is the time when all academic awards, other than honor roll certificates, are handed out to students,” Obranovich said. “This includes cords for seniors as well as certificates and other items. From academic excellence to departmental recognition,

the ceremony highlights a wide range of accomplishments.”

Students may be recognized in different ways depending on their achievements. Some awards are based on measurable factors like GPA or the rigor of courses taken.

“There are some academic awards which are determined by GPA, the kinds of high-level courses a student took or the number of AP or IB exams taken,” Obranovich said.

At the same time, not all awards are strictly tied to grades. Some awards are given to students for the performance in specific academic areas.

“There are also departmental awards given to students for their achievement in different areas, though it may not have anything to do with their GPA or grade in the class,” Obranovich said.

Due to the large number of students recognized, organizing the annual event can be a large undertaking. Obranovich described the planning process as detailed

and data-driven.

“There are a lot of spreadsheets to be created and numbers to look at,” she said.

In addition to tracking student achievements, organizers must also coordinate communication with students and families.

“There is also a lot of organizing in terms of compiling lists of students’ advisories, home addresses and parents’ email addresses in order to make sure that families are aware of the ceremony and can attend,” she said.

The students being honored at the event receive a personalized award and experience.

“Each student receives an individual invitation and awards packet which contains all the certificates and items that they received,” Obranovich said. “They get to walk across the stage to receive the packet and have their name read by an administrator.”

AWARDS continues on page 2

Seniors share their plans for what comes next

Whether they are heading to college or taking a gap year, the Class of '26 is moving on

By TESSA LENOCH
Quill staff writer

Cooper seniors are making important decisions for their life after high school as the school year comes to an end. While all seniors shared similar experiences at Cooper, whether it be friends, teachers or classes, everyone’s post-graduation path is different. While some plan to go to college, take a gap year or go straight to the workplace, every senior will always have Cooper to call their alma mater.

Jazmin Tlaseca (12): “I will be attending Concordia University, St. Paul and majoring in early elementary education.”

Edmund Hettle (12): “I am going to Gustavus Adolphus College [and] majoring in finance.”

Janeah Sims (12): “I will be attending the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. In August, I’ll be abroad in London.”

Alene Lor (12): “My plan after high school is to become a Botox nurse.”

Mathilde Klausen (12): “I will go home to finish my 13th year of high school then take a gap year to work and travel.”

Gavin Otero (12): “I am going to the University of Minnesota for mechanical engineering.”

Sofia Barrera Lopez (12): “I am going to Saint Ben’s. Go Bennies!”

Chad Hill (12): “I am going to Gustavus Adolphus College and majoring in political science.”

Amari Davison (12): “I am attending Central State University and majoring in business administration.”

Vision Wonken (12): “I will be going to North Dakota State University for accounting and finance.”

Ryanne Dutton (12): “I am attending the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities for biology.”

Alaina Niswander (12): “I am going to the University of Wisconsin, Madison for biochemistry on either the pre-med or pre-dental track.”

Eden Carling (12): “I will be going to Iowa State University for zoology on the pre-veterinary track.”

George Kelly (12): “I am attending Marquette University and majoring in chemistry.”

Mariana Heggestad (12): “I am going to the University of Illinois, Chicago and majoring in biochemistry.”

ACADEMIC AWARDS continued from page 1

The ceremony has become a highlight of the school year for students, families and staff members alike. “It’s always a fun occasion,” Obranovich said. “We had a lot of people attend last year and I hope we have even more this year.” Beyond the awards themselves, the ceremony plays an important role in shaping school culture. The event provides an opportunity for students, families and staff members to come together and acknowledge the effort that goes into academic success. According to Obranovich, recognizing student achievement in this way can have a lasting impact. “I hope that it’s motivating for students to know that their academic efforts are going to be recognized,” she said. “It’s positive for the school culture to make sure that we celebrate all the achievements of our students, from academics to sports to the arts. Each one is important and has a place.”

Graduating Quill writers step into spotlight

After months of covering Cooper and its students, members of the Quill staff share more about themselves



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

The staff of *The Quill* convenes daily during eighth period in room 241 for the Journalism class.

By ROSE VANG-LOHNES
Quill staff writer

This is the last issue of *The Quill* for the school year. Traditionally, we have used this issue to recognize the hard work that the staff has put in, especially the graduating seniors. What follows is a special recognition of the newspaper’s soon-to-be graduates, who have worked hard and dedicated themselves to *The Quill*.

Tessa Lenocho (12)

Lenoch has been part of *The Quill* for two years and is one of the editors-in-chief. Lenocho mainly does movie reviews with the occasional opinion and news article.

Lenoch has been in a variety of activities at Cooper. She is captain of the debate team and has been for the last three years. Additionally, she has taken numerous AP and IB classes, including AP Human Geography, AP Environmental Science, AP U.S. History and IB Math. Lenocho has also been part of the yearbook staff and is involved in Chamber Singers.

“I started these activities in order to expand my experiences and hopefully grow some new skills. In debate especially, I found a lot of new skills and did quite well. I am now a much better public speaker,” Lenocho said.

One of the things that Lenocho likes about debate is meeting people from all over the state and keeping up with poli-

tics. Lenocho’s favorite debate memories include being a state finalist three years in a row and qualifying for nationals twice. She said her hard work paid off in the activity and she enjoyed seeing herself improve each season.

When it comes to her leadership role in debate, she said the activity has helped her meet “lots of people who were either just trying out debate for a year or two or deeply passionate about the activity.” She said she found it interesting how different people can work hard to accomplish something.

When it comes to school, Lenocho said her favorite classes are IB English because it pushed her and gave her a chance to read great books, and Film Study because she is passionate about

watching movies. Outside of school, Lenocho enjoys creating commissioned artwork.

After high school, Lenocho is committed to Macalester College, where she will major in philosophy and economics on a pre-law track.

Diana Sanchez Morales (12)

Sanchez Morales has been a part of *The Quill* for one year and has mainly written news pieces.

Morales is currently taking IB Chemistry HL, IB English HL and IB Spanish. She decided to take IB Chemistry because she wanted to challenge herself and her mom told her to try harder classes, which motivated her. The same goes with IB Spanish, which she just joined this year to be able to learn more about her family’s language.

“I want to accomplish something with what I hear from my parents all the time,” she said.

Meanwhile, she said IB English is her favorite class.

“I want to major in English for university. That’s why I got in IB English,” Sanchez Morales said.

According to Sanchez Morales, one thing that ties together her favorite things about school is writing.

“It does not matter if it’s equations, words or even Spanish writing,” she said.

Outside of school, Sanchez Morales writes stories and reads books. Her college plans are not finalized right now, but she wants to major in English and show her writing off to people who like to read.

Ella Van Massenhove (12)

Van Massenhove is a foreign ex-

QUILL WRITERS continues on page 8

Students reflect on highlights of '25-'26 school year

While some respondents cited personal achievements during the year, others pointed out shared experiences that stood out

By DIANA SANCHEZ MORALES
Quill staff writer

As the 2025-2026 school year comes to a close, students are reflecting on a time filled with challenges, growth and memorable moments. From adjusting to academic pressures to balancing social life and responsibilities, each student’s experience tells a unique story. This piece explores how the school year went for students, highlighting both the struggles they faced and the successes they achieved along the way.

Anisha Yang (10): “It was, like, the crappiest school year, not to mention all the stuff I went through, but it was a fun year with friends. My grades say otherwise. Other than that, I just hated this year and it really wasn’t it for me.”

Alia Renteria (12): “My 2025-2026 school year went pretty decent. It was a year of confidence and resilience and it taught me to focus on the things that matter the most school

wise, such as grades, clubs and sports. Anything else isn’t worth your time dwelling on. All you can do is focus on yourself and the rest will follow.”

Ryanne Dutton (12): “It went well. I enjoyed all the senior activities and making the most of my last year with my friends.”

Vision Wonken (12): “Honestly, it feels kind of good and almost sad a bit, and what I mean by that is that it’s like we’re about to board a ship and depart to go live out our lives. It’s like a mini goodbye is in the making. This year went by fast. It was an okay year that had a lot of feelings to it. The 2025-2026 school year definitely taught me patience and to be appreciative of the people around me. I’ll miss it.”

Michelle Morales Liborio (10): “It was great because I made new friends, I helped a lot of people [and] I tried and learned new things like sports and new classes. Getting to know new people was good because

it helped me to lose the fear of socializing with new people.”

Vanessa Avalos (12): “The 2025-2026 school year was not as bad as I thought it would be. There were some bad days as there were good days, but I got through them. A lot of times, I was stressed with school work, but I was enjoying my last year as a high schooler knowing I’ve been waiting all these years for this.”

Oliver Morales Liborio (11): “The 2025–2026 school year was honestly kind of tough, but it also helped me grow a lot. Being a junior came with way more pressure than I expected, especially with harder classes and more work piling up. Some subjects, like math and science, were challenging and forced me to actually focus and change how I study. There were definitely times I felt stressed trying to keep up with everything, but I got better at managing my time as the year went on. I’m proud of myself for not giving up, even when things got frustrating. Overall, this year taught

me a lot and made me feel more ready for senior year.”

MariaRogelia Barron Lopez (12): “The 2025-2026 school year for me was not as bad as I thought it would be. I think for me it went pretty well. Semester one was fairly easy except for economics, but other than that, it wasn’t too bad. This semester is definitely way better than last semester. Now that it’s our last year, I think it’s definitely more fun. My classes were and are super fun and energetic, and the people and teachers definitely made it worth it. There were times where I was super stressed about things like tests and quizzes, but everything turned out great in the end. I’m definitely enjoying these last few weeks while I can before it’s all over and before we graduate. I’ve prepared all of my life for this, so I’m definitely ready to graduate and get my diploma because I know all of my hard work has paid off.”

STUDENTS REFLECT continues on page 6

STUDENTS WRAPPING UP MAY IB, AP TESTING continued from page 1

For students accustomed to digital testing platforms, IB exams may feel like a step back in time.

“IB still does all of their testing on paper,” Obranovich said. “Students will come into the testing room, leave their backpacks and electronics in a different room and then proceed through the test.”

The format of the paper exams is rigorous and traditional, reflecting the type of tests students often encounter during midterms and finals in college environments.

“Most of their answers are written by hand in a test booklet and some have multiple choice components,” Obranovich said.

According to Obranovich, the emphasis on handwritten responses reflects IB’s focus on critical thinking and written communication.

