



New teachers make transition into working at Cooper
Page 3

Weight room offers Hawks access to exercise equipment
Page 7



ALSO INSIDE

News



Cooper Cares fights hunger
The September 20 volunteering event at Feed My Starving Children gave students a chance to give back to their community

Page 2

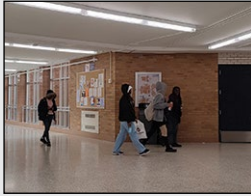
News



Robotics team seeks members
The Thingamajiggers, a team that has had national success, is looking forward to a competitive 2022-2023 season

Page 3

Opinion



Truancy reaches troubling levels
Whether it is in-school or out-of-school truancy, large numbers of students are missing class time at an alarming rate

Page 4

Variety



Classic Noire has cinematic feel
Moody game lets the player become a Los Angeles police detective in a story set during the film noir era of the 1940s

Page 5

Sports



Hawks balance athletics, classes
Coaches and players agree that the challenges of doing a sport can have a positive impact on a student's academic performance

Page 8

BLOOD DRIVE ATTRACTS DOZENS OF NEW DONORS



Photo by MS. LIESER

Sophia Berg (12) is one Cooper student who took part in the first Cooper blood drive of the 2022-2023 school year.

By CHIMUAL VANG
Quill staff writer

Cooper hosted its first blood drive of the year on October 3. Approximately 70 students and staff members volunteered to donate blood during the event. A blood drive is a charitable act in which a group of people come together to donate blood to aid those in need. Since blood is not a product that can be formed artificially in a lab, it is important

that blood drives can provide enough of a supply for such a life-saving necessity. "Most people I believe donate because they have gone through a similar experience with either themselves or a loved one that needed a donation," blood drive organizer and AVID coordinator Ms. Lieser said. The requirements to be a donor at the Cooper event were that people must be at least 16 years old. If a student was not 16, they needed to get a parent consent form signed. However,

if they were 17 years old or above, they did not need a form and could legally donate after passing the health check up that is required before donating. Cooper's blood drive was organized by the National Honor Society (NHS) along with the American Red Cross. The drive took place in the school auditorium. There will be additional blood drives occurring at Cooper on December 22 and March 6, 2023. "I like how you can find

out where your blood is being used or sent to for aid after you've donated," social studies teacher and NHS advisor Ms. Kilsdonk said. Students who are considering donating blood at a future drive are encouraged to get hydrated beforehand so it is easier to visibly see their vascular system. Hydration allows your veins to be more visible to prevent any difficulty for the needle's injection. Future donors should also have a full stomach of healthy

Nearly 70 people took part in the October 3 event, which will be followed by two more drives this year

food so that when they donate blood, they won't become light-headed or feel uneasy when extraction begins. Additionally, volunteers should have enough iron in their body so they can increase the quality of their blood when donating. After donating, it is recommended that people avoid any physical activity as their body is recovering. Donors should also drink plenty of water to sustain their body so that it can reproduce red blood cells and prevent possible anemia, nausea and other side effects related to lack of blood in the body. Finally, eating a healthy meal after one donates is recommended to keep the body sustained. Helping with this is the fact that snacks are provided by the Red Cross. "The National Honors Society and Red Cross volunteers can help you answer any questions if needed to help you donate, deal with needles, or even how to check what blood type you have," Lieser said. Looking ahead, the March 6 blood drive will be dedicated to former Cooper employee Jane Bockhaus, who passed away in 2021. Lieser said that Bockhaus was a staff member who helped lead many past school blood drives. Lieser said she was a staff member who was known for her "support and kindness." "She is remembered for her unwavering passion and she didn't hesitate to help others," Lieser said.

Nelson named Cooper assistant principal

After years as an English teacher and administrative intern in the building, Nelson moved into his new position this summer



Photo by SHENG VANG

Nelson said he enjoys the chance to continue working with Cooper students.

