



Melinda Vogel joins Cooper as new grade-level counselor

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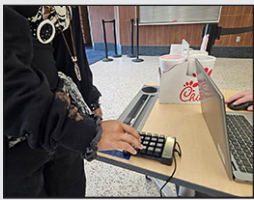
Music Cafe class enters second year of focusing on guitar instruction

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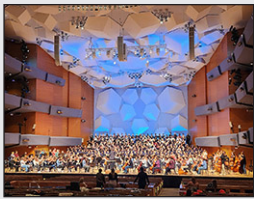


Voting critical in midterm election

Concerns about the direction the United States is taking in domestic, world affairs make it important that all citizens vote

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Musicians prep for Fall Festival

The concert at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis, which takes place November 9, involves student performers from band, choir, orchestra

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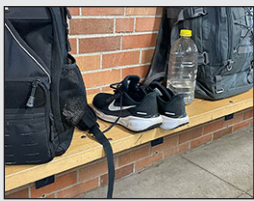


Marching Band plays State Fair

In addition to performing as part of a parade at the fair, the group appeared on KARE11 during the evening news broadcast

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Athletes juggle sports, academics

Their daily commitments to competing and completing schoolwork can cause Hawk players to be short on free time and sleep

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COOPER WELCOMES HEAD PRINCIPAL BELL



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Dr. Norman Bell said that listening to "student voice" is central to his philosophy as the school's head principal.

By KAZUO LOR
Quill staff writer

Dr. Norman Bell joined Cooper as its new head principal at the start of the 2026-2027 school year.

Bell has served as a secondary school leader for more than 12 years within various Twin Cities-area school districts. He holds

a Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership from Minnesota State University, Mankato, a Master of Science in School Counseling from the University of Wisconsin, River Falls, and has recently completed his Doctorate in Educational Leadership and superintendent licensure through Hamline University.

Bell said his lifelong focus on education was inspired by his family.

"I come from a family of school administrators and teachers," he said. "I had an uncle who was a principal and we were really close. A lot of things he did as a principal and how he led were things that I wanted to do too."

Bell is recognized for his steadfast focus on student academic growth, his commitment to creating equitable learning opportunities and his ability to build meaningful, lasting relationships. In order to demonstrate these traits at Cooper, Bell said he is working closely with Student Council to make sure

The new head Hawk arrived this summer to lead Cooper into the '27-'28 school year

those leaders feel involved in making decisions. In addition, he is working on creating a Bell Student Group.

"I want to hear student voice. I want to bring students to staff meetings as well. Student voice is something that is really important to me. I want student voice to be loud and clear when we make decisions," Bell said.

According to Bell, his first impressions of the school when he walked through the doors on day one have remained consistent as the school year has gotten underway.

"It's a tight-knit community and it's a family here. I love that all the kids are friendly, it's a diverse school, the staff are nice and it feels like a big family here," Bell said.

Cooper teachers have been pleased to welcome Bell and the changes he has been bringing to the building. Math teacher Garrett Bruce said Bell and his administrative team seem to be supporting teachers and helping them succeed in the classroom.

"The cell phone policy is helping a lot for the students and for the teachers in helping with the learning.

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Students, staff react to school's revised phone policy

Having phones out during class time after a teacher warning will result in those devices being confiscated by staff for one day

By LINUS JOHNSTON
Quill staff writer

Cooper students and staff were met with a new procedure around phones at the start of the new school year: one warning at the start of class, then the device is gone if it is seen out. The only times when phones are now allowed is during passing time and at lunch.

Under the new policy, teachers of students who have devices out after being warned will contact the Coaches Corner office, which will send someone to the classroom to take the device for the rest of the school day. Devices seen out in the last period of the day will be placed in the Coaches Corner office during the next school day. Students whose devices are taken can pick them up at the end of the day they were confiscated.

According to 11th grade principal Ned Nelson, this new policy was created to address the growing phone use problem at school.

"Both teachers and students stated that students' use of personal electronics in the classroom was an issue and that there needed to be a procedure in place to help students stay engaged in their classes," Nelson said.

Prayer Sollee (11) is a student who agreed that phones were causing many students to fail classes in previous years.

"Last year, without the phone policy, a lot of us failed, but this year, I just feel like we're on track," Sollee said

In order to help students adapt, some teachers have been easing into the procedure. According to social studies teacher Evan Moore, there have not been many problems in his classes, but he has been more lenient to upperclassmen as they adjust. Meanwhile, he said the younger

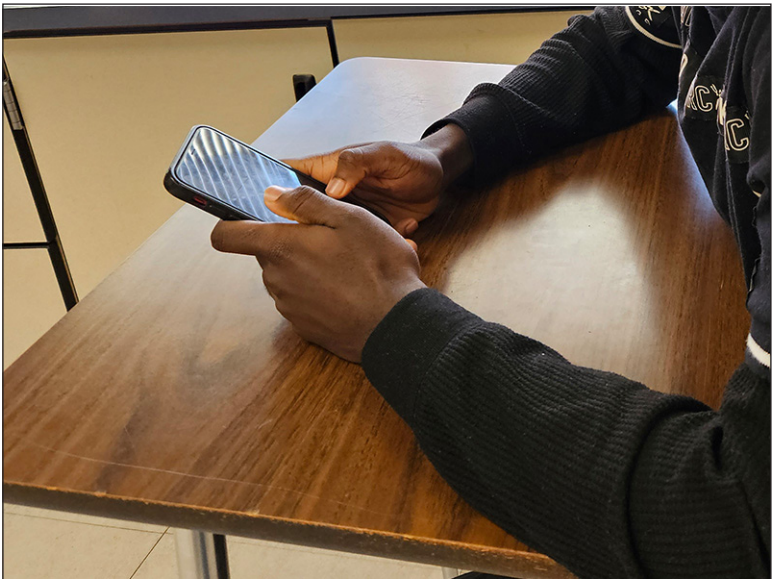


Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

The new approach to phones is designed to improve the learning environment.

students are responding well to the policy.

"The ninth graders, since it's a new school for them, it's kind of just like, oh, that's what we do at the new school, so it hasn't really been

PHONE POLICY continues on page 3

Transition to high school brings challenges to ninth graders

Freshmen have many strategies at their disposal to make their first year of high school as successful as possible

By JAYLA FLETCHER
Quill staff writer

Between finding new locker combinations, navigating busy hallways and adjusting to high school credit requirements, incoming ninth graders quickly discover that life as a Cooper Hawk moves at a whole new speed.

One of the biggest changes for freshmen is the amount of responsibility placed on them. Cooper science teacher Caroline Sutliff said freshmen are expected to keep track of their own missing work, upcoming projects, tests and daily assignments instead of relying on teachers to remind them.

"I think the hardest part of the transition is that more of the responsibility for doing school is put on the ninth grade student" Sutliff said. "They had been used to their middle school teachers keeping track of their missing work, upcoming projects, summatives and daily work, and now they have more responsibility in that. It is a big transition."

Along with more responsibility, incoming students face a heavier and more difficult workload. Sutliff said students have to "problem-solve more independently," which can be difficult for many incoming freshmen. Thaxton Bentley (9), a new Cooper student, said he has experienced some of these changes firsthand.

"There is a lot more space and more floors, so it's harder to get to class on time," Thaxton said.

The size of the school can also make it difficult for new students to learn where everything is. Thaxton said that he is still "trying to remember all [his] classes and where they are" because the school is so big.

However, academics and navigating the building are not the only adjustments freshmen have to make. Students also have to become more independent and learn how to manage their time. Cooper social studies and AVID teacher Chris DiSalvi said high school students are expected to manage their schedules, grades and extracurricular activities more independently than they did in middle school.

"High schoolers are expected to be a lot more independent than middle schoolers. They should be able to manage schedules, grades and other extracurriculars without the help of their parents," DiSalvi said.

With these new responsibilities, organization becomes important. Sutliff recommends that freshmen use folders, keep track of due dates and test dates, take useful notes and use class and study hall time wisely.

Social pressure can also make the high school transition difficult. DiSalvi said freshmen may feel pressure to do well academically, join activities or "fit in" based on how they think high school students are supposed to act.

According to Thaxton, making friends helped make his transition easier.

"At first, it was awkward for me because I barely knew anybody," Thaxton said.

After starting to socialize, Thaxton said high school became "pretty much the same" as his ex-

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HLL replaced by weekly academic support system

Hawk Connections takes place after second period every Tuesday, Thursday

By JOCELYNN YANG
Quill staff writer

Hawk Connections was introduced this school year as a place for students to be able to meet with teachers, work on what they need to get done and ask for help with assignments.

Under the new schedule, Hawk Connections runs on Tuesdays and Thursdays between periods two and three from 10:09-10:49 a.m.

Many students who have been at Cooper for at least one year were questioning why Hawk Connections was put into place instead of continuing with the Hawk Lunch and Learn (HLL) system. Hawk Connections was created in a collaboration between the principals, support staff and teachers to address issues with HLL. In short, school leaders wanted students to have an opportunity to be more successful in their learning, whether that is getting assignments in, making up tests or asking for help.

“The main goal was to provide a time and space for students to receive academic help and to work directly with their teachers,” Assistant Principal Ned Nelson said. “HLL was not working as an academic intervention. When we met with student leadership last year, one thing that was mentioned many times over was the lack of dedicated academic intervention time. Hawk Connections provides that opportunity for students.”

Through the new system, teachers put students directly into a class to be able to work on missing assignments and ask questions if needed. Additionally, students are able to go to a specific teacher and ask them to be put in their Hawk Connections in advance.

Teachers and staff are so far finding Hawk Connections to be a reliable setting for students to be able to make up formatives and summatives.

“I know it will be helpful for students that may struggle in certain areas,” physical education teacher Onte Burns said. “It gives them more time to catch up on their work and improve their grade in whatever subject.”

According to art teacher Claire Mielke, the new system is an improvement over the HLL system used in the past.