Once the exams are complete, the journey of those tests is far from over.

“Testing materials actually

get sent all over the world to be graded and assessed,” Obranovich said. “I will send off each test separately to different locations, depending on the subject, and those answers will get scanned into the IB system to be assessed.”

Students do not receive immediate feedback on the exams. Given the number of exams taken and the need for assessors to read and score them, the results take several weeks to appear.

“All results are available on July 6 this year,” Obranovich said. “Students can use their IB login and PIN number to access their scores. I will also get a copy of all of the scores, so students can reach out to me if they aren’t able to log in.”

For many students, the stakes of IB and AP exams go beyond a single score. Both programs are designed to offer college-level coursework in high school, and success can translate into tangible benefits.

“Depending on the score that students get and the college

that they go to, they may receive college credit for their courses,” Obranovich said. “In addition, taking IB classes in general is a great thing to have on your transcript and shows colleges that you are ready to take on college courses.”

Similarly, AP exams offer students the opportunity to earn credit or advanced placement in college. According to Obranovich, these programs are widely recognized for their rigor, and participation often signals academic dedication and preparedness.

Inside classrooms, the approach to teaching shifts as exam season nears. For social studies teacher Sharon Kilsdonk, preparation is embedded into the curriculum from the start.

“IB History of the Americas and AP U.S. History (APUSH) are taught through the lens of test preparation,” Kilsdonk said. “In IB, the unit evaluations are old test questions. In APUSH, we use a test prep book that has practice questions at the end of each sec-

tion.”

Students are consistently tested in ways that mirror the actual exams. This familiarity helps reduce anxiety and build confidence.

“Students are assessed in each of these history courses like they will be on the college exams,” she explained.

Practice is a key component for IB and AP exams.

“Students are given practice exams for APUSH on both paper and electronically through their AP College Board account,” Kilsdonk said. “Students also can come to HLLs to practice and review for the exam.”

The day before the social studies tests is structured to maximize readiness.

“The day before the exam is an excused study day,” Kilsdonk said. “Students meet in the Media Center and prepare for the exam.”

Meanwhile, in IB math class-

MAY IB, AP TESTING continues on page 3

Bidding farewell to the Class of 2026

The wide-eyed ninth graders of the 2022-2023 school year are preparing to say goodbye to Cooper on May 29



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

The ever-changing surface of the Cooper rock is one memory many graduates will hold onto after leaving.

By ROSE VANG-LOHNES
Quill staff writer

I never thought that my senior year would pass by this fast. I remember like it was yesterday that I was complaining about how the 2025-2026 school year had just started and I already had so much school work to do. Now, we are in May.

As my senior year is coming to end, I feel a bit disappointed. Overall, I did not get to fully live the senior year that I wanted be-

cause I was always stressed and burned out. At the same time, I cannot complain too much because I was able to experience some new things this school year and throughout my four years at Cooper.

I remember when I moved to New Hope and was going to start my high school years at Cooper. I came from a small town where it was not diverse, so my parents warned me that I might have a cultural shock on my first day of school. Boy, they were right. When I was on the bus at the end

of my first day, a fight broke out and the students involved were pushing against the bus. During my second week of high school, two girls mistook me for someone else and almost jumped me in a bathroom stall. What a start to my freshman year.

Now, it is four years later. At the beginning of this school year, I was ready to be done with high school, but now that we are getting near the end, I do not know if I am ready to leave. There will be no more messing around with my

friends and peers after this. I will no longer get to see the teachers who have made an impact on me. I really do think we take things for granted until they are taken away from us. I now realize I am really going to miss this school.

It breaks my heart to hear my peers talking about how scared and unsure they are about their future. I have even seen some of my peers give up on school for this reason. Sometimes, adults unintentionally overlook how stressed and scared seniors are about their future. School is all we know and it is scary to be pushed out into the real world. Some students do not have a solid plan for what will happen after high school, and the closer we get to the end, the more stressed out we get.

With the end now approaching for the Class of 2026, it is important to keep trying and pushing ourselves to the finish line. If you have a NC in a class, it is not too late to get that up to a D or a C. You got this. Do not give up. We are so close to being done.

Even if you are unsure about your future and are scared because of that fact, just remember that your world will not end after high school. I have faith that you will achieve that dream you have in your heart. Whether it be your parent, guardian, sibling or teacher, never let anyone tell you that you cannot achieve something. Goodbye, thank you and good luck to the Class of 2026.

MAY IB, AP TESTING

continued from page 2

rooms, the tone may be slightly more relaxed, but the focus remains clear.

“We will just be going through review questions and topics in class,” math teacher Tim Darsow said. “Generally, it is pretty laid back.”

When it comes to IB exams in language and literature, English teacher Michelle Kope said her IB coursework naturally aligns with exam expectations.

“The units in IB HL English Year 2 align with the exams for IB, so everything we do, in a sense, prepares students for the exams,” she said.

As the exams approach, students in her IB class shift their focus so they can give all of their attention to test preparation.

“IB students are excused from the last unit of the year that College in Schools (CIS) students do: the book club,” Kope said. “As CIS students are reading a choice book and talking about it with friends, the IB students are preparing for their two May exams.”

Resources are readily available to students testing in the language and literature areas of IB.

“There are lessons in School-ology to help the IB students do their best on the tests,” Kope said. “That includes sample exams and responses, tip sheets and activities to help students be prepared.”

Perhaps most importantly, students have already experienced a preview of what the tests entail thanks to the structure of the assessments in the classroom.

“All students have also done mock exams for both (IB) Paper 1 and (IB) Paper 2, so they will feel more comfortable when they sit for the actual exams,” Kope said.

While teachers provide structure and resources, much of the preparation ultimately falls on students themselves. For IB Diploma candidate Julia Pha (12), that preparation begins in the classroom.

“What I am doing in class to help prepare myself for the May IB exams is using the booklets that my teacher has provided in our IB testing preparation folders,” she said.

Outside of school, Pha said her preparation routine is consistent and focused.

“I dedicate my time before bed to review material in subjects that I struggle to understand, such as chemistry and math,” she said.

Pha’s fellow IB Diploma candidate Pha-A-Thit Vongsoury (12) also follows a structured approach to his test preparation.

“I have organized and prepared folders for each IB test by sorting notes from my junior and senior years of high school,” he said.

With those materials in place, Vongsoury said he then developed specific strategies for approaching each separate exam.

“I began studying for the tests a few weeks ago by creating a plan for each subject and determining the order to review and practice each unit,” Vongsoury said. “I reviewed the most recent units first and studied towards the first unit.”

Vongsoury pointed out that there are some general study methods that work not only for his IB exams, but for subject mastery in general.

“I used two study techniques, which are blurring and teaching,” he said. “Blurring is reviewing a section of notes and writing all of the information that one recalls on a separate piece of paper without notes.”

As for teaching, Vongsoury said the method is exactly as it sounds: he tries to teach subject-related concepts to his peers.

“I discovered that teaching others helped me significantly with actively recalling content,” he said.

A final way Vongsoury prepared himself was by putting himself through practice exams to build his confidence.

“After every unit, I take prac-

MAY IB, AP TESTING

continues on page 8

Modern Classroom approach does not always work

While the work-at-your-own-pace components of this teaching method make sense, there are some accompanying downsides

By MARIAH WASHINGTON
Quill staff writer

Most people in school today are familiar with the term Modern Classroom, which is in reference to a teaching system developed in the 2010s that has been expanding throughout the United States. However, this is not a term or a teaching approach that I like. The Modern Classroom system has ruined all the fun parts of school and learning for me. At times, it seems like a lazy approach to teaching.

I have never been shy to share my disdain for Modern Classroom and its approach. At the same time, I can see how it can be beneficial. Modern Classroom allows for students, when absent, to access the missed materials and successfully complete the work. The Modern Classroom approach also allows students to go at their own pace. However, what if going at their own pace is part of the problem?

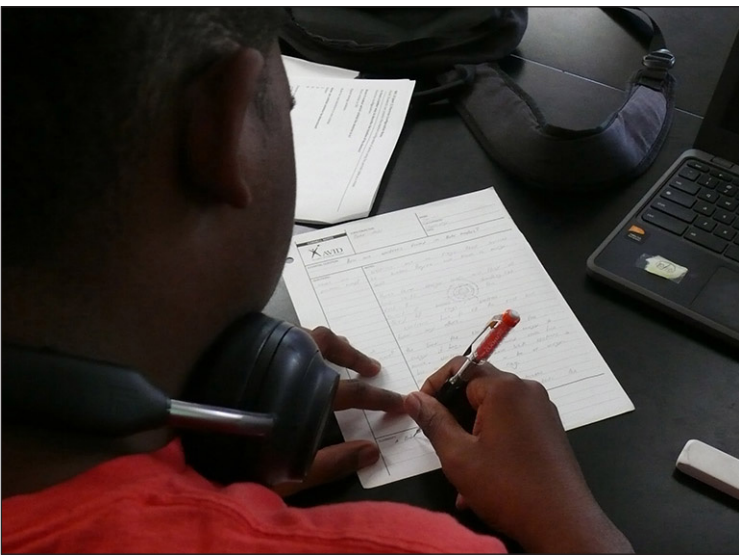


Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Packets are a familiar sight for students in courses using Modern Classroom.

When students are expected to do the lessons on their own, they can fall behind. Additionally, for a teacher who has 100-130 students, it can be hard to make sure everyone is on pace. In contrast, if those teachers were to lecture and use a more traditional approach, they could ensure the students are all learning the same thing and on pace

because the teacher is setting the pace.

Even if teachers go over the course content after each lesson, that does not ensure the students are all on the same lesson. In this way, Modern Classroom puts too many expectations on the students. If they are behind, then the students are the ones with the consequences, even if

the point of Modern Classroom is to go at your own pace.

I believe a traditional classroom approach helps students stay more engaged. As they follow the lectures and lessons, students can ask questions, which allows for interactions with the teacher. This question-and-answer format can be of benefit to everyone in the classroom. I think we can all agree that we have experienced moments in which a classmate asking a question has clarified something for us too.

Modern Classroom is not terrible, but it needs more structure. I can see it being helpful if it is mixed in with a more traditional approach. You could also weave it into one-on-one or small group work so that people can ask some questions and get the clarification they need. Overall, while Modern Classroom is something that can be beneficial, many students just learn better from a teacher in front of the class explaining things and setting the pace.