By DAMARIUS HAMILTON
Quill staff writer

Mr. Nelson has been promoted to the position of assistant principal (AP) starting this school year. He is taking over the AP position previously held by Mr. Howard, who has become the school's activities director. Cooper Head Principal Mr. Herman said Nelson was the one chosen to be

promoted due to his relationships with the school's students and staff. "He loves the kids," Herman said. "He loves it here and he wants and deserves it the most." While a head principal oversees the entire school, APs are usually assigned to one specific grade. This year, Nelson oversees the tenth graders. Nelson said he has had a "complicated" journey on his way to working in education. In fact, Nelson wasn't always in education. He started as a radio and television communications major and he wanted to be on the radio. He eventually graduated college with a speech and communications degree. Nelson first got into education when he went to Japan and taught English, after which he came back to the United States and got his teaching license. He then worked on getting a master's degree in education and, shortly after that, he got his principal's license. "I was in college for 16 years," he said. As he was working on his master's degree and his administrator's license, he was also working at Cooper. Nelson did his student teaching at Cooper and was soon hired to be a substitute. Shortly after that, he got a job as an English teacher at Cooper, and he taught English 9 and English 12 for eight years. After eight years of teaching, Nelson served as an administrative intern for three years before he finally got to the position he is in now. Nelson stated his goal as the new AP is to create more community so that Cooper is "a place where kids and staff can feel as if they belong." "If more kids feel like they belong, they will engage in classes more and we can make classes more rigorous," he said. In addition to overseeing the sophomore students, Nelson works with teaching and learning, PLC meetings, staff evaluations, evening supervision, the SAT, attendance, the Coaches Corner, the school supervision schedule, Hawk Lunch and Learn, the school registration guide, the graduation ceremony and new student orientation.

College Knowledge Month guided Hawks toward future

While underclassmen dealt with college issues in advisory, seniors had a chance to apply to schools during their English classes

By DAMARIUS HAMILTON
Quill staff writer

Cooper just wrapped up the school's 2022 College Knowledge Month. This annual series of events, which take place throughout October, is designed to get ninth, tenth and 11th graders to start thinking about college, while 12th graders take important steps in applying to college. "It's mainly for seniors but we like to have activities for all grade levels," student counselor Ms. Hough said. "It's typically a month when we emphasize the college application process and planning for after high school. It's in October because that's prior to any application deadlines and many colleges waive their application fees for the month." As part of College Knowledge Month, Hough

scheduled all seniors to work with her on their college applications during their English classes over the last two weeks of October. "I also did a parent informational presentation for senior parents to go over the process," Hough said. Additional events occurred in October through Cooper's College and Career Center. "In October, we've had a number of colleges visit the College and Career Center to meet with students," Hough said. Although the focus was primarily on seniors, Hough said students in other grades had activities geared toward them during advisory. "For other grades, we're having contests like quizzes and scavenger hunts for the opportunity to win college gear," Hough said. Helping Hough create and lead the many col-

lege-related events in October were Ms. Warndahl from the College and Career Center, AVID coordinator Ms. Lieser and Mr. Emery from the Get Ready program. Together, this group worked hard to get students to think more about their futures. "It's important for students to know what their options are after high school and to know what they need to do get to those options," Hough said. While the official events of College Knowledge Month have come to a close, Hough emphasized that Cooper offers supports throughout the school year to students planning for what comes next after graduating. "Just because there is a focus on college knowledge in October, that doesn't mean there aren't resources to get questions answered and get assistance during other times of the year," Hough said.

New counselors work to support their students

Three long-time counselors moved on from Cooper after last year

By JESSE GARCIA
Quill staff writer

Cooper has new counselors for the ninth, 10th and 11th grade students. Each took a different path to end up at Cooper and they each have something to offer to their students.

According to fellow counselor Ms. Hough, who works with Cooper's seniors, her new colleagues have a "great work ethic." Additionally, she said she has confidence in their ability to accomplish great things for Cooper and its students.

Ms. Bivona

This year's ninth graders were welcomed to Cooper by their new counselor, Ms. Bivona. She is someone with a large amount of experience teaching and working with students.

Bivona went to school at the University of Minnesota. Once she was done, she went to Madrid in Spain and started teaching English. In Spain, she said she found her "passion" for working with high schoolers, but she eventually decided to come back to America.

Upon her return, Bivona started to work as a substitute teacher in an attempt to make money so she could afford living on her own. Soon after, Bivona got a job at a charter school in Los Angeles. It was at this school that Bivona said she found her "love for counseling."

"I learned to work with and really care for students," she said.