“I wish there was more student choice, but it will be much less chaotic during lunch as well as providing time for open lunch kids to have academic sessions and study hall time unlike HLL before,” Mielke said.

Student counselor Salinee Hough said she is optimistic the new system will be of benefit to student success in the classroom.

“I hope students see improvement in their academic performance. That’s the goal,” Hough said.

On the other hand, students have noted that the new system seems to be limiting their freedom and ability to make choices.

“I don’t like Hawk Connections at all,” Aaron Larteh (12). “Last year, with the Hawk Lunch and Learn system, we had more freedom like having an open gym session.”

At the same time, Larteh said he can recognize the benefits of the new system.

“I think Hawk Connections is somewhat helpful for students that want to finish assignments,” he said.

Ultimately, Nelson acknowledged that veteran Cooper students may feel they have less freedom with Hawk Connections that they did with the old HLL system.

“I think there are mixed feelings about the system. Last year, the students had a lot of freedom during HLL, but students’ grades

ACADEMIC SUPPORT continues on page 3

New schedule shortens time for open lunch

Elimination of HLL means upperclassmen can no longer add an extra 30 minutes to the time allotted to leave school



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Students leaving and returning to the building for open lunch must be more efficient with their time this year.

By YUUKONG LEE
Quill staff writer

The schedule change this year at Cooper has angered some juniors and seniors because it changed the nearly 60-minute open lunch period of previous years to a 30-minute lunch.

According to Assistant Principal Ned Nelson, the new schedule is designed to “improve student grades.” As part of the changes, fourth period now consists of a 30-minute lunch followed by a normal class period, or a normal class period followed by a 30-minute lunch. In the past, lunch took place during fifth period, which consisted of 30 minutes to eat and 30 minutes for an academic or leisure activity. Under this schedule, upperclassmen with open lunch were able to use the full 60 minutes to leave the building for lunch.

A large majority of teach-

ers generally approve of the new approach. Teachers have pointed out that the hallways are clear and there is way less chaos in the building thanks the new schedule and the need for students to get to class.

“The hallways are more clear than they were and people know where they need to go,” art teacher Madeline McNeil said.

In contrast, many students, especially juniors and seniors, have issues with the new lunch schedule. One issue is that the new system has caused students in music to spend less time practicing compared to what they did before.

“Lunch could have been better if they didn’t focus on Hawk Connections as people in music last year had both second and third period to use for music. I wish they could have connected HLL and lunch as one thing just as they did last year,” Raiden Southwell (12) said.

Beyond the impact on students in music-related programs, other students pointed out some problems in how the lunches themselves are organized.

“A and B lunch is dumb. Having nine and 12, and 10 and 11 together was a better system as both 10th and 11th graders could bounce ideas off each other and ninth graders would get ideas and learn more or get help from the seniors. They should have kept HLL,” Giovanna Hall (12) said.

According to 2026 graduate Caleb Cummings, the system in place when he was an upperclassmen was superior to what the school has now.

“From what I’ve heard, the new lunch time was an attempt to fix something that will simply never be fixed, which is that there are skippers and people who are constantly late,” Cummings said. “I think it’s a poor

decision. It punishes people who have done nothing wrong, while again the skippers will always be the same and do the same.”

The issue of students skipping fifth and sixth period due to open lunch in the past is one problem that led to the schedule change according to Nelson. He acknowledges that many students now feel like they have to suffer just because some individuals did not follow the rules in the past. However, he said the changes were necessary.

“Yes, it’s harder for kids to go out for open lunch. It allows people to go out and learn adult responsibilities, but they need to come back and learn. Originally, lunch was always 30 minutes, but it was after HLL was taken away that those 60 minutes were reverted back to the original 30 minutes,” Nelson said. “Before HLL happened, we had period lunches at fourth, fifth and sixth hour, and noticed a lot of people skipping those hours. So, eight years ago, we created the HLL system to limit where the skippers would be.”

Ultimately, Nelson said the school implemented this new system not to try and limit the freedom of students, but to try and ensure they can pursue their education with no distractions while limiting the possibilities of skipping.

While many students do not like the new system because of how it affects their lunch, their time to hang out with friends and their time to practice their instruments, many teachers approve of it because there is less chaos and the school day is more productive with the shorter time during the lunch period. Nelson said he hopes as the school year continues that the new system will be able to achieve what it was meant to do while being able to satisfy the needs and wants of the students.

College fair gives students access to area schools

The October 22 event brought campus representatives to Cooper to meet directly with interested Hawks

By NATALIE BERG
Quill staff writer

The Cooper College Fair happened in the Community Gyms on October 22. Classroom teachers were invited to sign up to bring their students down to the gyms to have an opportunity to meet with college representatives.

The event was organized by student counselor Anna Walters along with support from student counselor Salinee Hough and College and Career Center Coordinator Mark Rosenblum. The fair is coordinated through an organization called MnACC. This is a noncompetitive, collaborative group made up of area colleges that is dedicated to improving access to higher education for Minnesota’s students of color.

According to Hough, the fair was helpful to students who had an idea of the specific schools they were interested in learning more about.

“There are a lot of colleges and talking to all the tables would be a lot. It’s good to have at least an idea of specific schools to talk to. It’s also helpful to have an idea of questions to ask,” Hough said

Hough also mentioned that the fair is typically geared toward upperclassmen, but it can benefit underclassmen for the future.

“For ninth and 10th graders, it’s good for them to learn about opportunities so they know what to plan for. At this point in their high school careers, the hope is they’re giving themselves as many opportunities as possible for after high school. It’s never

too early to start planning for a future,” Hough said.

According to Hough, the primary goal of the fair is to get students to connect with colleges. However, the individual goals of going to the fair may be different for each student who attended. For instance, some students can get general information and see what their options are at a given college. Meanwhile, students who already have an idea about which college they want to go to can get as much information about that school as they want.

Hough said the fair included colleges from nearby states too, which helped make the fair useful for more students.

“While most of the schools will be from Minnesota, there will be schools from outside of Minnesota, mainly the ones

right outside Minnesota like Wisconsin and North Dakota,” she said.

Another benefit of the college fair is the opportunities it gives students to ask questions about college life.

“Students visiting colleges typically visit the student center, cafeteria and possibly a dorm. They typically also get a walking tour of the campus so they can see where things are in relation to their possible classes,” Hough said. “The fair is a great time to ask questions about college experiences to find what suits you.”

According to Hough, the fair also gave students who are not in AVID or college-in-school courses a chance to learn about more about colleges by speaking “face to face” with their representatives.

Student work on fall play *Odyssey* gets underway

Preparation for the performances, which take place December 2-5, require students in on-stage, behind-the-scene roles

By CHAOKHANG VANG
Quill staff writer

The Cooper theater department will introduce a unique interpretation of the legendary Greek tale *The Odyssey* as this year’s fall play, which will begin its showings in December.

The theater department puts on two major shows that occur in the fall and winter. The fall show is a play and the winter show is a musical. There is usually a smaller show in the spring, which can vary from being a one-act performance to an improv show.

For this year, the fall play is *An Odyssey*. *An Odyssey* is a play by Samuel Buggeln based on the legendary Greek tale *The Odyssey*. It follows the same story of

Odysseus and his soldiers on their journey home. It is filled with monsters, mythical islands and intervention from gods. However, it will not just be like *The Odyssey*; it is called *An Odyssey* for a reason.

“This version will have a unique twist where, in every scene, a new actor will be picked to play Odysseus. In our production, anyone can be the protagonist of the story,” theater director Alondra Alamilla said.

Alamilla’s theater journey started at Cooper before she went to study theater at Augsburg University with a major concentration in directing.

This is her second year directing theater at Cooper. The previous shows she directed at Cooper were *Sleepy Hollow*, *You’re a Good Man Charlie Brown* and *A Time to Remember*. Alamilla’s decision regarding what work to choose for the fall play this year was due to the theater department having a great season last year.

“I felt that it was what students deserved as an opportunity to feel the power of what they can create on stage,” Alamilla said.

Alamilla hopes that this show will encourage more people to join theater and, hopefully, inspire more people to watch future shows. According to Alamilla, theater is often made up of returning students rather than new ones, although incoming students are welcome to get involved.

The returning students make up the majority of the students

within theater. To them, theater is more than just acting, because you can act anywhere. According to Camille Bailey (12), what keeps them coming back is something more special.

“What keeps me, not as a student, but as a teen, coming back to the auditorium of Cooper would have to be the people,” Bailey said.

Many returning students agree on the fact that it is the community of people within theater that keeps them in the clutches of the stage. One of those veteran performers is Annika Nogle (11).

“Theater is my second home and I couldn’t imagine leaving it

FALL PLAY continues on page 6

New grade-level counselor joins Cooper

Melinda Vogel now works with 11th grade Hawks after seven years of serving as a counselor at Armstrong



Photo by JOCELYNN YANG

Melinda Vogel's office is located in the Student Services Center next to the other Cooper counselors.

By ALEX SANCHEZ GALINDO
Quill staff writer

Melinda Vogel is one of Cooper's new hires for the 2026-2027 school year. She is currently the guidance counselor for ninth graders after working at Armstrong in a similar role for seven years. Vogel said many factors led to her becoming a student counselor. "When I was in high school, I wanted to become a high school history teacher or an environmental lawyer fighting polluters. By college, I had narrowed it down to wanting a career where I could work with students and make an impact. Being a school counselor is a perfect mix for me. I like that every day is

different and that I get to meet and work with really amazing students. I also really enjoy helping students plan for their futures after high school," Vogel said. Vogel's style of counseling students is aimed toward helping them learn to help themselves. "[I am] empathetic, friendly and goal-oriented," Vogel said. Like many of the staff members at Cooper, Vogel gravitated toward education because she had a positive experience when she was completing her high school education. "I had a pretty good high school experience. I did swim team, water polo, mock trial, National Honor Society, choir and theater club. My favorite classes were AP

US History and AP English Literature. I wanted to do well in school, but sometimes I got disorganized and overwhelmed," Vogel said. When it comes to tackling student issues, Vogel said there are some common challenges today's student face. "Phones, constant distractions, mental health concerns and not enough sleep. Every person is different and navigating any concern is an individual process. My focus is to help empower students to choose their own solutions, changes or plans to solve their problems," Vogel said. When it comes to working with students, Vogel said she is prepared for situations when a student may be nervous to work with a counselor.