Avoiding senior slide is critical as school year draws to close

Graduating Hawks may be tempted to scale back their focus on school as they approach the finish line, but that could prove to be disastrous

The end of the fourth quarter at Cooper has many seniors looking forward to spending their last weeks in high school participating in the well-established tradition known as the “senior slide.” The senior slide refers to the time during which 12th graders lose their motivation to keep up with good grades and regularly attend school. While it may not seem like a bad thing to give in to the temptation of the senior slide, there are many good reasons to avoid doing so, including some that the average senior has not considered.

One thing that prompts many seniors to slide is their acceptance into a college. In effect, if a senior knows she or he is set for school next fall, they may feel less need to do well in school right now. However, these seniors forget that colleges are interested in knowing how they do during their final semester of high school. In fact,

some elements of the college acceptance process are contingent on the college receiving a final transcript, which will clearly spell out how the student performed at the end of the school year. The average senior should be motivated to keep trying up through the end of the school year because of this fact.

Another big reason why some seniors slide is that they are legitimately busy outside of school. Some seniors work and many of those working seniors have actually seen their hours increase as the summer months approach. Ironically, many seniors who intend on going to college may be inclined to take on additional hours and shifts in order to earn more money for college. This makes it challenging to keep focused on school and completing one’s work in the final weeks of

the year.

Another way seniors can be busy is through their participation in school-related activities. Senior athletes, musicians and performers are often pulled in multiple directions at the end of the school year thanks to conference and section competitions, end-of-year concerts and spring productions. However, it is important to remember that these events should not take the place of getting things done for one’s classes. Earning credits and graduating on time need to be focused on more than one’s extracurriculars.

Another reason many seniors may be inclined to slide is uncertainty about what comes next. While some seniors have plans for college, the military or work, some others do not. The students in this latter category

From the Editors

Cutting teachers is bad way to fix budget shortfall

Loss of staff members has an adverse impact on students, culture of building

By MANAL BARE
Quill staff writer

Cooper students are beginning to see the ways in which district budget cuts have been affecting our school. In fact, these cuts have been changing the daily lives of many students and staff members across the district. While these financial decisions begin as something “on paper,” we are witnessing how they become real and so much bigger within our very classrooms.

Teachers across the district have been preparing for layoffs and cuts since last school year, when the district first announced its \$21 million budget deficit. More than one hundred teachers were cut on the Friday before spring break in 2025, including many temporary, probationary teachers. This year, another large round of cuts came in March, fueling anxiety around job stability among teachers in the district and uncertainty among students. Even when some cut teachers were later offered different positions, many full-time jobs were still lost.

These cuts create problems that go beyond just simple numbers. Fewer positions for teachers means some educators are forced into part-time roles or must teach multiple new classes. Meanwhile, some other teachers are asked to take on heavier workloads in their departments by teaching extra sections of class beyond their basic contracts because the cuts made their departments smaller.

Teachers being unexpectedly cut does not give them proper time to adjust or find job security elsewhere. Being cut in the middle of the school year can be scary. Not only do you suddenly lose your income, you now have to go through the process of applying for jobs and being hired. As a result, being cut can leave teachers struggling to support themselves and their families.

As students, we feel the effects as well. Class sizes have gotten bigger because there are too many students and too few staff members to support them. This can especially be seen with EL students, who often need more individual attention and language support, but now find it harder to get assistance due to the cuts. When support systems such as this disappear, it seeps into each student’s education, creating stress for students who are losing access to support and the help of trusted adults.

Robbinsdale teachers should not operate in constant fear of layoffs every spring. Education is not the place to cut costs. It is an investment in the future. When districts reduce staff to solve financial problems, they risk losing trust within the school community and put in jeopardy every student’s right to an education.

Robbinsdale Area Schools must recommit itself to supporting its staff and students. Budget cuts may address financial issues now, but they will create bigger problems later. A school district should be focused on building strong futures, not on another round of damaging cuts in the present.

Ending school year strong is essential

Students in every grade level would benefit from the life skills one learns by giving full effort up to very end

By JA'LAYIAH MCCLINTON
Quill staff writer

It can be tempting for students in all four grades to simply coast through the final weeks of the school year. With summer just around the corner, motivation often drops and distractions increase. However, these last moments of the academic year are just as important as the first. Finishing strong not only boosts grades but also builds habits like discipline and perseverance that will carry you through future challenges. By being present, staying healthy and communicating with the people around you, students can make the most of the final days of school.

My first tip for ending the year off strong is to be present and engaged in all of your classes. Even if the school work is tough and stressful, you can communicate that to your teacher, make a plan to get back on track and sign up for HLL sessions, during which you can finish those assignments and receive the support you may need. I truly believe that a lot of students struggle in silence when they do not have to. Simply speaking up and reaching out to your teachers can make a big difference in how the end of



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

Studying for exams and finishing projects is important even when you do not feel fully motivated. the year turns out.

Taking a few mental health days every now and again to prevent burnout is also important. School is not just about grades; it is about your well-being. If you are experiencing stress and anxiety that make it difficult to focus at school, it may be time for a day away. However, be sure to communicate that fact with your parents and teachers so it is properly documented in the attendance system.

Related to your mental health is the benefit of communicating with the people around you. Speaking up and speaking out matters. Your voice is important, your voice is valuable and every day is a new day to use that voice. Giving yourself this mindset can change everything, especially when things start to feel overwhelming.

Overall, it is important to avoid sinking in a hole of schoolwork and stress to the

point where you feel stuck or defeated in the final days of school. The end of the year is supposed to be fun and exciting. It is about moving forward, whether that is continuing in high school or graduating and embracing those first big steps into your life as an adult. This is a time of year that should be appreciated, not just rushed through, because the end of the school year marks the beginning of something new.

Summer break is important time to make memories

With work likely filling up your summer in the future, now is the perfect opportunity to do things with your high school friends

By TYLER GOODMAN
Quill staff writer

During the past couple of summer breaks, I felt that, in terms of time with friends, it has been pretty dry. That is not to say that I have not gone out with friends, but I believe I should have taken more of the time that I had in summer break to go out and make memories. It is better and easier to spend time with friends when you are still in school, and summer break is a key time to do so, especially because you do not know what will become of you and your friends after graduation. Given the uncertainty about what direction your friend group will go after high school, it is better to spend time with them now, which makes summer break an important opportunity to hang out with your friends before it is too late.

Spending time with friends during the summer is not only fun but also easier in many ways. During the school year, a busy schedule can make it tough to see friends. Moreover, when you eventually become an adult, it is likely that you will not always have time for your current friends. After graduation, it will be harder to spend time with friends because most people will get into the reality of college and jobs, not to mention the fact that some of your friends may even end up out of state. When friends have their own important things to deal with, you lose that ability to easily create memories to look back on. For this reason, it is



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Seeing friends at lunch cannot match the fun of summer socializing.

important to use summer to see your friends instead of looking back later and wishing that you had done more with your break.

Creating memories during summer break with people who are important to you can create

likely to have more time to hang out with friends, and spending extended time together is what leads to stronger bonds. These stronger bonds can help make the friend group last beyond high school or even college. Instead

Creating memories during summer break with people who are important to you can create a stronger bond in your friend group. Spending time with your friends during summer break is easier given the fact that everyone tends to have a more flexible schedule.

a stronger bond in your friend group. Spending time with your friends during summer break is easier given the fact that everyone tends to have a more flexible schedule. As a result, you are

of losing touch with your high school friends, you are more likely to maintain those connections well into the future.

At the same time, spending your summer break making

memories by yourself is also important. While spending your summer break with friends can make it more enjoyable, you should also make the most of doing things alone. Spending time outside or doing things away from your home can make you happier and clear your mind from anything negative that may be going on. If you have the ability to go on a trip, you should, even if that trip is solo. These fun summer activities do not need to be done with others because it is equally important from a mental health perspective to spend some time alone. Some especially beneficial kinds of solitary activities include things that are physical in nature such as hiking or camping.

Ultimately, teenagers should take advantage of their summer breaks while they can since those breaks are not something they will have in the future. The ease with which you can take time out of your summer break to bond with friends and go on adventures alone is something to make the most of. By spending time outside of your house, whether it is alone or with friends, you will improve your mental and physical health and create stronger bonds for longer-lasting friendships. If you have the ability, you should take more time out of your summer to go out with your friends. That way, you can be part of those stories you and your friends will share for years to come about those crazy adventures you had in high school.

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Fans of horror games should try *Reanimal*

Although it is not perfect, the storytelling elements, emotional impact of *Reanimal* make it a game worth experiencing



Photo by TARSIER STUDIOS

Reanimal follows the adventures of two siblings as they try to escape a world filled with animal-like creatures.

By DIANA SANCHEZ MORALES
Quill staff writer

The video game *Reanimal* was created by Tarsier Studios and released on February 13, 2026. I chose to review this game because I like creepy adventure games and this one looked really unique compared to others. *Reanimal* mixes horror with emotional storytelling, which made me curious to try it. Overall, I think *Reanimal* is a strong but slightly flawed game because it has an

amazing atmosphere and visuals, but some parts of the gameplay can feel confusing and slow.

Reanimal follows two siblings who are trying to escape a dark and twisted world filled with disturbing, animal-like creatures. Their main goal is to survive and find a way out while staying together. The story takes place in a gloomy, abandoned environment that feels both realistic and surreal at the same time. As you play, you slowly learn more about what happened to this world and

why everything feels broken. The story definitely keeps you interested and a little unsettled.

One of the best parts of *Reanimal* is its graphics. The game uses dark lighting, detailed environments and creepy creature designs to create an intense mood. Everything looks polished, and even small details, like shadows and movements, add to the horror feeling. The visuals remind me a little of other games by Tarsier Studios, but this one feels more advanced and disturbing. This

makes exploring the world more exciting, even when it is scary.

The gameplay is interesting but not perfect. You control the characters as they solve puzzles and avoid danger, which can be fun and challenging. However, sometimes the controls feel a bit slow or unclear, especially when you are trying to react quickly. This can make certain movements frustrating instead of fun. Still, the teamwork between the two characters adds something new and makes the game more meaningful.

The sound design in *Reanimal* is strong and probably one of its best features. The background music is quiet but creepy, and it builds tension without being too loud. Small sounds, like footsteps or distant noises, make you feel like something is always nearby. This keeps you on edge the whole time, which is perfect for a horror game. The sound really helps bring the whole experience together.