After that, Bivona got a job in Plymouth as a counselor. That eventually brought her to the counseling position at Cooper.

During a typical day of work, Bivona said she sees roughly 25-50 kids. Most of these visits relate to schedule changes.

Outside of work, Bivona said she has a real love for dogs and wolves, she enjoys her time alone, and she values self-care and mental health.

Mr. Meyers

This year's 10th graders have Mr. Meyers as their counselor. Meyers went to Luther College for schooling and he has had past experiences at Cooper. In fact, he said he has had two internships at Cooper in the past, which gives him a deeper connection to, and understanding of, the Cooper community.

Meyers said he has been spending the opening weeks of the school year connecting with the new students and trying to figure out which students require the most support.

"I'm here to support the students and want to help guide them to be their best self when possible," he said.

Outside of counseling, Meyers describes himself as a person who values his time with his family. He also mentioned that he likes Harry Potter.

Ms. Walters

The third new counselor is Ms. Walters, who was assigned to this year's 11th graders. She is a counselor with a long history as a counselor. In fact, this is her eighth year in this line of work.

In her adolescence, Walters went to Litchfield High School, followed by getting an undergraduate degree at St. Cloud State University. Additionally, she said she comes from a family where her father is a teacher.

Walters has done volunteer work in the past. She also said she is a big advocate for mental health awareness. To help spread that interest, Walters said she is attempting to plan a mental health day for students.

Over the last month, Walters said that she is getting a large influx of kids coming in due to "schedule changes and new students." However, she added that it "should slow down" in the coming weeks. She emphasized that she is attempting to really get to know her juniors this year.

Walters' interests outside of work are dogs and music.

Cooper Cares volunteers fight hunger

The September 20 event at Feed My Starving Children gave students a chance to give back to their community



Photo by MS. GEISE

Scheduling issues led to the Cooper Cares event being shifted away from district elementary schools.

By SHENG VANG
Quill staff writer

Cooper students participated in the Cooper Cares event at Feed My Starving Children (FMSC) on September 20 to give back to the community.

"Cooper Cares is really any service done by the school," Ms. Geise, Student Council advisor,

said.

There are typically three big days of Cooper Cares service opportunities throughout the year. Of the three major events, the first one occurs right when school starts during homecoming week.

According to Geise, the Student Council officers usually are the people who organize the events. This year, however,

homecoming came too quickly for the Student Council officers to organize activities at the elementary schools, where Cooper students usually go to assist the younger students. Despite that, students were still given an opportunity to participate in Cooper Cares at FMSC during homecoming week.

On the day of the event,

Foreign exchange students adjust to life in America

Cooper is currently playing host to five high schoolers from five different countries this school year

By SHENG VANG
Quill staff writer

Cooper is joined in 2022-2023 by five foreign exchange students: Martin Garcia (12), Mungu Purevdavaa (12), Laura Erfurth (12), Pol Prats (12) and Funanya Jibunor (12). As the school year started, they each shared their goals and thoughts about being a part of the Cooper foreign exchange program.

Martin Garcia

Garcia came from Spain as part of the Cooper foreign exchange program. He took part in this program to learn more about other cultures and to gain new experiences.

When Garcia first came to Minnesota, he was amazed by how big everything was.

"Everything was much bigger than I thought, like the cars. Everything was just like in the movies," he said. "It was really cool."

Garcia also mentioned how, even though the first day of school was challenging, his classes are going pretty well. One school event he especially enjoyed was the homecoming march. He said the march was powerful because of the "cool beats and energetic people."

Garcia is involved in the

Cooper soccer team and hopes to join the tennis team in the spring.

One of his goals as the school year continues is to improve his English skills and do new things.

"I would like to become better at speaking in English and I would like to make new experiences," he said. "I think [participating in a foreign exchange pro-

Martin Garcia (12) mentioned how, even though the first day of school was challenging, his classes are going pretty well. One school event he especially enjoyed was the homecoming march. He said the march was powerful because of the "cool beats and energetic people."

gram] is a very good experience to try something different."

Mungu Purevdavaa

Purevdavaa is also in the Cooper's foreign exchange program. He originated from Mongolia and joined this program to learn and connect with others.