"We're a really friendly, relaxed bunch and I usually have candy or mints. We're non-judgmental and our main goal is to help with whatever situation is going on," Vogel said. Although Vogel is working with ninth graders this year, she is already planning on how to support her students as they eventually become seniors. "One of my favorite parts of my job is working with students as they plan for their futures. I'm always happy to read over [and] edit a college essay, help suggest more colleges to look at or scholarships to research, or just listen. It can be a really stressful time, but meeting with a counselor and doing direct admissions is a great place to start," Vogel said. Students interested in meeting with Vogel have several options for doing so. "Scan the QR code on my door or in front of the Student Services Office, and sign up for an appointment time that works best for you, preferably during your study hall," she said. "Students can always drop by if there's an immediate, serious problem, but sometimes I'm in meetings. If I'm not available, one of the other counselors or social workers would be happy to help too." Outside of school, Vogel has several activities that fill up her time. "I wheel-throw pottery, I run and I hang out with my almost five-year-old son," Vogel said. Additionally, Vogel said she is working on a new hobby that may surprise students. "I'm learning how to skateboard," she said.

BELL
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Seeing the admin in the hallway allows for less distractions and chaos in the hallways. Having admin stop in to view the classes and have conversations has also been helpful," Bruce said. Echoing Bruce's comments is science teacher Anne Johnson. "For the most part, I like the support with the cell phones. They have been quick to respond. [Also, they have been] keeping the hallways and bathrooms clear," Johnson said. While Bruce said he would describe Bell as "energetic, passionate and hopeful," Johnson said she would describe him as "positive, caring and strong." As he heads into his first full year as principal, Bell said he has a key message to get across to students. "Try your best and don't be afraid to dream. Whatever you want to do after high school, you can do it. You just got to put your mind to it and work for it," Bell said. Outside of school, Bell said he loves to spend time with his dog and go fishing.

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that big of an issue. And as I have found, as we get more days into the school year, they know the deal now. They've probably been in the class where someone's gotten their phone taken in the middle of the class. They don't want that to be them, so they're not really pushing back. They just are like, oh, okay, no phones. That's really it," Moore said. Though it is too early to tell how the procedure will impact grades, Moore said its impact on the classroom atmosphere is already evident. "I think what I've noticed is students are talking to each other more. They're having more conversations because you can't really just check out and scroll on your phone," Moore said. For Solee, the new procedure was a wakeup call. "It got me to do more of my work again," Solee said. "It's making students actually do their work, including me."

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perience in middle school. When students struggle, both Sutliff and DiSalvi encourage them to ask for help rather than falling behind. Sutliff said students should talk to their teachers, use Hawk Connections and ask classmates for help. DiSalvi also recommended that students reach out to trusted adults, such as teachers, counselors or parents. Although the transition can be intimidating, teachers said freshmen should remember that they are not expected to figure everything out immediately. "Everything is going to be okay," Sutliff said. As freshmen continue through their first year, developing good habits, staying organized and asking for support can help them adjust to the responsibilities of high school. DiSalvi encourages students to be "kind, eager to learn and true to themselves" while they find their place as Cooper Hawks.

Intentional study habits can help Hawks with school

From retooling one's approach to test preparation to limiting outside distractions, students can take charge of their own learning

By ADAM JACOBSEN
Quill staff writer

Studying a little each day, limiting distractions, understanding the classroom notes and avoiding cramming for tests are among the tips students can follow to have success in class. Science teacher Sandy Hawkinson said students make a mistake when they wait too long to begin preparing for a major exam. "The review should happen in short periods over multiple days, but not for a long time all at once," Hawkinson said. Agreeing with Hawkinson was math teacher Garrett Bruce, who emphasized planning study time before a test approaches. "Be intentional about the time you use to study," Bruce said. "Schedule a block time in your phone and then focus your energy during that time to help you prepare for the test." For a daily routine, Hawkinson recommended spending 10-15 minutes reviewing topics learned earlier in the week before moving on to new material. She said students should set aside review time even when they do not have home-

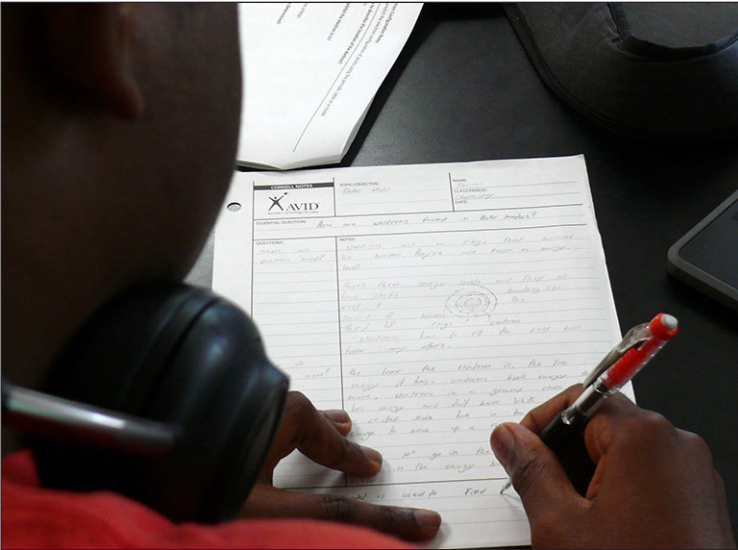


Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Careful note taking while reading is one way to aid information retention. work due. Planning ahead also matters to Jonatan Carias (12), who recommended using a calendar to organize studying. "Students waste preparation time when they start on their phone instead of studying," Carias said. Beyond making time to study, Bruce said that students should be strategic in how they study. Bruce said his "study routine would focus on notes [he] still had questions about, with a quicker review of material [he] already understood." He added that copying information as part of studying does not help the student if the student does not know how to use it during the test. "Students need to understand the material they put on their notecards," Bruce said. Meanwhile, Hawkinson explained that rereading without making meaning of the material is "passive review." She recommends that students put information into their own words.

Students also question how much copying actually helps in the studying process. Tavian Thomas (12) identified "writing down every word" as a habit that was a waste of time. Instead, Thomas recommended attending class and reviewing what was taught as better methods of preparation. The place where a student studies was another area of concern when it comes to proper preparation. Bruce recommended creating a quiet space and keeping any background music low. In turn, Hawkinson described her recommended study environment as "comfortable, but not too comfortable, quiet [and] isolated." From the student perspective, Thomas said he preferred a slightly uncomfortable space, while Carias preferred studying in the dark, alone and without noise. Carias also said a studying routine should include putting devices away. A final studying tip is to make a regular schedule. Hawkinson suggested assigning different classes to different review days and adjusting the schedule when needed. She recommended keeping a planner or setting aside blocks of time to maintain that routine.

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were not to the high standard that we expect from our Cooper students. I think students will start to feel better when their midquarter grades come out," he said.

Nelson added that, although Hawk Connections is not a traditional class, student attendance is expected. "Students should go to their

assigned Hawk Connections class and use that time to get academic help, socio-emotional support, make up tests and other work, and use the time to focus on their school

work. Hawk Connections is treated like an assigned class; disciplinary action will follow the same expectations of any other class," Nelson said.

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Restricting use of phones may hinder learning

Despite causing distractions, phones also aid academic performance

By ADAM JACOBSEN
Quill staff writer

Last week in math class, I found myself stuck on an equation. In the past, if I was stuck on a problem, I would pull out my phone and quickly look up an explanation that would help me figure out how to solve the problem. This year, however, I was afraid to take out my phone because I would be at risk of getting the phone confiscated. This stress made me realize how much the current no-phones policy holds us back from our potential in every class. While the policy is meant to reduce distractions, it ultimately hurts our learning by cutting off access to instant educational support. As a result, I believe the new phone policy is misguided and needs to change.

One important reason why the phone policy needs revising is that modern phones are not just distracting social media devices, they are tools that can aid learning. When we disallow phones, students lose immediate access to education apps, digital calculators, flash card tools and access to research sites that could help clarify a lesson more expediently than using a Chromebook. This phone restriction directly impacts students who learn better through electronic means and might need to quickly look up something like a historic timeline to stay on track with a class. Allowing us to have our phones to support our education is valid because it teaches us how to operate technology respon-

The new phone policy needs revising because modern phones are not just distracting social media devices, they are tools that can aid learning.

sibility to enhance our academic growth.

Another major issue with the total phone ban is that it restricts our ability to collaborate and access essential classroom materials online. Many teachers post assignments or study guides online, which are easier to check with a phone than a Chromebook. When phones are completely banned or taken away, it limits our freedom to quickly double-check a rubric or complete groupwork with classmates. This ultimately forces us to rely on school computers, which are not always fully charged or as fast as our personal devices, thereby slowing our academic productivity.

What is more, I think a strict phone policy ignores the reality that smartphones help us to manage our daily lives inside and outside of school. Many people use organization apps and digital calendars to keep track of homework and our extracurricular activities. Denying us access to these tools throughout the day makes it harder to be organized and stay on top of our responsibilities. Instead of teaching us to hide our devices completely, the school should help us bring this brand of organization into our daily routines.

Overall, the current phone policy does more harm than good by stripping away resources that actively help our education and outside-of-school lives. Forcing students to hide their phones prevents us from using various tools that could help us succeed. Administrators must update this policy to allow structured use of phones in the classroom. We should work together to create a policy that trusts students to use their technology responsibly, which could transform our phone from a classroom distraction into a classroom asset.