Overall, *Reanimal* is a well-made game with amazing visuals, strong sound design and an interesting story, even though the gameplay can be a little frustrating at times. If you enjoy horror games with an immersive atmosphere, *Reanimal* is definitely worth trying. I would recommend it to anyone who likes games that make you think and feel a bit uneasy. My final rating is four out of five stars.

CORTIS enters K-pop universe with excellent EP

The '25 release *Color Outside the Lines* captures the clear talent of this young group



Photo by BIG HIT MUSIC

The EP's first single, "Fashion," was an international hit for the band.

By DIANA SANCHEZ MORALES
Quill staff writer

CORTIS is a South Korean boy group that released their debut EP, *Color Outside the Lines*, on September 8, 2025. One of the most popular songs from the album is "Fashion." I chose to review this album because I like energetic music with strong beats and meaningful lyrics. CORTIS stands out because their music feels fresh and creative compared to many other new groups. I think people should listen to the album because it shows confidence, individuality and strong talent. Overall, *Color Outside the Lines* is a strong debut album with great production, good lyrics and memorable performances.

CORTIS debuted in 2025 under the direction of the Big Hit Music company as a five-member boy group. They are known for helping create their own music, which gives them a unique style. Before releasing this EP, they released the songs "Go!" and "What You Want" to build excitement. *Color Outside the Lines* is their first official EP, making it an important step in their career. The album is doing well and receiving positive attention from fans, especially for songs like "Fashion." Since it is their debut, many people see the EP as their most important release.

One of the best parts of the album is the production. The beats are strong, clean and full of energy. In "Fashion," for example, the beat sounds stylish and powerful, which matches the song's title and message. Additionally, the bass and rhythm help make this song exciting and easy to remember. Meanwhile, in "Go!," The fast beat creates a fun and energetic feeling. Good production helps this song sound professional and makes it more enjoyable.

The lyrics are another strong part of the album. Many of the songs focus on confidence, freedom and being yourself. In "Fashion," the group uses style as a symbol of personality and self-expression. Similarly, in "What You Want," the lyrics talk about chasing your goals and not letting others control your choices. These messages are easy for young listeners to relate to. The lyrics make the album feel meaningful instead of just entertaining.

The vocal and rap performances also make the album strong. In "Fashion," the rap sounds smooth and confident, while the chorus is catchy and easy to remember. The members switch well between singing and rapping, which keeps the songs interesting. At the same time, songs like "Joyride" and "Lullaby" feature softer vocals that show a more emotional side of the group. This balance helps prove that CORTIS can handle different styles of music.

Overall, *Color Outside the Lines* is a successful debut album for CORTIS. The strong production, meaningful lyrics and good vocal performances make the EP stand out. I think people who enjoy K-pop and energetic music should listen to this album. CORTIS makes a strong first impression and I give their EP four out of five stars.

Never Have I Ever is a satisfying coming-of-age series

The 2020 dramedy, created by Mindy Kaling from *The Office*, follows a high school girl trying to deal with life issues

By JA'LAYIAH MCCLINTON
Quill staff writer

Never Have I Ever is a TV show created by Mindy Kaling and Lang Fisher, produced by Netflix, and released in 2020. The show follows Devi Vishwakumar, a high school girl trying to deal with grief, pressure and figuring out who she is. I chose to review this show because, as a graduating senior, it feels really relatable. Over the course of the show, we follow the emotional rollercoaster of being a teenager, the pressure parents put on us and the high expectations we are held to. It also shows that it is okay to not be perfect, to be different and to make mistakes. Overall, *Never Have I Ever* is a really good show because it mixes humor with real-life struggles and shows what growing up is actually like.

Never Have I Ever is about a high school girl, Devi Vishwakumar, who feels pressured by societal norms and tries to lose her virginity to prove something to herself. Her problems really start



Photo by NETFLIX

Maitreyi Ramakrishnan's performance as Devi (left) is a highlight of the show.

after her dad dies at her middle school orchestra performance, which causes a lot of trauma and even leaves her unable to walk for a while. Going into freshman year of high school, Devi tries to reinvent herself and become a "new" person, but she is still figuring everything out.

One of the best parts of the

show is how Devi's character develops. She goes through ups and downs with friends and family, deals with heartbreak and even starts therapy to handle her emotions. She is also super focused on school and wants to get into a really good college like her dad, which just adds more pressure. Over time, she starts to realize

she does not have to prove herself to anyone, which is something a lot of people can relate to.

Another reason people should watch this show is because of how the story is set up. It keeps you interested with a lot of drama and cliffhangers, and every episode makes you want to keep watching. Devi makes some pretty unpredictable choices, which keeps things interesting. The story also touches upon real issues like grief, mental health and growing up, which makes it feel more real instead of fake.

In conclusion, *Never Have I Ever* is a really engaging show that mixes humor with serious topics. It stands out because of its character development, relatable themes and the way it shows real-life struggles related to societal pressure, questions about identity and the challenges of growing up. You should definitely watch this show, especially if you like stories about high school life and real emotions. Overall, I rate *Never Have I Ever* four out of five stars.

Marias hit their stride as a band with memorable *Submarine*

Although the group's first three albums were excellent, *Submarine* sees The Marias embrace a more polished, radio-ready sound

By JURIA VANG
Quill staff writer

The Marias released their fourth album, *Submarine*, in 2024. I chose to review this band because its lead singer, María Zardoya, is sweet without being superficial. In fact, she gives a motherly feeling when you listen to her speak in interviews. She is an absolute angel who is not afraid to express who she is and where she comes from. As for the reason why I chose to focus on this specific album over the other ones from this band is because I really connected with one of the songs on the album before growing to love the album as a whole. I think that The Marias are a bit different from popular music you hear these days. They sound like something you hear while drifting off to sleep after a tiring day. Ultimately, *Submarine* is a masterpiece because it provides a comforting, subaquatic escape that feels both deeply personal and musically refreshing.

The Marias are an indie-pop band formed in Los Angeles. In addition to Puerto Rican-born singer Zardoya, the group includes drummer and producer Josh Conway. They first gained fame for their *Superclean* EP and their debut album *Cinema*, which blended jazz, soul and bilingual lyrics. Their fourth album, *Submarine*, was released at a high-stakes point in their career: it is their first release following the romantic breakup of the band's two members. Fans responded to the release with immense support, admiring the band's ability to remain professional and creative despite the relationship drama. Today, many consider this to be their most sophisticated work, often ranking it as their best or second-best album because of its focused aesthetic.

The vocal performance on this album is the main reason for the angelic and motherly feeling I get from the group. Zardoya's voice never feels forced or aggressive; instead, it is breathy and soft,

which creates a sense of intimacy. In the song "Sienna," her gentle delivery feels like she is speaking directly to the listener. This style is a success because it provides a calm contrast to the high-energy digital vocals often heard in popular music today. This approach reinforces the idea that The Marias make music to relax to.

The instrumentation is another factor that allows the listener to feel as though they are drifting off to sleep. The band utilizes heavy reverb and wet guitar textures to establish a submerged, watery atmosphere. In tracks like "Echo," the pulsing bass lines and shimmering synths create a weightless sensation, making the listener feel as if they are floating. This specific musical arrangement is effective because it perfectly encapsulates the album's title, immersing the audience in a tranquil environment that is ideal for decompressing after a tiring day.

The lyrics on the album are also a strong element because they show that Zardoya is not afraid to

be vulnerable. She writes about the pain of a breakup and the fear of the future with total honesty. While some of the lyrics are simple and repetitive, this helps maintain the sleepy and hypnotic vibe of the project. By switching between English and Spanish, she also stays true to her roots, proving that she is not superficial but rather a complex artist who uses her background to add depth to her songs.

In conclusion, *Submarine* is a beautiful and unique album that stands out in the modern music landscape. By combining Zardoya's sweet, angelic presence with a dreamy, subaquatic sound, The Marias have created a project that is both emotionally raw and incredibly relaxing. I believe the group's background, vocal style and immersive production work together to create a one-of-a-kind listening experience. You should definitely listen to this album if you want something that feels like a warm embrace at the end of a long day. I rate *Submarine* 4.9 out of five stars.

Premier Performers

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

Destiny Williams

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

Destiny Williams (12) has spent the last four years finding her voice through Cooper's choir program. What began as a simple love of singing has grown into one of the most meaningful parts of her high school experience.

"I started choir because I love to sing," Williams said. "The teacher, Ms. Rowan, is really nice and understanding when it comes to music, and she helped me fall in love with it."

That sense of belonging has stayed with Williams throughout her time in the program. For Williams, choir is not just about music, it is about forming connections with her fellow musicians.

"The best part of being in choir is the field trips and the people that you get



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

to meet along the way," she said.

Some of Williams' favorite choir memories connect back to those shared experiences. Specifically, she said performing at Orchestra Hall in the fall and participating in Tri-Metro Conference concerts at different schools have been highlights of being in choir.

Outside of choir, Williams enjoys expressing herself in other ways, especially in the classroom.

"My favorite class is English because I can express myself through my writing skills," she said.

When she is not in school, Williams spends time playing volleyball.

After graduation, Williams plans to take a path of service.

"My main path going forward is enlisting in the National Guard," she said.

Sofia Barrera Lopez

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

Sofia Barrera Lopez (12) has been involved in choir for the past three years and is currently part of both the school choir and the small, specialty ensemble Chamber Singers. This year marks her first time joining Chambers. She said she decided to join the group for the chance to take her singing to another level.

One of her favorite parts of being in Chamber Singers is getting the opportunity to perform in a more personal way. One example of this is the ensemble's annual trip to the homes of Cooper teachers during December.

"I really enjoy being in Chambers. We got to go caroling and sing for teachers," she said.

As the school year comes to an



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

end, Barrera Lopez said that she and her group are focused on preparing for their final performances.

"Right now, we're finishing getting ready for our upcoming concert on May 14, so we've been rehearsing a lot," she said.

Outside of choir, Barrera Lopez is also involved in many other activities. She has been doing cheerleading for two years and even served as captain for the football cheer squad this school year. In addition, she is currently playing flag football.

When it comes to school, Barrera Lopez's favorite subjects are math and AVID because she likes the teachers.

Looking ahead, Barrera Lopez plans to attend the College of Saint Benedict, where she intends to major in business. She also hopes to stay involved in choir and flag football during college.

Caren Osorio Pinto

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

Caren Osorio Pinto (12) has played the flute in the Cooper band since freshman year and was involved in the Marching Band this year. She started band in sixth grade just for fun, but then realized she actually loved it. This year, she decided to join the Marching Band because she wanted to experience it during her last year at Cooper.