According to Purevdavaa, he was supposed to come to the

United States two years ago, but due to the pandemic, the program was postponed. After two years, even though he already graduated, he still came to Minnesota because the program is not refundable. In spite of that, Purevdavaa mentioned that he is enjoying the program and having a good time here.

"My favorite part of school is, of course, hanging out with my friends," he said.

Some of Purevdavaa's favorite classes are weight training, psychology and U.S. government.

"U.S. government class is interesting because I lack vocabulary and I got to learn those new vocabularies introduced in class. As for psychology, I had always

students met in the front foyer and together the group went to FMSC. After the service, the students returned to school in time for lunch and then continued their school day.

Melissa Truong (12) expressed that the trip went well for her.

"This is actually my first and only year to participate in FMSC. I really enjoyed the service because the atmosphere was very cheerful and welcoming," Truong said. "My favorite part was when the different groups were competing to see who would pack the most supplies."

Likewise, Student Council president Connor Brynteson (12) said he had a great time participating at the service event and enjoyed "helping the community with his friends and those that care about it."

Brynteson encourages more students to participate in these service events. He also said he wishes to see more service opportunities in the future as it is a great way for students to "get active in their community."

Also pointing out the importance of Cooper Cares was Truong. She said Cooper Cares is important because it is a way for students to "give back to their community."

"We are Cooper Cares. We help because we care," Truong said.

been interested in it ever since I was young," he said.

His interest in psychology made him decide on his major after high school.

"I plan to go to college and major in psychology and become like a family therapist," he said.

Laura Erfurth

Erfurth is a foreign exchange student from Denmark. She wanted to participate in this program because America had always been a place she was interested in and she wanted to experience American culture.

Erfurth said when she first came here, the biggest difference she noticed between America and Denmark was the size differences in objects, such as drink size and bathroom stall size.

"In America, they were bigger," she said.

Erfurth also mentioned how friendly and open minded everyone is, which is making everything great.

The school year has been going well for Erfurth. Some of the classes she takes are acting, French and U.S. history. According to Erfurth, acting class is the most enjoyable because of the class environment.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE
continues on page 5

Ninth grade transition into high school has its challenges

Teachers, administrators and students have diverse takes on the issues faced by incoming freshmen

By LA'SHAYA TAYLOR
Quill staff writer

As the freshmen start their first year at Cooper, many teachers and students say that the process has had its ups and downs.

One person who works with ninth graders is English teacher Ms. Prillwitz. She said that she has many observations about the class of 2026 thanks to her work with freshmen in her English 9 classes.

"I am excited to work with them this year. It's always great to see how much the freshman class grows throughout their first year of high school," Prillwitz said.

When working with ninth graders, Prillwitz said there is much she enjoys about the experience.

"I like the energy ninth grad-

ers typically bring to Cooper at the beginning of the year. Freshman year is a great time for individuals to set new goals, meet new people and try new activities," Prillwitz said.

According to Prillwitz, ninth graders often face many new challenges when starting high school.

"Often, it takes awhile for many ninth graders to believe that grades and credits really do matter in high school. Once they catch on to that, freshman year tends to go better for many," she said.

There are a number of tips Prillwitz gives to members of the class of 2026 to improve their performance in school.

"Use your class time and study hall time wisely. In other words, put away the phone and you will likely be quite successful

this year," she said.

From the administration perspective, ninth grade assistant principal Ms. Jefferson said that she has been largely impressed so far by the class of 2026.

"I'm excited about the freshmen starting their first year in Cooper, and so far, they have been doing really great," she said.

Much like Prillwitz, Jefferson's primary advice for ninth graders revolves around time management.

"Use your time wisely," she said. "If you know you have work to do, do it in a study hall."

As for the freshman students themselves, the transition into high school has had its positive and negative aspects. According to Caleb Cummings (9), one thing that has made his entry into Cooper a smoother one is his preexist-

ing group of friends.

"Something that has been easy or helpful for me about the transition from middle school to high school was my friends," he said. "We helped each other get used to the new environment."

In fact, it was the new environment itself that Cummings said was an initial challenge about attending Cooper.

"Finding my way around school was something that was difficult for me," he said.

In order to stay on top of his academics as a ninth grader, Cummings said he tries to stay organized.