Creating school spirit rests on all Hawks

If we want a school that truly feels like a community, there are ways each student can contribute on a daily basis



Photo by JOCELYNN YANG

School-wide celebrations like the pepfest during homecoming week are great ways to develop connections between students.

School spirit refers to the desire to celebrate your school and all the people in it. Having school spirit activities is one way to build a sense of community and have fun. Activities like pep rallies or theme days like dressing up as twins or as your favorite character are school spirit activities that bond us together. Spreading school spirit and making sure everyone has a chance to be involved is simple. You can invite clubs and sports to participate in pep rallies; you can make sure teachers, staff and faculty show school spirit and make school a positive place to learn; and you can maintain the reputation of being a good school so people will feel spirited enough to want to participate.

One way to promote school spirit is through school groups and sports teams. Free promotion is easiest when you can get each person from each sport

and club to participate in school events and promote them on social media. Giving each participating club and sport a role in the school spirit activities is key to getting the larger Cooper community involved. School spirit activities are brought to the next level when students share their creative ideas and memories on a platform. Promoting your school spirit will not only get the student

body interested, but also inspire other schools, spreading all-around positivity.

Another way to help spread school spirit is through teacher participation. Teachers can help by actively promoting school spirit. For example, during past homecoming weeks at Cooper, the AVID teachers have excused a single Cornell Note assignment

for each day a student participates in the homecoming activities. This persuades AVID students to share the dates for spirit activities online, to tell other students about the events and to participate themselves. Additionally, some teachers give candy and treats to promote school spirit. Rewards of this sort can give students

something to look forward to and an additional reason to get involved.

Finally, just being a great community worth celebrating is the best way to spread school spirit. Caring about school spirit activities is unlikely if the student body does not care about the school itself. Individually, it is easy to distance yourself from school, but when multiple students do it, noticeable changes need to be made.

Cooper traditionally has great school spirit days like the '90s day and jersey days. We always go big and it is fun to see everyone dress up. The more of us who take part and try to raise the school spirit, the more school spirit will improve.

All in all, Cooper school spirit improves when students help promote events on social media, when the teachers and staff participate and when the student body feels positive about the school. Giving each club and sport time to shine is extremely important to show we as a community care about the talent at Cooper. The fact that our participation and excitement level is high during school spirit weeks proves that Cooper cares about its community. School spirit is strong at Cooper because of the contributions made by all the members of its community.

From the Editors

Voting in midterm elections critical in current climate

Concerns about the direction the United States is taking in domestic, world affairs make it important that all citizens vote

By LINUS JOHNSTON
Quill staff writer

I remember being unaware of how elections worked as a small child. At one point, however, my parents took me with them to see a polling place and watch them vote. After that, I only really became aware of politics around Donald Trump's first term, just in time to watch the world collapse under the combined weight of him and COVID.

As things got worse and worse, even under Joe Biden, I became depressed and frustrated by the lack of power I had. I was also confused why other people did not seem to care much about elections until I learned it mostly came down to just not being as well informed and rightfully not

wanting to think about the endless bad news.

With the midterm elections currently upon us, it is important to remember that your vote is likely the most powerful thing you

diminish your voting power. This, among other things, is why your vote matters now more than it ever has before.

Another reason your vote matters is that both chambers of

Ultimately, these upcoming midterms will decide whether or not Trump keeps control over the House and Senate. If his control is stopped, Trump will no longer be able to act with unchecked power.

have to exert influence over the leaders and policies of this country. At least for now. More and more egregious gerrymandering is dividing up districts in an effort to

Congress currently have majorities made up of MAGA Republicans. What that means is that Donald Trump can act illegally or against the will of the people with-

out consequence, regardless of what the people want. This underscores the importance of making voting decisions that push back against this majority.

Ultimately, these upcoming midterms will decide whether or not Trump keeps control over the House and Senate. If his control is stopped, Trump will no longer be able to act with unchecked power. Congress will be able to uphold the law again and stop things like the Iran war and Trump's trade wars, which are both making life harder for everyone.

Overall, this election should be something to pay attention to and definitely one to vote in if you can. If you want an end to the trade wars, the literal wars and the affordability crisis, learn about your states candidates and vote.

Full editorial policy of the Cooper High School Quill

The purpose of *The Quill* is to function as an open and public forum for the thoughts and opinions of the student body of Cooper High School, as a means of expression for the *Quill* staff, and to help create a more solid community for our school through news, information, thought, humor and opinion. Student editors are responsible for all *Quill* content decisions.

The Quill's policy regarding profanity and obscenity will reflect the practice of professional daily publications of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. It is under the final control of the student editors to strike any unneeded words from

quotes that are considered offensive if these changes are within reason and still accurately retain the meaning of the quote.

Editorials will be presented in their respective section of the paper if the issue concerned is timely and of consequence to the community. However, editorials will not be printed that intentionally offend or hurt any racial, ethnic, gender or religious groups in the school.

All news stories, editorials and advertisements should be of a

content pertaining to the interests of the Cooper community and surrounding communities. No material will be refused based solely on the views expressed therein.

News and feature stories are under the creative control of the staff and editors. The staff of *The Quill* will attribute each article to its own writer and will make every effort to retain accuracy in facts and quotes. If a mistake of significance is made, the following issue will address it in a correc-

tional section.

Illustrations and photographs should be tasteful and not be offensive toward any groups based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

Advertising space will be available to all advertisers, yet the editors reserve the right to deny space to any advertisement based on the previously stated policies. The cost of advertising will be determined by the advisor and the advertising manager.

Electronic distribution of *The Quill* will be handled by staff members on the day of the paper's release.

From the Editors

Music programs prep for Fall Festival

The annual concert at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis involves student performers from band, choir, orchestra



Photo by ROSE VANG-LOHNES

One highlight of the November 9 concert is the chance to perform for an audience in a professional space.

By CHAOKHANG VANG
Quill staff writer

Cooper will pair up music programs ranging from Choir to Wind Ensemble to Symphony Orchestra for the Fall Music Festival at Orchestra Hall on November 9.

The Fall Music Festival happens yearly for Cooper musicians. It is a chance for students to perform at a professional space. Each one of Cooper’s music programs prepares differently for the Fall Music Festival. One music program in particular had an issue to address in their preparations for the festival and that is band. Musicians in this area had to deal with the fact that band teacher Markus Hahn was out of school during September for paternity leave.

“The fact that my goat Mr. Hahn [was] not back [was challenging]. My goat [was] gone; I [needed] my goat back,” Raiden Southwell (12) said.

Southwell is an eight-year music veteran who plays in both band and orchestra. His worries about the festival extend beyond Hahn being away from the band room. Specifically, he is focused on working with Symphony Orchestra. He describes his preparation as “a lot of practicing and a lot of praying.”

“I’m not yet confident in the ability of Symphony Orchestra. I’m not confident in their ability to play in the Fall Festival,” Southwell said.

He explained that the reason for his concern is due to the fact that Symphony Orchestra is an auditioned program, yet some people get in without auditioning. As a result, the skill gap is apparent when practicing.

At the same time, Southwell said he believes in his skill as a bass player and that the tenors will perform well at Orchestra Hall when the time for the festival arrives.

Other band members said they had different ways of preparing during Hahn’s absence.

“Me and the other members of the band [listened] to the music we’re going to play, and individually we all practice our music,” Andrew Nguyen (11) said.

Nguyen is a music veteran who began playing in fifth grade for the Robbinsdale district elementary band program. He still continues with it today within the Wind Ensemble. He

said that working with a new director who they were not used to during Hahn’s absence was difficult because they needed to adapt to that teacher’s expectations and standards. Despite this challenge, he is also confident in himself and the band.

“I feel confident because everybody in the band is working really hard, and every day, when we come together, we’re sounding better and better,” Nguyen said.

Agreeing with Nguyen was Annika Nogle (11).

“Preparing for the Fall Music Festival has looked a little different this year as our director Mr. Hahn has been out, but the Wind Ensemble has still put in the work every day to feel prepared and ready, taking our instruments home to get in even more practice,” Nogle said.

Nogle is another veteran musician who began playing in fifth grade. She has been in Freshmen Band, Concert Band, Jazz Band and, now, Wind Ensemble. She said the most challenging part of festival preparation for her was not just Hahn being away, but also getting used to a higher-level band.

Nogle said she feels confident in her abilities to go out and play great music at the Fall Music Festival, while also enjoying the opportunity because “it is not an everyday thing.”

In contrast to the band, the choir program has been having a more typical time preparing for the concert.

“So far, the most challenging part is trying to learn the music well enough to support the other members of my voice part. We all have to build on each other while we develop the music, so I have to make sure to do my job as a team player,” Kyllander Nelson (12) said.

Nelson is an eight-year choir veteran who has been in the activity since fifth grade. She has been in the All-District Choir and has been working hard to hone her skills, not just as a singer, but also as a leader. Her preparation for the Fall Music Festival has been to focus on areas where she struggled during rehearsals, asking questions and listening to rehearsal tracks. Nelson said she has more confidence than last year as the Fall Music Festival approaches.

“I feel much more confident than I did last year. During this choir season, I have been trying to build on my confidence and it has helped me realize I am capable of doing all the things I find difficult, like breath support, hitting higher

notes and building relationships with the group,” Nelson said.

Nelson added that her goal is to enjoy singing to the fullest because of her passion for it.

While the choir program is usually filled with experienced members, one individual who is fairly new is Levi Morehouse (11).

“I did not start choir at a young age. I started choir in my sophomore year because I needed a fine arts credit. It was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made. Choir has honestly changed my life. I did not have an interest in choir music until I started choir, so my background in music is very minimal,” Morehouse said.

Morehouse said he prepares for the Fall Music Festival by using the rehearsal time in choir and using time at home to practice. He added that his challenge is trying to manage the time he has each day for everything he does.