One of Osorio Pinto's favorite memories of being in the Marching Band is performing during halftime for the football games.

"Going to the state fair was also really fun. We marched in the parade and we played for 30 minutes," Osorio Pinto said.

According to Osorio Pinto, be-



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

ing part of band is fun in general and they have built a great community.

"I think people should give it a try if they think that they could play an instrument," she said.

Band is also one of Osorio Pinto's favorite classes, along with AVID and Spanish.

"I really like band. I like to play out. I'd also say my AVID class is really fun. We've built this family type of thing going on. And I really like AVID because I like the activities that we do. Spanish is a really nice class too," Osorio Pinto said.

Outside of school, she likes to draw, listen to music and go on long walks.

Next year, Osorio Pinto is planning to take a gap year. After that, she will go to North Hennepin Community College for two years.

Melvina Blay

By ELLA VAN MASSENHOVE
Quill staff writer

For Melvina Blay (12), the arts are a way to belong to a group and grow as a person. Blay has spent the past three years in choir, a class she initially joined by chance.

"I started doing it at first because I was just placed in that class," she said. "Then, I actually started to really love it, so I just stayed in it."

In addition to choir, Blay joined cheerleading during her junior year because she was looking for something new and exciting.

"It was just something fun I wanted to do," she said.

Both activities quickly became central parts of her life, offering Blay connection and purpose at school.

"For cheer, I think it's more about being a part of a team and having



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

something to do outside of school," she said. "In choir, it is honestly the same: being a part of something that is bigger than me."

Blay's favorite memories reflect that sense of community. In cheer, she said that senior night stands out the most.

"I loved how my friends all showed up for me," she said.

Meanwhile, in choir, Blay cited performances as a highlight.

"Every single concert night is memorable. I just love singing," she said.

Outside of the arts, Blay enjoys classes that challenge her, especially Functions, Statistics and Trigonometry, which she calls her most interesting subject. In her free time, she likes to read and watch TV.

Looking ahead, Blay plans to attend a community college before transferring to a university to pursue nursing.

Hawks debut first-of-its-kind show

A Time to Remember combined the traditional spring theater show with an improv approach



Photo by RACHEL FETTIG

The show, which took place in the Cooper auditorium on April 25, was directed by Alondra Alamilla.

By MARIAH WASHINGTON
Quill staff writer

Cooper's improv show, *A Time to Remember*, took place on April 25 in the auditorium. According to Alondra Alamilla, theater director and health mentor at Cooper, this was a unique show because, instead of taking their seats in the audience, the spectators were sitting around the actors on stage.

This year's show was a mix of the spring show put on by past improv troupes and the traditional spring one-act festival show put on by the school's theater department. Since there is no IB Theater class second semester this school year, the spring show was redesigned to allow students to continue creating original, student-driven work.

"We combined both ideas so students could still create original, student-driven scenes," Alamilla said.

According to Alamilla, this combined performance was "the first show of its kind" in Cooper history.

Given the incorporation of the improvisational approach, preparation for the spring show required strong teamwork and trust.

"The key is building strong relationships so students feel comfortable and have good chemistry," Alamilla said.

In preparation for the show, students learned to react quickly and support each other's ideas, even without a script. The show also helped students develop important acting skills.

"Without a script, they must adapt and be creative in the moment," Alamilla said.

The need to create characters and scenes from simple prompts strengthened the instincts and imagination of the performers. Levi Christensen (11), a student performer, said that improv can be challenging but rewarding.

"The most challenging part of

improv is definitely thinking of things on the spot," he explained.

He also added that rehearsals were fun thanks to the improvisational aspect of the show.

"The warm-ups are always very entertaining," he said.

Another student performer, Chaokhang Vang (11), said that improv builds resilience. He said that is especially important because performers sometimes struggle with audience reactions.

"If you push past that and learn from your mistakes, you should be able to perform better," Chaokhang said.

Ultimately, the goal of the April 25 performance was to showcase student creativity and offer insight into their ideas. According to Alamilla, it gives the audience "an insight into what original student work can look like" and highlights what students care about today.

Music groups plan for spring break trips in '27

Next March will bring with it a tour for members of Cooper's band, orchestra programs

By TYLER GOODMAN
Quill staff writer

Both the Cooper band and orchestra will have a combined trip during spring break next school year. Currently, the plan for the music groups is to make a trip to Denver, Colorado.

"Denver was chosen because it is a fun city with a lot of attractions, the weather should be nice and it's close enough to reasonably take a bus," band director Markus Hahn said.

Both music groups take trips out of state every two years. Hahn said this is good for students because it is easier to travel the world before they are adults. Additionally, it gives students choosing classes for next year a chance to pick band or orchestra as one of their classes.

One student, JJ DeGroot (10), said that he is choosing to attend the trip because, when the Marching Band went to Washington, D.C., he "had the most fun ever on that trip." Meanwhile, Zach Cummings (10) said that his reason for attending the trip is because it allows him to "go on a trip with all of [his] friends and make music."

"[I am] looking forward to the

music we're going to play and all of the different things we'll do there," Cummings said.

While students hope the trip is going to be fun and enjoyable, they also hope there is something to be gained from it. One thing Hahn said that can be gained from it is a stronger bond between both music groups. Instead of it being a family or a group of friends going on a trip, it is an entire school group going to the same place. Cummings said he thinks stronger bonds will be made.

"I think I'll be able to make closer bonds with my peers by traveling with them," he said.

According to Hahn, the music groups take trips because it is something that the school has been doing for years.

"At Cooper, the music programs take trips biennially, and importantly, the band alternates these trips: Marching Band and Concert Bands. The last trip the band took was Marching Band in the 2024-2025 school year to Washington; that makes the next trip 2026-2027 and a trip for the Concert Bands," Hahn said.

In Denver, the bands and orchestras have plans to play in addition to sight-seeing. However, it is currently

not certain when and where they will play during the trip.

"Typically, on a trip like this, we try and do two musical events. Sometimes it's a clinic, sometimes it's an exchange concert with another high school [and] sometimes it's a performance at an amphitheater or nursing home. There are a lot of performance opportunities out there," Hahn said.

Another reason for doing the trip is because it gives the student musicians a chance to get feedback from new people.

"Trips like this allow students to gain performance opportunities outside our state, and get different perspectives from clinicians or teachers. Importantly, it allows students to get a more broad perspective of our country," Hahn said.

One issue with going on these trips is the affordability for everyone involved. Hahn said that they "try and keep [the] cost below \$1,500" for each student. He explained that this is much more affordable for a weeklong trip than the fees seen at some other schools, where the cost is \$2,500-\$3,000 per student. Hahn added that there will be "fundraising opportunities for students who can't cover the cost completely out of pocket."

STUDENTS REFLECT ON '25-'26 SCHOOL YEAR continued from page 2

Rose Vang-Lohnes (12): "It went well. I will admit I could have done better academically, but I did achieve one of my goals of senior year: I wanted to have fun. I always worked so hard to have the best grades, perform well, get a high GPA and get awards. But now, as my high school career is coming to an end, I just really wanted to have fun. So I made many good memories and did things I never thought I would dare to do. Overall, it was a good school year."

Faith Johnson (12): "It went okay. I wish I did everything I wanted to do and really enjoyed it, but I didn't and I won't miss anything at all. I'm so tired."

Ryan Phan (12): "It went well. I met a lot of new people and made a lot of friends on the way to graduation."

Tristan Whitehead (11): "It was good."

Breana Beenken (12): "It went well. I loved making more friends and ending the year strong with good grades. I feel like I've made a lot of progress and got to experience a lot more."

Amy Diouf (12): "I think this school year went well for me. There were some times that were a little stressful, but other than that, it's been pretty good."

Maj Young (12): "It was great."

Pha-A-Thit Vongsoury (12): "My 2025-2026 school year has been exciting but stressful, but I have also met and worked with countless people this school year, which was

wonderful. One memorable moment was speaking at the NHS induction ceremony and planning it all out with my peers. If I could tell myself a piece of advice in September of this school year, then I would tell myself to keep pushing and challenging yourself; you are almost at the finish line."

Nathalie Younger (12): "I thought everything was pretty chill. Some classes like government or economics are kind of a lot, though."

Phuong Anh Tran (12): "This school year went by fast and it was alright."

Catalina Montejó (11): "I really liked the school year and my classes were more challenging but overall still fun."

Low-tech charm makes *Jason* a keeper

With the coming release of Christopher Nolan's *The Odyssey*, it is a great time to revisit a cult classic take on Greek myths



Photo by COLUMBIA PICTURES

Perhaps the biggest highlight of Don Chaffey's *Jason and the Argonauts* is the groundbreaking visual effects of Hollywood legend Ray Harryhausen.

By TESSA LENOCH
Quill staff writer

Jason and the Argonauts is a 1963 film directed by Don Chaffey. It is an epic adaptation of the Greek poem *The Argonautica* and focuses on its titular characters as they journey to steal a golden fleece. Remembered mostly for special effects designer Ray Harryhausen's impeccable use of stop-motion animation to fill the ancient world with wonder, *Jason and the Argonauts* is a film I think most people should watch at least once in their lives.

I watched *Jason and the Argonauts* just a few days after my first viewing of Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Medea*, a film I reviewed last issue.

These two films would make a fantastic double feature. In fact, *Jason* could even be viewed as a prequel to *Medea* if one is interested in Greek myths. While I appreciated *Medea* far more than any of the other films I watched this year, *Jason and the Argonauts* was a pleasant surprise. Taking on a much more silly and playful tone than *Medea*, *Jason* is a film I would recommend to viewers of all ages.

The story follows Jason's adventures on a vessel named The Argonaut. Throughout the film, he and his crew bounce from an island guarded by a mighty giant to a hidden civilization blessed by the gods. It is a sprawling but still lighthearted tale that is sure to satisfy any view-

er's urge for adventure.

The most unique feature of *Jason* is its stop-motion special effects. Many times in recent years, I have spoken to people who share my fatigue when it comes to modern, big-budget, CGI-focused projects. While CGI visual effects are no doubt impressive, sometimes they seem to be too hyper-realistic. In contrast, the stop-motion monsters in *Jason* are a prime example of the opposite phenomena and create a more organic impression.