"When I get home every day, I have to make sure to look at all my classes to see if I have any homework. There is much more work to do in high school than in middle school," he said.

Robotics squad seeks new members

The Thingamajiggers, a team that has had national success, is looking forward to a competitive 2022-2023 season

By LLEWELLYN BOUTHIM
Quill staff writer

The Cooper FIRST Robotics Team is entering the 2022-2023 season with a small but growing roster and the hopes of recruiting additional students who are interested in technology and having fun.

Serving as advisor for the team, which is known as the Thingamajiggers, is Ms. Coutts. This is the 11th season Coutts and her husband have been mentors for the squad.

“We started the team in 2012 when our son was a sophomore at Cooper,” she said.

Much like sports teams, the robotics squad uses practices to get ready for eventual competitions.

“Our team builds at least one, 120-pound robot from scratch to play a unique game that changes every year. The students design, prototype, wire, program, test, drive, break and fix robots,” Coutts said.

The early season practices are designed to get students comfortable working with the technology in preparation for the start of competitions in January.

“Before the competition game is revealed in January, our practices are usually focused on learning how to build the bot and what the various systems do. This year, we’re hoping to finish up our PartyBot that we’ll roll out at halftime,” team member Tommy Resja (12) said.

The competition season begins on the first Saturday of January when all the FIRST Robotics teams worldwide get to see the actual game, the game rules are released and all teams receive their build components.

“Once we know the competition, we spend the first few weeks going over the very extensive game manual, then we’ll start drafting our prototypes and building mock-ups of the arena so we can test,” Resja said.

After the first Saturday in January, the team meets Tuesday and Friday evenings from 6:30-8:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 12-5 p.m.

“The days and times sometime vary because of school scheduling, mentor time conflicts, or how the build is going, but in general that is the schedule we try to maintain,” Coutts said.