“The most challenging part of choir is balancing choir with the rest of school. I have two hours of Chamber Singers rehearsal every week, two hours of theater rehearsal every day and I have to write notes and tutorial request forms for AVID, which certainly does not make doing homework easy,” Morehouse said.

Despite being in such a time crunch every day, Morehouse feels confident within his skill to perform at Orchestra Hall as the Fall Music Festival approaches.

“I feel confident in my performance skills. I’ve been picking up the songs quickly, and my past experience in choir has helped me significantly on the road to the Fall Music Festival,” Morehouse said.

Directing the choir students is Jennifer Rowan, who has 28 years of experience in teaching choir and directing musicals. She said she took every opportunity she could as a student to participate in the performing arts, including band, choir, show choir, piano lessons, music camps and theater.

As a director, Rowan said there are several things she must do to get students ready for the fall performance.

“Preparing the students includes learning the music pitch and rhythm while also understanding the historical concept and a little bit about each piece,” Rowan said.

Rowan said the main challenge she faces in getting ready for the an-

nual event is “trying to nail down the specifics,” including program order, determining soloists and establishing rehearsal time. According to Rowan, it is also important for the choir students to work on the pieces individually outside of class.

One thing Rowan said she has loved about getting ready for the show is the variety of the pieces being performed and the student reaction to each one. In fact, Rowan said she has a hard time deciding which song is her favorite.

“I like them all. Whenever we do one, I always say, ‘This is my favorite,’” Rowan said.

Despite there still being so much progress to be made, Rowan said the choir students will be ready for November 9.

“We are one of the few high schools that perform at Orchestra Hall annually. The program is fresh and exciting, the level of musicianship and performance is high, and the show should not be missed,” Rowan said.

When it comes to Symphony Orchestra, director Kristen Moon said preparations for the event are going as planned.

“Orchestra students are working hard on their music for this performance,” Moon said.

Moon is the new orchestra instructor at Cooper and this is her first year teaching at the school. Moon has been teaching music for 18 years and started doing music by playing the cello in fifth grade. She said there is tremendous talent at Cooper despite the difficulties they have encountered in getting ready for November’s performance.

“There is quite a bit of music for students to learn in a short amount of time,” Moon said.

Moon said that performing with the band and choir is difficult because performing with hundreds of other people is always challenging due to the precise timing needed to execute a good performance. Her preparation for the festival includes having students work with a metronome to stay on beat, and then adjusting the pacing and tuning to eventually match the other performers.

Moon also mentioned that there are more challenges to getting ready for the show than just having students practice.

“There are a lot of logistical pieces that have to be thought through carefully to ensure that the student performers are safe and feel successful,” Moon said.

Moon said her favorite piece to work on so far has been “Hoedown” by Aaron Copland, a classic piece of American music.

“I have played it many times myself and always enjoy performing it, whether it is the string orchestra version or the full symphony version. This is my first time teaching it to a group of orchestra students, and I’ve always wanted to do it,” Moon said.

Moon said that she is fortunate to be working with Symphony, Philharmonic and Freshmen Orchestras because of the talented and dedicated students within each group. She said she feels confident as the Fall Music Festival approaches.

“I do feel confident,” she said. “We have some very impressive musicians here. The orchestra students are also hard-working. They want to be challenged and improve, and that makes my work as a teacher so enjoyable,” Moon said.

Anime *Hunter* hooks viewers with great plot

The popular series lives up to the hype thanks to its engaging approach to storytelling

By CAMILA RODRIGUEZ
Quill staff writer

Hunter x Hunter is a popular anime that stands out because of its strong characters and storytelling. Directed by Hiroshi Kojima and produced by Madhouse, the show follows a young boy named Gon Freecss as he leaves his home to become a Hunter and find his missing father. I chose this show because I enjoy it so much. Even during serious moments, the series has a fun and energetic atmosphere that makes it enjoyable to watch. Some people call *Hunter x Hunter* overhyped or basic because so many people have seen it, but I think that is part of what makes it so good. The series is popular for a reason. Almost anyone can watch it and enjoy the characters, action and story. Overall, *Hunter x Hunter* is an excellent anime because of its memorable characters and engaging storytelling.

The plot introduces viewers to Gon’s journey and the friendships he forms along the way. The story begins on Whale Island, where Gon learns that his father, Ging, is alive and working as a professional Hunter. Hunters are people who take dangerous missions and travel the world. Gon leaves home to take the Hunter exam so he can find his father and follow in his footsteps. Along the way, he becomes friends with Killua and several others who have different goals and personalities. The first part of the series focuses mainly on the Hunter exam and the growing friendships between the main characters.

One of the greatest strengths of *Hunter x Hunter* is its cast of characters. The friendships between Gon, Killua, Kurapika and Leorio feel genuine, which makes viewers care about them more. Gon’s positive personality gives the show a cheerful and energetic tone, while Killua balances it with deeper emotions and humor. Even though the characters face many different challenges, they continue to support one another and grow throughout the series. Their friendships are one of the main reasons so many people enjoy the show and become invested in the characters.

The action and animation are another major highlight of the series. The fight scenes are exciting because each character has unique abilities and uses different strategies. The animation remains smooth and detailed during important moments, making battles more intense and entertaining. The show’s power system, called Nen, is also explained clearly, which makes the fights feel intelligent rather than random. The series incorporates planning and creativity into many battles, helping the action remain interesting throughout the story.

The series also does an excellent job balancing humor and emotional storytelling. Some parts of the story become much darker later on, which surprises many viewers because the show begins with a cheerful and adventurous tone. The soundtrack strengthens emotional scenes and adds energy to action sequences. Even though the anime is extremely popular and is sometimes considered basic, it still feels unique because of the emotional connections it creates with viewers.

Overall, *Hunter x Hunter* is one of the best anime series because of its lovable characters, exciting action and emotional storytelling. The fun energy of the show makes it enjoyable to watch, while the deeper emotional moments keep viewers invested in the story. Although some people believe the anime is overhyped because of its popularity, that popularity reflects how entertaining and well-made it is. Anyone looking for an exciting and uplifting anime should give *Hunter x Hunter* a chance. This series earns five out of five stars.

Memoir about Cambodian genocide has powerful impact

First They Killed My Father, the 2000 book by Loung Ung, is often read in high school English classrooms

By CAMILA RODRIGUEZ
Quill staff writer

First They Killed My Father is a powerful memoir that tells a true story of survival during the Cambodian genocide. Written by Loung Ung and published by Harper Perennial in 2000, the book recounts Ung’s childhood experiences during one of the darkest periods in Cambodian history. I chose this book because I wanted to learn more about a part of history I did not know much about. I also liked that it was written from the perspective of someone who actually experienced these events. I think this is a powerful and emotional book that people should read because it provides an important look at war and survival.

The memoir’s plot follows Loung Ung and her family as they struggle to survive under the Khmer Rouge. The story takes place in Cambodia during the 1970s when the Khmer Rouge takes control of the country. Loung is forced to leave her home with her family and live under harsh conditions. Throughout the first half of the book, Loung and her family struggle to survive while dealing with hunger, fear and separation. Loung’s goal is mainly to stay alive and protect the people she loves. The memoir shows how quickly her normal childhood disappears because of the war.

The book’s first-person point of view makes the story especially powerful. Because the memoir is told through Loung’s eyes as a child, the

events feel more personal and emotional. Readers experience her confusion, fear and sadness in a realistic way. This perspective makes the story easier to connect with and helps readers understand how terrible and frightening the situation was for everyone, especially children.

The memoir’s mood also strengthens its emotional impact. The author creates a serious and emotional atmosphere throughout the book. Many scenes feel tense because readers never know what will happen next to Loung or her family. The descriptions of hunger and fear make the story feel real and help readers understand how difficult life became under Khmer Rouge rule.

The characterization is another

strength of the memoir. Loung changes significantly throughout the story. At the beginning, she behaves like a typical child, but as the war continues, she quickly becomes stronger and more mature. Her family members are also portrayed realistically, which makes readers care about them even more. Their relationships and sacrifices are among the most emotional parts of the book.

First They Killed My Father is an emotional and important memoir. The personal point of view, strong atmosphere and realistic characters make the story memorable. I would definitely recommend this book to people who enjoy historical or emotional stories because it teaches important lessons about war, family and survival. This novel earns five out of five stars.

Premier Performers

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

Levi Christensen

By ALEX SANCHEZ GALINDO
Quill staff writer

For Levi Christensen (12), music is something he is extremely passionate about. Christensen shows off that spirit through the works of art he presents while he is at school.

Christensen has been with the band program ever since his freshman year. Additionally, he more recently got involved in the school's theater program.

"I have been doing band all four years of high school and started theater last year. I did band because I like music and I did theater because I think doing tech is cool," Christensen said.

One of his favorite moments from being in the band program connects to the many trips that the group has gotten to take around the country.



Photo by NATALIE BERG

"My favorite memory for band has to be the Marching Band trip to Washington, D.C. and the Independence Day parade," he said.

As for theater, Christensen said he likes the camaraderie he has with the other people in the program.

"My favorite memory for theater is socializing with some of the cast before and after the play," he said.

Outside of school, Christensen enjoys video games. In fact, he is currently helping someone develop a game of their own.

After finishing up his high school education, Christensen plans to continue working with music.

"After high school, I might continue with music in a different style and I might do tech for a theater," he said.

Currently, Christensen is thinking of attending college for technology.

Guitar class attracts all players

Whether experts or novices, students in Guitar Music Cafe get personalized attention



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Band teacher Markus Hahn first shifted the focus of this music class to learning guitar last school year.

By TYLER GOODMAN
Quill staff writer

The Guitar Music Cafe class has continued for another school year at Cooper and the enrolled students said they are enjoying it.

For the first month of the school year, Markus Hahn, the teacher of both band and the Guitar Music Cafe class, was on leave because of the birth of his child. Josey Gruba was the teacher for all Hahn's classes during that time span. Even though Gruba taught band, she had never before taught guitar.