On first glance, the effects in *Jason* are clearly claymation. However, as the battles continue and the stakes raise, the once fake-looking animation starts to feel like visuals straight out of a storybook. Interest-

ingly, the "fake" look of the effects actually benefits the film, helping make the story seem even more visually interesting. Unlike CGI, the visuals never look outright bad or silly; instead, they are the highlight of the entire movie. After watching this film, you may feel compelled to write to your local moviemaker and encourage them to create 100 more stop-motion movies. I know I was.

If you find yourself sick of the humor and dreadful grey color schemes of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, but you are still on the lookout for a fun adventure story with fantastical battles, *Jason and the Argonauts* is the perfect movie for you. I give the film four stars out of five.

First *Conjuring* film remains best in franchise

Directed by horror movie icon James Wan, *The Conjuring* spawned a series of movies that have grossed more than \$2 billion

By ANGEL JARQUIN RAMIREZ
Quill staff writer

The Conjuring is a supernatural horror film that was released in 2013. The film is directed by James Wan and produced by New Line Cinema and the Safran Company. This movie serves as the foundation for what would become the massive *Conjuring* cinematic universe. I chose to review this movie simply because it is one of the first horror movies to catch my heart and my interest in this horror franchise. You should see *The Conjuring* because it depicts a classic, haunted house story with incredible technical skill.

The Conjuring opens in 1971. The story revolves around Roger and Carolyn Perron (played by Ron Livingston and Lili Taylor) and their five daughters. Not long after they move into a farmhouse in Harrisville, Rhode Island, strange occurrences begin: clocks stop at 3:07 a.m. and the family dog refuses to enter the home. When these incidents eventually escalate into a violent, supernatural haunting, the Perrons reach out to paranormal in-



Photo by WARNER BROS.

Paranormal investigators Lorraine and Ed Warren are in each *Conjuring* film.

vestigators Lorraine and Ed Warren. The Warrens soon discover that the house is not only haunted by a spirit, it is cursed by a dark, ancient entity that intends on destroying the Perron family.

One aspect from this movie that I love is James Wan's direction, which is the driving force behind the film's success. Wan uses long, unbroken takes and slow pans to

build unbearable tension. He also guides the audience's eyes to look at the dark corners of the frame, where terrifying images typically await.

A second aspect that I enjoy is the acting of Vera Farmiga and Patrick Wilson, who play the Warrens. Their expert performances help elevate the film beyond the standard horror fare. Additionally, their on-screen chemistry provides a warm

emotional core to this story and makes this film feel much more interesting than a typical horror movie.

A third aspect of this movie that I enjoy is the sound design. The sound effects are the most terrifying thing about the movie apart from the dark entity that is haunting the Perrons. The film uses practical, tactile noises to create unease. We hear the rhythmic creaking of floorboards, heavy thuds on the basement floor and the sound of two claps coming from a dark wardrobe. These details are used to manipulate the audience's senses and build anxiety.

Overall, *The Conjuring* is a high mark for the horror genre, grounding supernatural horror in the related struggle of the two families focused on in the story. The movie creates a sense of dread that lingers on long after the final credits roll. *The Conjuring* manages to be terrifying without being exploitative, which proves that the old-school, haunted house approach still works best. If you are a horror lover or simply looking for a good thriller, you should watch *The Conjuring*. I rate this movie five out of five stars.

Fans of psychological thrillers should see *Prisoners*

The 2013 release was directed by Denis Villeneuve, who went on to helm the highly popular *Dune* trilogy

By BRAYLON NIX
Quill staff writer

Prisoners is the kind of film that stays with you long after the credits roll. Directed by Denis Villeneuve and released in 2013 by Warner Bros. Pictures, this gripping thriller pulls viewers into a haunting story about desperation, morality and the limits of justice. I picked this movie because it made me feel strong emotions and most movies do not. I believe you should watch this film for that same reason.

The main character in *Prisoners* is Keller Dover (Hugh

Jackman), a father whose young daughter disappears along with another young girl, pushing him into a spiral of rage and determination. As the film unfolds, we follow the search for the perpetrator by the police, led by Detective Loki (Jake Gyllenhaal). After the police arrest a young suspect and release him, Dover decides to take matters into his own hands.

While the plot itself is intense, what truly elevates *Prisoners* is its performances. Hugh Jackman delivers a powerful and emotionally raw portrayal of a father on the brink, capturing both his love and

his unraveling state of mind. Jake Gyllenhaal is equally compelling as Detective Loki, bringing a quiet intensity and focus that balances the chaos surrounding the case.

The movie builds tension at a slow, deliberate pace, allowing the mystery to unfold in a way that feels both realistic and deeply unsettling. Each scene adds another layer, keeping the audience engaged without relying on cheap thrills. One great example of this is a scene near the end of the movie when the characters rush to the hospital. Also, there is a similarly haunting moment in the last scene

of the film when we hear the sound of a whistle.

Another one of the film's strongest elements is its twist ending. Without giving anything away, it recontextualizes much of what came beforehand and leaves viewers thinking long after the story ends. It is a payoff that feels earned, rather than forced.

Overall, *Prisoners* is a powerful and thought-provoking film, driven by standout performances and a memorable conclusion. It is not an easy watch, but it is a rewarding one. I rate *Prisoners* five out of five stars.

Nostalgia is primary draw of *Crooklyn*

Director Spike Lee used his childhood memories to create the plot of the film

By ZAREEA MCKENZIE
Quill staff writer

The movie *Crooklyn* is directed by Spike Lee and was released in 1994. I chose to review this movie because I had already seen it before and liked how real and emotional it felt. I also appreciated that it was told from a young girl's point of view and showed what life was like in Brooklyn in the 1970s. *Crooklyn* uses art direction and editing to show what the main character, Troy, is going through and to bring out the feeling of the time and place where the movie is set.

Crooklyn is a semi-autobiographical film that depicts the life of the Carmichael family and their vibrant, Bedford-Stuyvesant community. Schoolteacher and loving Carmichael matriarch Carolyn (Alfre Woodard) runs a no-nonsense household, working hard to keep the lights on and raise her nine-year-old daughter, Troy (Zelda Harris), alongside her four rowdy brothers, with little help from her sensitive, struggling, jazz-musician husband, Woody (Delroy Lindo). Troy proves adept at holding her own while navigating adolescence amid the chaos of one dynamic Brooklyn summer in 1973.

One filmmaking technique that stands out in *Crooklyn* is art direction, especially in the scenes set at the Carmichael family's house. In these scenes, the family is just doing normal things like eating dinner, watching TV and arguing. However, the house itself says a lot about the characters. There are old couches, bright colors and stuff everywhere. It all looks kind of messy but homey at the same time. The art direction helps show that this is a real family with a lot going on. The house feels lived in and full of chaos and personality, which tells us what the family is like without needing a lot of words. It makes the audience feel like they are actually in the house with the Carmichaels. The setting is warm and a little off-kilter, which brings out the family's vibe.

Another effective filmmaking element is the editing, especially when Troy goes to stay with her relatives in the south. The screen suddenly gets narrower and the scenes feel slower after the move. It kind of feels weird and different from the rest of the movie, which makes sense because that is how Troy is feeling too. The slow editing pace shows how uncomfortable and out of place she feels. It is like the movie is trying to put us in her shoes so we can feel what she is feeling. For the audience, it definitely stands out and makes you feel more connected to her. It also makes the scenes back in Brooklyn feel even more like home.

One of the main messages in *Crooklyn* is that family is important, even when things are tough. There is a scene toward the end of the movie when Troy comes back home. Things at home have changed, especially after her mom dies. She can tell Troy has grown up a little, and even though her family still has problems, they are still there for each other. Although families are not perfect, the connections between relatives are important. I agree with this message because I think family plays a huge role in who you become.

Crooklyn uses art direction and editing to show what the main character Troy is going through and to bring out the feeling of the time and place in which the movie is set. Overall, I like the film a lot. It feels real and not over the top. I also like seeing a story told from a Black girl's point of view. The story is sad in some parts but funny and sweet as well. I think Spike Lee does a really good job of making everything feel natural. *Crooklyn* earns four out of five stars

GRADUATION

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and excited to leave Cooper and be done with high school,” she said. “The excitement stands out the most to me, but I still haven’t fully acknowledged that I won’t be coming back to Cooper after another summer break. It has been a stressful final stretch with the IB exams. Graduation to me means leaving behind a part of what made you who you are now as you transition into new things.”

As for Pha-A-Thit Vongsoury (12), he is looking forward to celebrating the end of his high school journey with family, friends and teachers.

“For the upcoming 2026 graduation ceremony, I am looking forward to walking across the stage and smiling at my family and friends in the audience for a commemorative photo,” he said. “Additionally, I am looking forward to expressing my gratitude and good-byes to my teachers and mentors before I graduate high school.”

One of the key witnesses to the journey of the graduating class over the last four years is guidance counselor Alessandra Bivona. In fact, this cohort represents her first senior class.

“It has been rewarding to watch students grow. I have watched their achievements in academics, athletics, arts and extracurricular activities, as well as milestones such as college acceptances and scholarships,” she said.

Bivona emphasized the determination of the Class of 2026, pointing to the early years of distance learning during the pandemic as a significant hurdle they had to overcome.

“The Class of 2026 has many strong traits and characteristics. They started their middle school years during the COVID pandemic and did online schooling via distance learning for many years. They embraced their return to in-person learning by showing up for their peers and overcoming these challenges through many forms of resiliency,” she said.

As Bivona prepares to bid farewell to her seniors, she offered some advice to the graduating class.

“It is okay to embrace change and you should be open to new opportunities. In addition, don’t be afraid to fail in life’s lessons as it is often a path to personal growth and success,” Bivona said.

Also celebrating the accomplishments of the graduating seniors is Head Principal Shaunece Smith. Much like Bivona, she emphasized the resiliency of the group.

“The Class of 2026 is a group defined by resilience, creativity and a strong sense of community. They’ve grown through rapid change, adapted to new expectations and consistently shown that they can rise to any challenge,” she said.

Smith added that she looks forward to what comes next for each student graduating from Cooper.

“Class of 2026, you have shown us what determination and compassion look like. As you step into the next chapter, trust your abilities and stay true to your values. You are ready for this moment. We believe in you, we’re proud of you and we can’t wait to see the impact you’ll make on the world,” she said.

MAY IB, AP TESTING

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tice tests and grade myself using the IB rubric,” he said.

Despite differences in subjects, study habits and learning styles, one thing unites all IB and AP students this time of year: the shared experience of preparing for something that will pay benefits after high school. In fact, Obranovich pointed out the positive impact going through the May testing process can have on students.