The robotics competitions are a

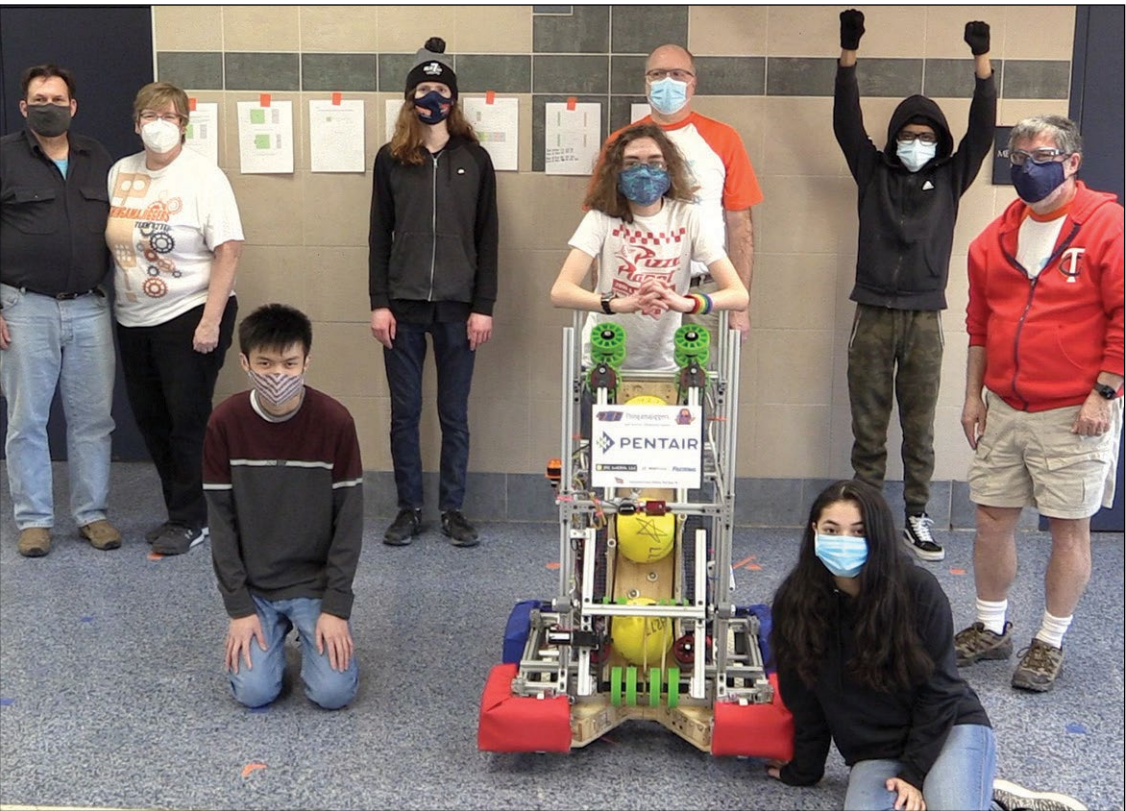


Photo by MS. COUTTS

The robotics team is looking forward to more traditional competitions after the two years of the pandemic.

multi-day process involving dozens of teams. At each event, roughly 60 teams get together with their unique robots. Teams are then randomly paired and battle three robots against three robots for a chance to make it into the playoffs.

“The competition is fierce but cooperative. It is not uncommon to see one team helping another team to fix or upgrade their robot during the competition, only to find themselves competing against the same team later that same day. FIRST calls our events ‘cooperation’ events,” Coutts said.

Coutts said the strength of Minnesota’s robotics community makes it possible for the team to take part in four competitions each season, two of which are at DECC in Duluth, and two of which are at Mariucci and Williams arenas on the University of Minnesota’s Twin Cities campus.

“The competitions are some of the most exciting and intense three days I’ve ever had,” Resja said. “Our team is randomly assigned two other teammates from other robotics teams and are matched up against a team of three other random teams. The robots then compete, first in autonomous mode, which means they are only controlled by pre-written code, and then in tele-op mode where a pilot and copilot

control the robot. There’s a whole lot more nuance like ranking points and placement that affect where the team falls in the ranking but it’s mainly that more points [means a] higher rank, [which is] better.”

Although the process of building and competing with robots may sound intimidating, Coutts said students of all ability levels are welcome and will enjoy themselves.

“For some students, robotics is their first experience using hand and power tools, so they have an opportunity to gain skills and knowledge that can be used outside of school. We have had students go on to engineering, software and skilled trades,” Coutts said. “Our team prides itself on having a student-led, student-designed and student-built robot. The team has tended to be on the smaller side as FIRST teams go, so every teammate is able to make meaningful contributions to the design, fabricate parts, construct sub-systems, build game elements, work on wiring, programming, having an opportunity if they choose to and participating on the field during the competition. There are also opportunities to do animation, graphic design and formulate a business plan, so it’s just not building a robot.”

The collaborative nature of robotics was cited by Resja as one of the things he enjoys most about being on the team.

“The biggest benefit I’ve gained from being in robotics is my teamwork skills,” he said. “I’ve learned how to work together with some or all of the team in order to get what we need done. I love working with the robotics team because my teammates are some of the most creative, hard-working people I’ve met. I know that every time I show up, someone’s going to have some absolutely crazy idea and we’ll all come together to make it work. The sense of community I feel being a part of the team is unparalleled by any other group I’ve been a part of.”

Another benefit to joining the team according to Coutts is the flexible way it fits into most people’s schedules.

“Often, students think they don’t have enough time to participate in robotics and still participate in other school activities such as drama, debate, band or winter sports. Because we meet in the evenings and Saturday, most students are able to do both.

ROBOTICS SQUAD
continues on page 8

New teachers adjusting to their first year at Cooper

Some of the teachers have come to Cooper from other schools, while some are just starting in the teaching profession

By CHIMUAL VANG
Quill staff writer

Cooper welcomed many new teachers to the building during the 2022-2023 school year. These new staff members are hoping to help adolescents of this generation while getting used to their new work environment.

One new teacher this school year is Spanish teacher Ms. Pastrana. She has previous experience as a teacher, having taught at the middle school level. Now that she is in a new and larger environment, she said there are huge differences between this and her old school when it comes to dealing with the older students and navigating the building.

“I find it hard to get used to the community, but I like the change of pace,” Pastrana said.

At the same time, Pastrana



Photo by SHENG VANG

Ms. Peterson joined the English department after working at Southwest.

na said she has enjoyed seeing some of her old middle school students now that she is at Cooper.

“As someone who taught at the middle school, seeing some of my old students here at

Cooper High School makes me really nostalgic and I like it,” Pastrana said.