"This was my first time teaching guitar as a class. At my previous school, I taught a modern band and music production class where I often found myself advising guitar players on some minor technique things during their songwriting process, and at one point, I actually had been a guitar player in the high school band. In both of these cases, however, I wasn't

doing much direct instruction as my students all took guitar lessons outside of school," Gruba said.

Even though she taught music, Gruba said she was still "a little intimidated by the idea of teaching guitar," but still pushed through the class by looking over what the class was going to do and recalling the guitar basics she had learned in middle school.

"I have played guitar very informally since middle school, so I knew the basics. This was, however, the first time I'd used traditional music notation when playing guitar," she said.

Many students said they have enjoyed taking the guitar class. One student, Jaxon Michael (11), said other students should consider signing up for it, even if they do not have a background in guitar.

"I do think other students should take guitar class because it's a very fun experience to learn an instrument and guitar is a very fun instrument to learn. It's very rewarding to hear your-

self improve and get better, learn new songs and play for other people," Michael said.

Many students may have thought of learning guitar but never actually took the time because they did not want to teach themselves or could not get guitar lessons at home. Thanks to Guitar Music Cafe, students can choose to take a guitar class at school.

"I have a whole bunch of guitars at home that I like to play, so I thought it would be a good idea to take an actual guitar class instead of teaching myself," Michael said.

Now that he is back at the helm for the class, Hahn said he enjoys teaching guitar because it is a fun instrument to play and he likes seeing students develop as players.

"I like seeing kids grow as musicians and gain confidence. Guitar is a fun instrument to play and I truly enjoy helping others learn it," Hahn said.

Grace Marie Page

By KEKELI DADZIE
Quill staff writer

For Grace Marie Page (12), art is more than a class on her schedule, it is a way to express herself, communicate meaningful ideas and explore her perspective on the world.

Page, who has taken IB/AP art for two years, did not initially choose the subject out of a lifelong passion. Instead, she began taking the class because it was part of the International Baccalaureate diploma program. What started as a requirement, however, became an opportunity for personal expression.

"What I've most enjoyed about it so far is I found a new way to express myself," Page said.

That expression has allowed Page to create artwork addressing serious so-



Photo by NATALIE BERG

cial issues. One of her most memorable experiences came when she created a work about police brutality.

"My favorite memory is when I made a police brutality piece and [art teacher] Ms. Mielke almost cried," Page said.

The reaction left an impression on Page. For her, the experience showed that creative work can communicate messages that go beyond words. Page also finds a similar outlet in her favorite school subjects: art and English. She said both classes give her room to explore ideas and share her perspective.

Outside of the classroom, she enjoys spending time at the lake watching the sunset and playing basketball.

Looking ahead, Page plans to play basketball in college and pursue a major related to law.

Marching Band enjoys State Fair performance

In addition to playing in a parade, the group appeared on a KARE11 news segment

By TYLER GOODMAN
Quill staff writer

The Cooper Marching Band performed at the Minnesota State Fair and made an appearance on KARE11 news on September 4.

Members of the Marching Band said they performed well in both street marching and while appearing on the news. One member of the Marching Band, JJ DeGroot (11), said that the television performance was a particular highlight.

"It is always super fun being on TV and showing the state what the Cooper Hawks band is capable of," he said.

Agreeing with DeGroot is Zach Cummings (11).

"Playing for KARE11 was one of my highlights at the state fair," he said.

For the Marching Band musicians, one aspect of their performance in street marching they were most concerned about involved their choreography.

"I think the band did well at the state fair and, overall, looked like we knew what we were doing," Cummings said.

Meanwhile, DeGroot pointed out the weather as a challenge on the day of the performances.

"We did really good for the conditions we were given. It was super hot but the band still prevailed," he said.

The marchers were not the only ones that said the performances went well. One of the Marching Band directors, Caryn Cummings, said the group did a good job of representing the school.

"The band did a fantastic job both marching at the Minnesota State Fair and performing at the KARE11 Barn for the 5 o'clock newscast. They showed perseverance marching in the high heat and humidity and represented themselves, the band and the school well," she said.

Given that the performances took place so early in the season, many band members said they were worried about going through rehearsals too quickly. Even though they thought they were going too fast, most marchers agreed that they felt ready for the fair.

"I do think that the band was prepared enough to march, but we

could always be better," DeGroot said.

Some of the difficulties in rehearsal were related to the absence of Markus Hahn, who is the main director of not only Marching Band, but all Cooper bands. Hahn was on paternity leave during first quarter following the birth of his second child.

"This year, there were some obstacles that the band had to work through. Mr. Hahn welcomed his second child and took a leave to enjoy this time with his family," Caryn Cummings said.

Despite these challenges, Caryn Cummings said that the band's performance went well. Specifically, she said it was the personality, community and sense of ownership that the musicians brought to the state fair that impressed her.

"The highlight of the band is not the end performance, but the community they have, the ownership they take in getting there and the support given to others so they can do their best as well. These students are genuinely fun to be around and make the experience quite enjoyable," Caryn Cummings said.

Wyatt Dean

By KEKELI DADZIE
Quill staff writer

Wyatt Dean (12) is in his third year of Concert Choir and Chamber Singers. In fact, Dean has been singing since fifth grade, when he joined the All-District Choir. That experience sparked a lasting interest in music and performing.

"I've always loved being a part of performing and making music," Dean said.

While both ensembles give him opportunities to sing, each offers a different experience. Dean said he enjoys the large-scale performances of Concert Choir, especially when weeks of practice finally pay off. Meanwhile, Chamber Singers allows him to work closely with a smaller group of dedicated musicians.

"I love having a concentrated



Photo by NATALIE BERG

group of people that are passionate about music," he said.

Through Chamber Singers, Dean has performed at venues that include the Marriott Hotel and the St. Paul Landmark Center. As the school year continues, he said this group will be busy with teacher Christmas caroling, Valegrams and other performances.

As for Concert Choir, Dean has a leadership role as the tenor section leader for the group.

Outside of the music room, Dean enjoys snowboarding, playing guitar and baseball. He also has an interest in anatomy, a subject that appeals to his curiosity about the human body and how it works.

After graduation, Dean will attend the University of Wisconsin, the University of Michigan or Iowa State University to study civil engineering.

Candice Bimberg

By ALEX SANCHEZ GALINDO
Quill staff writer

Candice Bimberg (12) has been playing instruments including the flute ever since she got her start in fifth grade. Currently, she is in Marching Band.

"I started band in fifth grade because it seemed fun," she said. "I joined the Marching Band my freshman year because my friends were interested in it and it influenced me to join as well."

Her enjoyment of creativity is seen not only in her band classes, but in her clay class as well.

"For band, I like to play the music we are given, especially when it's something I know, so when I'm playing it, I can tell what the lyrics are when I'm playing or not," she said. "In clay, I like making stuff on the wheel and seeing it



Photo by NATALIE BERG

be an everyday item."

Bimberg's many years of work in band has led to her having a leadership role this year.

"I am the flute section leader in Marching Band. It is going good. I have to help make sure us flutes know and can play everything good," Bimberg said.

Outside of school, Bimberg said she enjoys crocheting in her free time.

"I usually watch a TV show or movie while I do it," she said.

Looking ahead to life after high school, Bimberg plans to attend a local college to major in something related to psychology, but she is "not 100 percent sure" if she will. After graduating, she hopes to continue doing clay but will likely not continue with the Marching Band as "it is not something [she sees herself] doing anymore."

STUDENT WORK ON FALL PLAY GETS UNDERWAY continued from page 2

behind. The people in the productions are like family and no one ever wants to lose their family," Nogle said.

Many people who are in theater consider their fellow castmates and crew members as their second family. Many people join not just for the experience of performing on stage, but to meet new people.

"I like to meet new people and get a new experience," Aki-ane Willis (11) said.

Willis is another returning performer who pointed out that the people in theater act like they are a family.

"My experience has been amazing. The cast is so kind and welcoming," Willis said.

Some people join theater not for grand reasons, but rather for simple ones. Levi Christensen (12) is a person who joined in order to learn more about the behind-the-scene aspects of theater.

"I joined to do tech because I think it's cool," Christensen said.

The background workers play an important role contributing to the show. According to Christensen, the best way to describe them is like the sky. The actors are like the stars, while the tech crew and managers are like the sky that holds the stars. So, if you ever want to be a part of a big project without being the center of attention, Christensen said theater has options you may like.

When it comes to watch-

ing the fall play, the director had many reasons why audiences should attend.

"People should attend the fall play because it is a fun opportunity to see a great story like *The Odyssey* be interpreted by students who have such special and unique abilities for storytelling. They can expect suspense, humor and heart," Alamilla said.

According to Alamilla, the show will not just have a different Odysseus in every new scene, the plot of the play will be influenced by the students themselves. So, if you want to see a unique, one-of-a-kind show done at Cooper, Alamilla and the show's cast and crew hope to see you in the auditorium on December 2-5.

Coogler wows viewers with brilliant *Sinners*

A year after its release, the award-winning film is worth re-watching thanks to its plot, performances, production design



Photo by WARNER BROS. PICTURES

Michael B. Jordan masterfully plays twin brothers Smoke and Stack in the film, which takes place in Mississippi in the 1930s.

By ANAS ABDIRAHMAN
Quill staff writer

Sinners, released on April 16, 2025, was written and directed by Ryan Coogler and notably stars Michael B. Jordan in the dual role of twin brothers. Set in 1930s Mississippi, *Sinners* is a vampire horror film that follows two brothers returning home to open a juke joint, only to have their plans disrupted by a supernatural threat. Although *Sinners* is an incredibly entertaining horror film, its most notable feature is its soundtrack and the symbolic role music plays throughout the story. The film uses music as a unifying and liberating force for people who have been exploited and forced to create their own community in a world that does not welcome them.