“Taking IB classes in general is a great thing to have on your transcript and shows colleges that you are ready to take on college courses and have done the rigorous prep courses available to you in high school,” she said.

Bless attacks absurdities of U.S. culture

Cult favorite *God Bless America* was written and directed by infamous comedian Bobcat Goldthwait

By BEN KENYON
Quill staff writer

God Bless America is a 2011 political satire film written and directed by Bobcat Goldthwait. It gets its name from the popular phrase and patriotic song of the same name written by Irving Berlin, though instead of taking on themes of patriotism and love for one’s country, it embraces a sarcastic and mocking tone that signals the film’s main premise and point of critique: the degradation of American culture and societal decency. It is important to note that this film is rated R and includes heavy topics, strong language, social taboos and scenes of violence in their many multitudes. It is also a highly entertaining movie.

The plot revolves around Frank Murdoch (Joel Munay), a long-disgruntled, middle-aged insurance salesman fed up with how society has regressed around him. All in the same week, he is diagnosed with a terminal brain tumor, which causes him chronic migraines; he is fired from his job for alleged misconduct; and he has the displeasure of watching his daughter, of whom full custody was awarded to his now ex-wife, grow into being a spoiled brat. Rattled by these events, Frank’s mental state spirals lower and lower, reaching a breaking point where he begins to fantasize about killing those around him and eventually decides to end his own life.

However, before he can cross the literal point of no return, Frank is stopped by an epiphany he has when coming across a specific piece of media that reflects aspects of the behavior he sees in his own daughter: a reality TV show about an extremely spoiled and delusional teenager named Chloe.

It is this show that shifts Frank away from ending his own life. Instead, he decides he will murder the girl from this show to regain some sense of control and satisfaction from the otherwise comically bleak environment around him. Frank soon successfully slays this girl at her school in broad daylight. However, he picks up an unlikely sidekick while doing so: a teenage girl named Roxy (Tara Lynne Barr) who witnesses Frank



Photo by MAGNOLIA PICTURES

The surprisingly heartwarming bond between Frank and Roxy offsets the film’s often dark tone.

committing his deed and whose only response to seeing it is saying, “Awesome,” and flashing a grin.

With these initial events set in place, the two characters join one another on a trip across America. During the trip, they engage in a series of attacks against any targets the two of them deem brash, offensive or cruel. As Frank puts it, they target people who are “just not nice.”

One of the best parts of this film for me is the writing and how it creates the excellent character dynamic between the two protagonists. Frank, of course, serves as a great protagonist, but his accomplice, Roxy, is a particularly compelling character. I find the way she is written perfect for this movie’s special kind of dark humor: Roxy is a deeply misanthropic outcast whose cynicism and intelligence make her eager to develop a connection to Frank and take her anger out on people with unrestrained violence. She also displays some manipulative behaviors on occasion, most notably in how she gets Frank to agree to let her go along with him in the first place.

In contrast, Frank is shown to be a

bit more reserved as a character. In addition, he is a whole lot less impulsive than Roxy is. His desire for bringing forth bloodshed stems from a disdain for how cruel some people can be. Meanwhile, Roxy takes part in Frank’s schemes for the sake of action and to get revenge for personal annoyances. These two conflicting personalities make for some great comedic, and sometimes wholesome, moments throughout the film.

Another element of this film that I enjoyed is the overall direction of its narrative. The story pulls no punches: it attacks anyone and everyone. It especially puts the spotlight on things like exploitative TV shows, media personalities and celebrity worship, which were issues when the film was made and continue into the present time period.

Along with this focus on media culture, there are also plenty of tangents explored by the film. As Frank and Roxy progress through their road trip, they bump up against a multitude of annoying things about American culture, ranging from pretty petty nuisances to more serious topics. The issues the film addresses

range widely from people who take up four parking spaces to clueless political commentators to religious extremists espousing deeply offensive viewpoints. All of these problems and many more are explored by the film with no mercy.

Overall, there are many things that lingered in my head after I watched *God Bless America*. The film can definitely be hard to watch at moments, particularly in segments where it showcases the vulgar types of media it comedically critiques, or when it explores more touchy topics played out between Frank and Roxy. What is more, the film’s premise is not always tightly organized since the film focuses on the general decay of morals and dignity. However, the movie does hold true to its central purpose well and it remains relevant to this day. I would recommend it as a good watch for those who are interested in a critique of the less appetizing aspects of American culture. You will definitely get some laughs out of this film and its countless examples of both low and high humor. Additionally, you will have plenty of deeper topics to reflect upon. I give the film four out of five stars.

Incantation makes effective use of found-footage format

The 2022 horror film, which is directed by Kevin Ko, uses elements of folklore to terrify the audience

By ANGEL JARQUIN RAMIREZ
Quill staff writer

Incantation was released on July 8, 2022. The film was directed by Kevin Ko and produced by Media Arts and Butterfly Dance. This is a Taiwanese, found-footage, supernatural horror film that uses psychological manipulation and cultural folklore to terrify the audience. I think *Incantation* is a good movie because it blends vlogger aesthetics with ancient rituals and traditions.

The film is about Li Ronan, a single mother in Taiwan who is desperately trying to protect her young daughter, Dodo, from a supernatural curse that Ronan unleashed six years earlier by accident. The issues started when Ronan and her two friends ran a YouTube channel called *Ghost Busters* on which they violated a religious taboo. That single act leads to the horror the manifests itself in the present day.



Photo by MEDIA ARTS

Hsuan-ye Tsai’s performance as Ronan helps anchor the movie.

One aspect from this movie that I like is the found-footage style of direction. Kevin Ko uses the mockumentary style effectively because it forces the viewers to participate in the rituals.

There is a sequence when the characters are memorizing a chant that is a good example of this stylistic element.

A second aspect from this movie that I like is the acting. Hsuan-yen

Tsai, who plays Ronan, especially stands out for her performance. There is a scene when she begs the audience for help that feels so believable and grounded in reality. This increases the audience’s stress and anxiety as they watch the film.

A third aspect from this movie that I like is the cinematography and visual design. This film avoids using cheap CGI. Instead, they use traditional physical effects including great makeup design. Particularly effective are the film’s body horror moments, during which we see clusters of holes and skin deformities on the characters. Also effective is the distorted footage from the forbidden tunnel, which creates a feeling of claustrophobia.

Incantation is a good horror film that combines strong performances, innovative direction and visuals that are unsettling. This film delivers a story that stays with you even after it is done. I rate this movie five out of five stars.

GRADUATING QUILL WRITERS STEP INTO SPOTLIGHT

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change student who has been on the *Quill* staff for one year and does news articles and student profiles.

Van Massenhove has been involved in many activities at school. When it comes to classes, she is taking IB English, IB Psychology and IBMYP Media Arts. She took IB Psychology because it is a topic she has always been interested in and she joined IBMYP Media Arts because she wanted to learn how to use computer tools like Adobe Photoshop. What she enjoys about her classes is that her friends are in them and she can have fun with them at school.

“I also enjoy the way teachers give lessons and the fact that teachers have a more open relationship with students than in my home country,” she said.

When it comes to athletics, Van Massenhove took part in cross country, Nordic skiing and track. She said her involvement in sports gives her a chance to let off steam after a long day and stay in shape. As for her favorite memory in sports, it was her trip to Wisconsin with

the Nordic ski team.

“We skied in beautiful places and we played games with the whole team. It was so much fun,” she said.

Outside of school, Van Massenhove loves to spend some time with her family and friends. She also enjoys shopping, cooking and engaging in creative activities.

“I’m currently part of the play at my family’s church,” she said.

Van Massenhove’s plan for after high school is to go back to Belgium at the end of June. In September, she will be going to college in Brussels to study journalism and communication. She said she will have an apartment with some friends during school.

Rose Vang-Lohnes (12)

Vang-Lohnes has been part of *The Quill* for two years and has been editor-in-chief for both years. She mainly writes opinion pieces along with the occasional news article.

Vang-Lohnes is in IB Math and

CIS English. She joined IB Math because her sophomore math teacher recommended it to her.

“I wasn’t a fan of math so I am surprised I stayed in it for two years,” she said.

Meanwhile, she joined CIS English because of the benefits of gaining college credits.

With respect to extracurricular activities, Vang-Lohnes has been in debate and speech. She competed in debate for one year and speech for two years. Although she said she was not a fan of debate because it made her too anxious, she loved speech. Vang-Lohnes said she learned that she loved public speaking and bringing attention to social issues that she believed did not get enough attention. Ultimately, what she enjoyed most about speech is who she became when she spoke.

“This may sound egotistical, but I loved how I sounded and who I was when I was speaking,” she said. “I wasn’t always confident when I spoke,

but I did feel passion for what I was talking about.”

Outside of school, Vang-Lohnes enjoys reading, writing, painting and drawing.

“Really, anything that involves me creating something, I enjoy,” she said.

When it comes to the books that she reads, Vang-Lohnes prefers romance and fantasy because they hold her attention. Meanwhile, when it comes to painting, she enjoys watercolors.

“I find it easier to control and it just looks better when I paint flowers,” she said.

After high school, Vang-Lohnes is planning to go to the University of Minnesota, Morris. In fact, she was offered a full ride and two scholarships based on her academic record. She plans to major in communications but is unsure if she will have a minor. She does not know what career she will pursue, but is confident that she wants to do something that involves public speaking.

AED devices support safety

Athletic trainer Karin Shelstad has spent several years expanding Cooper's collection of AEDs



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

The devices are located throughout the school's gymnasium area and at the concession stand in the stadium.

By BRAYLON NIX
Quill staff writer

The Cooper athletic department has made significant strides in emergency preparedness since the pandemic. One specific example of this can be seen through the growing placement and use of automated external defibrillators (AEDs), life-saving devices that could mean the difference between life and death in a cardiac emergency.

“An AED is an Automated External Defibrillator, an important part of emergency response in a cardiac arrest or similar situation,” Cooper Athletic Trainer Karin Shelstad said. “It is user-friendly with clear voice prompts and will not deliver a shock unless required to based on the patient’s heart rhythm.”

Given the fact that emergencies of this sort can be associated with sporting events, Cooper has made sure that many of these devices are located throughout the first floor of the school near the gyms and that coaches have them accessible out on the school fields.

These devices are designed for use by everyday people, not just medical professionals. The American Heart Association website explains that “they are outfitted with clear voice prompts and easy-to-follow instructions, so even someone with minimal training can act quickly in a crisis.”