The film’s story combines supernatural horror with the realities of racial oppression in the Jim Crow South. Set in 1932 Mississippi, *Sinners* follows twin brothers Smoke and Stack, both played by Michael B. Jordan, as they return home from Chicago with plans to start fresh by opening a juke joint. Their effort to build a safe haven for their community is soon disrupted by both the harsh realities of racism and the arrival of an ancient supernatural evil.

The opening scene establishes the film’s mythology while emphasizing the importance of music. During the opening sequence, Annie, the estranged wife of Smoke, delivers an eerie voice-over explaining that certain people possess the ability to create music so powerful that it pierces the veil between life and death, connecting the past, present and future. According to Annie, these gifted musicians can bring healing to their communities, but their abilities also attract dangerous forces. This scene effectively establishes the film’s horror atmosphere while introducing music as a central theme. Sammie, another major character, is revealed to possess this gift. The film’s original mythology is refreshing and helps ground its supernatural elements in a unique world, allowing it to stand out from other vampire films.

The film’s sound design demonstrates how music and audio effects work together to build tension and suspense. One of the earliest examples occurs during a confrontation between Annie and the recently transformed vampire Smoke. Annie

throws a jar of pickled garlic at him, and the moment it strikes his face, a sharp sizzling sound accompanies his scream of pain as he flees the house. While Annie explains that the creatures are vampires rather than haints, dramatic guitar music swells in the background. This scene demonstrates that every aspect of sound design contributes to the film’s impact, not just the soundtrack. The combination of sound effects, dialogue and music builds anticipation for the climactic battle that follows later in the film.

The film’s most powerful use of music occurs during Sammie’s performance of the original song “I Lied to You.” As Sammie sings about hiding his love for blues music from his father, a preacher who condemns secular music, the performance transforms into a visual celebration of cultural connection. During the sequence, Sammie is joined by West African dancers, spiritual performers, musicians from different eras and cultures, a futuristic guitarist, a traditional Chinese dancer and a modern breakdancer. This is one of the most visually stunning and emotionally powerful scenes in the film. Sammie’s passion for

music symbolically connects him to both his ancestors and the future of Black musical expression. The scene reinforces the idea that music can unite people while helping them connect with their history. This theme is especially significant for Black Americans, whose connection to many West African traditions was disrupted by slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Music and dance remain important cultural links, and similarities between traditional West African dance and modern Black American dance styles demonstrate the enduring influence of those traditions.

Ultimately, *Sinners* uses music to explore how people can come together despite their differences to create something greater than themselves. The film’s soundtrack and sound design support conversations about culture, identity and community while strengthening its horror elements. I thoroughly enjoyed *Sinners* and have never seen a film quite like it. Its largely original approach to the vampire genre makes it stand out among modern horror films. *Sinners* may ultimately prove to be Ryan Coogler’s finest work. I give this film an enthusiastic five out of five stars.

The film selected for review is *The Black Phone*, directed by Scott Derrickson and released on January 21, 2022. I chose this film because of its compelling blend of supernatural horror and grounded, coming-of-age drama. Additionally, the premise of a serial killer communicating with victims through a supernatural phone offers a fresh take on the horror genre that I was eager to explore. *The Black Phone* intertwines supernatural horror with a coming-of-age story while using atmosphere and character development to explore resilience and the search for connection in the face of terror.

The Black Phone is about a shy, 13-year-old boy named Finney. After being abducted by a sadistic masked serial killer known as “The Grabber,” Finney is held captive in a soundproof basement. He discovers a disconnected black rotary phone that allows him to communicate with the killer’s previous victims, who guide him as he attempts to plan his escape. The film firmly belongs to the horror genre, specifically the supernatural thriller subgenre. One scene that clearly demonstrates this occurs when Finney first hears the disconnected black phone ringing in the basement and the Grabber’s voice begins to speak through it. This moment uses suspense and the uncanny to create psychological dread and fear of the unknown. The idea of a phone ringing without a connection, followed by a voice believed to belong to a dead victim, taps into a deep sense of unease and supernatural fear. This scene effectively places the viewer in Finney’s situation, generating sustained tension and anticipation for what might happen next.

An important filmmaking technique in *The Black Phone* is synchronous sound, which is especially evident during Finney’s escape attempt from the basement. In this scene, Finney scrapes at the wall with a brick while the diegetic sound of his efforts emphasizes the realism and urgency of his situation. The sudden silence when he stops, followed by the sound of the Grabber’s footsteps above or approaching the door, heightens the sense of danger. This use of synchronous sound intensifies the scene’s tension and makes Finney’s fear and desperation more immediate and immersive for the viewer.

The central message of the film emphasizes inner strength, resilience and the power of connection even in extreme circumstances. This theme is most clearly shown when Finney begins to fight back against the Grabber after receiving guidance from the killer’s previous victims through the black phone. Using their advice alongside his own growing courage, he is able to confront and ultimately escape his captor. This scene demonstrates how Finney transforms from a victim into a survivor by internalizing the lessons of others and discovering his own will to live. I agree with this message because it highlights how courage can develop under pressure and how support from others, even indirectly, can become a source of strength.

In conclusion, *The Black Phone* successfully combines supernatural horror with a coming-of-age narrative to reinforce its themes of resilience and connection. Overall, I found the film highly engaging due to its suspenseful storytelling, emotional depth and Ethan Hawke’s unsettling performance as the Grabber. Scott Derrickson’s direction balances horror with meaningful character growth, making me interested in exploring more of his work within the genre. *The Black Phone* earns four out of five stars.

First *Black Phone* far superior to recent sequel

Film couples tropes of horror genre with compelling themes about inner strength

By MOSES BLAMA
Quill staff writer

Original *Grown Ups* shows that silliness never gets old

Adam Sandler surrounds himself with former castmates from *Saturday Night Live* in this famous 2010 family comedy

By AMARI JONES
Quill staff writer

The movie *Grown Ups* was directed by Dennis Dugan and released on June 25, 2010. I chose this film because it is one of my favorite movies from childhood due to its humor and talented cast, which includes Adam Sandler, Kevin James, Chris Rock, David Spade and Rob Schneider. The movie explores themes of friendship, family and nostalgia, offering humorous yet heartfelt moments that demonstrate how childhood bonds can remain strong throughout adulthood. *Grown Ups* is a comedy that uses humor and relatable characters to explore the lasting power of friendship and the importance of cherishing family relationships.

The plot centers on five lifelong friends who reunite after the death of their childhood basketball coach. Bringing their families to a lakeside cabin for the July 4 weekend, the men reminisce about their youth while navigating midlife insecurities, marital challenges and the realities of raising spoiled children. As the weekend unfolds, the group disconnects from the pressures of everyday life, rediscovers the simple joys of friendship and eventually faces their childhood rivals in a basketball rematch.



Photo by COLUMBIA PICTURES

A third *Grown Ups* film is currently in the works for a Netflix release in 2027.

One scene that effectively demonstrates the film’s comedic style is the belly flop contest at the lake. While spending time with their families, the friends decide to compete in a belly flop competition, laughing and encouraging one another despite the painful-looking stunts. This scene reflects the comedy genre because it is lighthearted, humorous and centered on the characters’ playful interactions. The focus on humor and carefree fun creates an entertaining situation that encourages laughter from the audience. The scene also reinforces the film’s comedic tone and highlights the strong companionship among

the characters. As a result, viewers are left feeling amused while recognizing the characters’ ability to find joy in everyday situations.

The basketball game scene showcases the film’s energetic cinematography and helps emphasize the friends’ renewed connection. During the game at the lake house, the camera uses a variety of angles and quick cuts to capture both the athletic competition and the playful nature of the event. High-angle shots allow viewers to see the entire game, while tracking shots and rapid editing follow the action and maintain a sense of excitement. The cinematography immerses viewers

in the game and makes them feel as though they are part of the action. This visual approach reinforces the fun atmosphere of the scene and highlights the characters’ rekindled friendship.

The film’s central message is that friendship and family are more important than career success or material wealth. This message is evident when the main characters, all of whom have achieved varying levels of success but still feel unfulfilled, reunite for their coach’s funeral. Throughout the weekend, they spend time reminiscing, playing games and reconnecting with both one another and their families. These experiences remind them of the happiness and support that meaningful relationships provide. By the end of the film, the characters recognize that strong family ties and lasting friendships are essential to living a fulfilling life.

Overall, *Grown Ups* effectively uses humor and relatable characters to highlight the enduring strength of friendship and the importance of valuing family connections. I enjoyed watching *Grown Ups* because it is both funny and heartwarming. Dennis Dugan successfully balances comedy with emotional moments, and I would consider watching other films he has directed. *Grown Ups* deserves four out of five stars.

Hawks seek school, sports balance

The phrase "student-athlete" emphasizes the importance of each term to team members



Photo by TYLER GOODMAN

Student-athletes often juggle the demands of the classroom with the desire to compete on the field.

By JAYLA FLETCHER
Quill staff writer

For many high school students, the school day does not end when the final bell rings. Instead, it marks the beginning of another set of responsibilities, from fall sports practices and athletic competitions to homework, tests and projects. For student-athletes, finding a balance between academics and athletics requires discipline, planning and an understanding of personal limits.

According to head girls cross country coach Chris DiSalvi, maintaining a balance between academics and athletics begins with establishing expectations early in the season. He reminds his athletes that their responsibilities as students take priority over their commitments to the team.

"During cross country and track seasons, I make it a point to remind student-athletes at the beginning of the year that they are students before athletes," DiSalvi said.

DiSalvi said he has not needed to implement rigid academic requirements, such as mandatory study halls, for his athletes. Instead, he works with students who need additional time to complete assignments or prepare for exams.

"If a student does need to miss practice to get caught up on work in class, I definitely give them that time to do what is necessary to get caught up," DiSalvi said.

One thing DiSalvi said helps him monitor student academic progress is that he can access students' grades to check on those who may be struggling. If a student needs more structure or support, he can schedule them for Hawk Connections, which provides "an opportunity for additional academic guidance."

For athletes who leave school early for competitions, keeping up with assignments often starts before the competition day arrives. Zach Cummings (11), who participates in cross country, Nordic skiing and ultimate Frisbee, tries to communicate with teachers ahead of time so missed classes do not create unnecessary academic stress.

"I handle missing classes on competition days by asking my teachers what I'll miss ahead of time, usually the day before, so I can get the work done ahead of time at home," Cummings said.

By completing assignments in advance, Cummings said he can focus on competing without worrying as much about unfinished schoolwork. His approach also requires him to take responsibility for knowing what is happening in each class, even when he is away.

Meanwhile, Zane Halstead (12), who competes in cross country, Nordic skiing and ultimate Frisbee, uses a similar strategy. He requests assignments before leaving school whenever possible, allowing him to work independently and keep up with class expectations.

"Most of the time, I ask for the work in advance so I can do it on my own time or I just put in a lot more effort the next time I'm in class,"

Halstead said.

While both athletes plan ahead, they also recognize that schedules do not always work perfectly. According to Halstead, communicating with teachers, keeping track of assignments and recognizing which tasks require immediate attention can help prevent missed class time from turning into a larger academic problem.

Even with careful planning, student-athletes can find themselves facing several important responsibilities at once. Homework, athletic commitments, exams and personal activities may compete for the same limited hours. Halstead said he manages these demands by mentally organizing his schedule and deciding which tasks deserve attention first.

"I avoid feeling overloaded by mapping out in my head what I should be doing and when while weighing the value of the task I should be doing," Halstead said.

Halstead said he uses this method to identify his most important responsibilities. If he cannot complete everything on his list, he aims to finish the tasks that will have the greatest impact.

"This helps me make sure I'm getting the most important things done first, so in the event I can't do everything I have to do, I still get the best possible value out of it," Halstead said.

"I avoid feeling overloaded by mapping out in my head what I should be doing and when while weighing the value of the task I should be doing," Zane Halstead (12) said.

This strategy reflects an important part of time management: recognizing that being busy does not necessarily mean being productive. Halstead said that students who prioritize assignments based on deadlines, difficulty and importance may be better prepared to handle especially demanding weeks.

In contrast, Cummings said he faces the challenge of having multiple commitments by setting aside time to relax before beginning homework. Rather than moving directly from a full school day into another round of responsibilities, he gives himself a short break to recharge.

"To avoid feeling overloaded between my school and sports commitments, I try to take at least half an hour every day to spend time doing something chill before doing homework, like playing games with my friends, to help myself focus and wind down after the day," Cummings said.

Another issue faced by student-athletes is the stress of balancing academics and athletics. Students may experience stress when an important test falls near a competition or when several assignments are due during a demanding stretch of the season.

"Some of the ways I manage my stress when my sports and academics conflict is to set aside time to wind down and hang out with my friends to de-stress myself, so I can focus better on my class work after a sporting event," Cummings said.

Halstead also makes relaxation a regular part of his routine. He sets aside approximately 30 minutes to an

hour each day for activities he enjoys, including watching television, playing video games or spending time outdoors.

"It can be hard managing stress, but my method is taking about a half hour to an hour each day to do something enjoyable such as watch a show or play video games," Halstead said.

What is more, Halstead said he finds that walking and biking outdoors are two activities that help him decompress. These pastimes provide him with a change of pace from schoolwork and organized sports without adding another demanding commitment to his schedule.

From a coaching perspective, DiSalvi said he recognizes that student-athletes need opportunities to rest. He said he pays attention to the academic calendar and considers how school events and competitions affect students' energy levels. For example, when a cross country meet fell on the day before homecoming this season, DiSalvi decided to give athletes a day off from practice. What is more, if a student needs a day at home for personal reasons, he generally allows the athlete to take the day off.

"If a student-athlete is telling me they need a day at home because of personal reasons, I almost always let that student take the day off without any questions asked," DiSalvi said.

Although coaches make an effort to avoid wearing out their athletes, the athletes themselves may struggle with forcing themselves to get enough rest. In fact, among the many responsibilities student-athletes must

manage, sleep can be one of the easiest to sacrifice. Both Cummings and Halstead said they make an effort to protect their sleep schedules, understanding that rest is an important part of handling their busy days.

"During competition season, I try to set aside roughly seven-to-eight hours a day to sleep," Cummings said.

To make that possible, he sets timers while doing homework so he does not spend too long on assignments and uses alarms in the morning to ensure he wakes up for school.

Cummings' strategy combines a goal for sleep with practical reminders to keep his schedule on track. Instead of allowing homework to continue indefinitely into the night, he uses time limits to encourage himself to work efficiently.

Meanwhile, Halstead takes a more direct approach by establishing a consistent bedtime.

"The best way I can get sleep is to set a strict bedtime to make sure I get around eight hours of sleep or so and sleep in on the weekends," Halstead said.

The need for student-athletes to find a balance between their school work, their sports commitments and their personal lives outside of school can help them develop skills that will benefit them in the future. According to DiSalvi, students learn how to set goals, work through challenges and make responsible decisions.

"I want students to know that they can do hard things," DiSalvi said.

Cooper Competitors

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

Babucarr Camara

By JAYLA FLETCHER
Quill staff writer

Babucarr Camara (12) has been playing football since his freshman year. After joining the team, Camara found enjoyment in both the competition and the friendships he has formed along the way.

"I joined to compete against others and have fun," Camara said.

Some of Camara's favorite memories from football include summer practices and his performance this season. While competition is an important part of the sport, the relationships he has built with his teammates have also made football memorable.

"I've enjoyed the friendships formed through the sport as well as the physical competition," he said.

After football season, Camara is

considering different ways to stay active during the winter. He may participate in wrestling or spend time in the weight room. In the spring, Camara plans to return to track and compete in shot put.

Outside of athletics, Camara enjoys reading and watching television shows. In school, his favorite classes are government and chemistry because he finds the subjects interesting.

Looking toward the future, Camara will attend a four-year college and study chemical engineering. He hopes to eventually pursue a career in that field.

Although Camara is unsure what his athletic future will look like after high school, he hopes to continue participating in sports.

"I hope to continue some type of sport out of high school as a hobby and physical activity," Camara said.



Photo by JOCELYNN VANG

Dadjuah Karmo

By JAYLA FLETCHER
Quill staff writer

Dadjuah Karmo (12) has become a dedicated three-sport athlete, playing football in the fall, basketball in the winter and track in the spring. For Karmo, playing multiple sports gives him different challenges and opportunities to grow.

Karmo started playing football during his sophomore year after his cousin encouraged him to join. He wanted to try something new and challenge himself in a sport he had never played before.

"I enjoy playing multiple sports because they challenge me in different ways and help me grow as an athlete," Karmo said.

As a senior, Karmo has also taken on a leadership role with the football team. He helps lead the defensive ends

by teaching younger players the basics and putting them through drills when a coach is not there.

Karmo's favorite football memories include recording three sacks in a game, scoring two touchdowns against Park Center and leading his team in tackles and sacks. However, it is the relationships with his teammates that mean the most to him.

"The brotherhood we have built as a team" is what Karmo said he enjoys most about football. After football season, Karmo plays basketball and plans to compete in track during the spring.

Outside of sports, Karmo enjoys spending time with his family and going to church.

Looking ahead, Karmo plans to attend college and major in business management. He also hopes to continue playing football at the college level.



Photo by JOCELYNN VANG

Andrew Moe

By YUUKONG LEE
Quill staff writer

He is a big fella who plays football in the fall, esports in the winter and baseball in the spring. If you guessed that person is Andrew Moe (12), then you are correct.

Moe has been playing football since he started in his sophomore year.

"What gets me going is seeing the varsity players raising their jerseys. It makes me feel good and powerful," he said.

What Moe specifically likes about football is "being able to level a person."

"It feels good to tackle someone, though I'm not a violent person off the field," he said.

In the winter, Moe is on the esports team. He is a three-time ranked player in *Celestial* and a one-time ranked player

in *One Above All*.

"Being upfront, I usually and normally help my team, but we have new talent on the way. I have faith in my teammates," he said.

In the spring, Moe is in baseball, where he serves as the wall, catching balls and throwing to the other guys on the team.

"Cooper isn't the best baseball team on the planet, but I've got faith we can capture at least 10 wins," he said.

Outside of school, Moe likes to lift weights, play video games and make friends.

"I'm not a scary guy. Please don't feel afraid of me. But if you want to talk, you'll find me with matching color outfits," he said.

After high school, Moe hopes to go to college for business and play sports.



Photo by JOCELYNN VANG

Dylan Vang

By YUUKONG LEE
Quill staff writer

In the fall he plays football and in spring he plays volleyball. Can you guess who he is? Yes, it is Dylan Vang (12).

What brought him into football is his family, which convinced him to join the school's team in freshman year. What Vang enjoys about football is that it pushes him to be the best.

"Playing football is not something that is easy," he said.

One of Vang's favorite memories in football is when they celebrate a big play.

"Hearing the crowd cheer and seeing my coaches happy is really what drives me and gets me going," he said.

Being a leader is tough work for Vang as he and the other seniors have to be the example for the younger players.

"We are doing good, but we can always be better, for sure," he said.

During the winter, it is straight into the weight room so Vang can get stronger for the spring season, which is volleyball. Vang said he is excited for next season as they won the conference championship last year. He said he is ready to translate all that energy into this year as well.

Vang's main hobby outside of school is baking.

"I love baking sweets like cookies, brownies, banana bread or just cooking in general," he said.

Vang also likes photography because he can "capture every emotion all at once with a single snap," he said.

Vang's plan after high school is to attend college for either football or volleyball with a scholarship. If he does not get an offer, he will start at a community college and then transfer to a four-year school.



Photo by JOCELYNN VANG