Time is critical in a cardiac emergency. According to the American Heart Association, a victim’s chance of survival decreases by about 7-10 percent every minute without intervention, and using an AED within the first few minutes can double or even triple the odds of survival.

“Response time matters tremendously in a cardiac emergency,” Shelstad said.

For years, Shelstad has been a driving force behind ensuring AEDs are accessible throughout the school’s athletic areas, both indoors and outdoors.

“I have wanted an AED accessible to outdoor events for years,” Shelstad said.

Shelstad’s persistence paid off in a 2022 grant through which Cooper successfully secured funding to purchase an outdoor AED and train coaches to use it. She noted that the outdoor AED was

finally installed in the Cooper stadium during the summer of 2025. This AED is mounted by the concession stand and equipped with security features including alarms and cameras.

Inside the school, there are multiple AEDs strategically placed to ensure a quick response during any emergency.

“There is an AED mounted on the wall of the main gym, just below the large scoreboard,” Shelstad said. “There is also an AED in the foyer area of the community gyms mounted on the wall above the benches.”

Another AED unit lives in a wall-mounted case inside the training room, where Shelstad is based.

“There are other AEDs around the Cooper High School building. I’d encourage staff and students to notice where they are just in case,” she said.

In addition to the wall-mounted devices, Shelstad brings an AED to outdoor practices and games every day. When it is not in use outside, it sits under the athletic training room desk.

Having AEDs is one thing, but ensuring people know how to use them is another. Shelstad takes that responsibility seriously and is always up to date on her Basic Life Support (BLS) training, which combines CPR and AED skills.

“I am required to recertify every two years in BLS, which includes AED training,” she said.

To improve the readiness of people involved in Cooper athletics, Shelstad encourages athletes, coaches and staff to review emergency response plans and AED locations at the start of every season. Additionally, she said there is a training resource on the Minnesota State High School League website called “Anyone Can Save a Life” that promotes basic first aid and AED training.

Shelstad’s efforts to improve AED access at Cooper has made a difference.

“I have had to respond to a cardiac event that an AED was used to assess the patient, no shock required,” she said. “Thankfully, that athlete was revived and was medically cleared to participate in athletics. That was a life-changing event, literally.”

That kind of outcome reinforces the importance of preparedness and it is something that resonates with coach-

es like Chris DiSalvi, who leads the girls cross country team. According to DiSalvi, keeping athletes safe can be challenging in a sport like cross country, where runners train over long distances and may be spread out across a training run or a race course.

“For cross country, we kept an AED unit with us in a car as we followed our students at practice,” DiSalvi said. “That is because it is possible we could be very far from a mounted AED if a student had an emergency.”

DiSalvi’s interest in being prepared connects to a personal experience he had in the past with a heart-related emergency.

“I have had to give CPR to a stranger on the light rail who probably overdosed. It was scary, and fortunately the person survived, but I was not prepared to do that when I got on the train,” DiSalvi said.

It is for that reason DiSalvi is appreciative of the efforts to make sure AEDs are accessible at Cooper.

“No one plans to have a heart-related problem, so it is important to be prepared,” he said. “Having AED units readily available for athletes who are asking a lot of their heart while performing is essential.”

Another key component to preparedness is creating a culture of safety around athletics. From hydration reminders to weather awareness to encouraging communication about injuries, the school’s coaching staff prioritizes an environment where athletes feel comfortable speaking up.

“We go through routines and announcements to talk about how to keep our students safe,” DiSalvi said. “Coaches model safety behavior. Activity directors and principals create environments that allow coaches and athletes to feel safe while practicing and competing. I believe that Cooper does a great job of creating that environment.”

Echoing this sentiment was Shelstad, who said that AEDs play a critical part of the culture of safety.

“Many schools and public venues are installing AEDs in public locations; there are grants and other support available,” she said. “AEDs save lives and schools should make them a priority.”

Vikings offseason moves raise hopes for '26

Although the squad made no major changes, the ones that have occurred are helpful

By BRAYLON NIX
Quill staff writer

The NFL offseason has been a reset and retool for the Minnesota Vikings. While they did not fully rebuild, they did make a lot of changes. Some primary areas they have been focusing on include creating some cap space, building their defense and focusing on the quarterback position. At the same time, they have left some questions on offense.

Perhaps the biggest move was signing quarterback Kyler Murray to the team for a one-year, veteran-minimum contract. This helps the team with quarterback depth since JJ McCarthy’s 2025 season was not as successful as the team and the fans expected.

The team also signed James Pierre as a cornerback and re-signed Eric Wilson, Tavierre

Thomas and Jalen Redmond. Signing Pierre helps out the cornerback position by adding depth. Meanwhile, re-signing Wilson is good because he was an important part of the defense last year. Finally, Thomas helps to keep depth at cornerback, while Redmond helps the D-line.

When it comes to making more cap space, the Vikings re-

Commentary

leased Jonathan Allen, Javon Hargrave and Harrison Smith. They also lost wide receiver Jalen Nailor because he signed with the Raiders. Freeing cap space is important because the team spent too much money last year for a season that did not work out, so they needed to take things slow this offseason.

During the draft, which ran

from April 23-25, the Vikings placed a heavy emphasis on the defensive side. The team drafted defensive tackle Caleb Banks with their first pick. Although he has an injury history, he also has a high upside that could benefit the team. Likewise, drafting linebacker Jake Lockley should improve the team’s linebacker room heading into the future.

After the draft concluded, the team picked up wide receiver Jordan Addison’s fifth-year option. In addition to him being a high-impact player, Addison makes a great compliment to Vikings star wide receiver Justin Jefferson.

Overall, the Vikings got younger and more flexible on defense and did not make many moves on offense. Fans will see how these moves, and lack of moves, have an impact on the team this coming September.

Cooper Competitors

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

Owen Vetter

By BRAYLON NIX
Quill staff writer

Baseball player Owen Vetter (12) views the sport as a lifelong pursuit shaped by dedication, resilience and a love for the game.

“I’ve been playing since I was four in T-ball,” he said. “I wanted to play because of [Minnesota Twins star] Joe Mauer. He was my favorite player growing up.”

That early passion has carried him through years of competition and growth. Vetter said he embraces the unique challenges that baseball brings.

“Baseball is probably the most individual team game,” he said.

One of Vetter’s most meaningful baseball memories did not come from a win, but from a hard-fought loss.

“In my sophomore season, we

played Orono in sections and it was my favorite game at Cooper, even though we lost 1-0,” Vetter said.

As a captain, Vetter has taken on a leadership role focused on supporting his teammates.

“I feel it’s going rather well helping the younger classmen with drills or giving advice,” he said.

Outside of baseball, Vetter said he enjoys science classes, noting his specific enjoyment of doing labs.

“I’m also really interested in the elements,” he said.

Outside of school, Vetter values quiet time.

“I spend a lot of time reading in the offseason and on the way to games to clear my head,” he said.

Looking ahead, Vetter plans to attend the North Dakota College of Science before transferring to complete an electrical engineering degree.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Matthew Yang

By BRAYLON NIX
Quill staff writer

Matthew Yang (12) has found his place on the court as part of the Hawks volleyball team. Now entering his third season, what stands out most to Yang is not just the competition, but the camaraderie.

“I have enjoyed getting closer to my teammates,” he said.

Over his many games and practices, Yang said he has had many valuable experiences. Among his favorite memories of volleyball is a simple but meaningful reward the team occasionally earns from the coach.

“My favorite memory is getting pizza for sweeping the opposing team,” Yang said.

Yang has also stepped into lead-

ership roles along the way. As a sophomore, Yang served as a JV captain, and even after moving out of that position, he continued to mentor other players.

“Even though I wasn’t the captain, I was able to help guide the newer players by helping them practice and giving them tips,” he said.

Off the court, Yang enjoys challenging himself academically. He said his favorite subject is math.

“I think I’m pretty good at it and I enjoy learning it,” he said. “I feel fulfilled when I solve a question or when I have that a-ha moment.”

In fact, this passion for math is shaping his future plans. Yang hopes to study statistics at Augsburg University and pursue a career as a data scientist or statistician.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Isaac Ottoson

By BRAYLON NIX
Quill staff writer

Isaac Ottoson (12) is a baseball player entering his final season on the Hawks squad. Although some of his teammates have years of baseball experience behind them, Ottoson’s journey began more recently.

“I’ve been playing for three years, starting my freshman year,” he said. “What got me to play was a group of friends telling me to join.”

That sense of connection with his teammates has remained the heart of Ottoson’s experience on the squad.

“I have enjoyed having a good time with my friends and coaches,” Ottoson said.

Whether it is through competition or practice, the relationships Ot-

toson has built in baseball have had a big impact on him as a person. In fact, some of his favorite baseball memories happen away from the field.

“Sometimes, after games or a good practice, we all go out as a team and go get some food,” he said. “The bus rides to the games are always the best too.”

Outside of baseball, Ottoson enjoys creative and active pursuits at school.

“Art is my favorite class because I’ve always loved to draw and paint,” he said. “Physical education will forever be one of my favorite classes because I love being active.”

Ottoson’s personal hobbies include rock climbing, drawing and tattooing.

Looking ahead, Ottoson plans to enter construction after high school.



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES

Chris Giroux

By BRAYLON NIX
Quill staff writer

Baseball has been a constant in Cooper player Chris Giroux’s (12) life for many years.

“I have been playing baseball for 14 years now,” Giroux said. “I first started in the sport when I was four years old.”

According to Giroux, his original motivation to get involved with the sport came from his family members, who love the game.

Now in his final high school season, Giroux continues to dedicate himself to the sport through both spring competition with the Hawks and with year-round preparation. In the fall and winter, he engages in off-season training. Additionally, he said he takes part in prospect camps to sharpen his skills

in advance of the spring season.

What has kept Giroux invested in baseball all these years are the experiences he has had while playing the sport.

“I really enjoy seeing the progress and growth I have made,” Giroux said.

As a captain of the 2026 team, Giroux has embraced his leadership role.

“I’ve been a captain since junior year,” he said. “It’s going good.”

Outside of baseball, Giroux said he enjoys his gym classes “because [he gets] to be active.” He also said he likes spending time playing video games and hanging out with his friends.

Looking ahead, Giroux said he is keeping open his options for a future career. Currently, he is considering the possibility of being a teacher and coach or “working in the trades.”



Photo by R. VANG-LOHNES