Another new teacher is Ms. Peterson, who works with students in 10th and 12th grade English classes. She said there

have been some struggles this year as she has gotten used to a new school.

“Hawk Lunch and Learn is complicated to navigate,” Peterson said.

Also new to the English department is M. Fettig, who works with 9th and 11th grade students. Fettig said they enjoy the atmosphere at Cooper.

“I was greatly influenced to come to Cooper because of how welcoming the community is,” Fettig said.

The importance of the community is one thing mentioned by all of the new teachers who have started at Cooper this year. Peterson said she likes how her peers help her when she has questions so she can do her absolute best in the classroom.

“I just love how they can clarify anything that I have questions about,” Peterson said.

Student council plans for '22-'23

Group aims to get more students involved at school

By OWEN SANDLUND
Quill staff writer

Cooper’s Student Council plans on instituting changes this school year with an emphasis on community involvement.

The Student Council organization is responsible for representing the student body, organizing events and initiating new programs. Every year, the council changes because it “brings new students with new ideas, so each year looks different,” according to Student Council advisor Ms. Geise.

In the 2022-2023 school year, the group is focusing on community involvement.

“The Student Council representatives need to make sure they are honing into their peers,” she said.

Newly elected Student Council president Connor Brynteson (12) agreed with Geise about the importance of this focus. In fact, he said that a drop in student involvement in Student Council is a good example of the problem the group hopes to address. Brynteson explained that, while being involved in Student Council “promotes good leadership,” he also pointed out that, in recent Student Council elections, less than a dozen students ran for the 12th-grade positions, showing a lack of community involvement. He said this is because of various factors, including students not having the needed grades, students having busy schedules and students being apathetic.

The Student Council’s response to these challenges is to connect with the student body using digital tools. Brynteson explained that the newly made Student Council tipline, which will allow students to utilize Google Forms, will improve community involvement. The community tipline can be found on the Schoology home page.

In addition to improving community involvement, Brynteson added that some other initiatives they will work on this year include breast cancer awareness and funding efforts for different social causes.

Students weigh cost of parking

Price to use student lot is too high for some Hawks

By BRIGHT DEKU
Quill staff writer

Cooper students who want to park at school are required to pay a fee to do so. The yearly parking cost is \$170. Another option is a semester pass, which is \$90 dollars. Finally, there is a daily pass for \$3.

Students who are interested in buying a parking pass can see the school’s bookkeeper, Ms. Rucker, in the front office. According to Rucker, she tries to work with students who might have issues with the cost of the different passes. In some cases, they might provide alternate transportation like a van, and in others, they may give

PARKING COSTS
continues on page 8

The Quill

Leadership Staff

Editor-in-Chief

Sheng Vang

News Editor

Jesse Garcia

Features Editor

Chimual Vang

Opinion Editor

Owen Sandlund

Variety Editor

Bright Deku

Sports Editor

Noah Plahn

Copy Editors

Sheng Vang

Alexis Williams

Advertising

Chimual Vang

Circulation

Damarius Hamilton

Staff Writers

Isis Bridewell

Nemo Ponder

Llewellyn Bouthim

Owen Sandlund

Cole Bursch

Yuseff Shabazz

Kyle Cox

La'Shaya Taylor

Bright Deku

Chimual Vang

Damarius Hamilton

Sheng Vang

Noah Plahn

Alexis Williams

Support Staff

Photographers

Bright Deku

Sheng Vang

Advisor

Eric Zuccola

Principal

Frank Herman

Letters to the Editor

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

Advertising

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

Editorial Policy

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

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

NSPA

Vaping at school is unacceptable

District should strengthen punishments for vape use

By OWEN SANDLUND
Quill staff writer

Vaping is incredibly widespread in the U.S. The FDA found in 2022 that 14.1 percent of high school students currently vape. While there is no statistic from the FDA on vape usage at Cooper High School, I wouldn't be surprised if it was higher than the national average. Students vape in the bathrooms, on buses, off campus during open lunch and even in some classrooms in our school district.

Vaping is universally considered terrible for the mental development of teenagers. As science correspondent John Hamilton wrote for NPR on October 10, 2019: "There's no easy way to study precisely what nicotine is doing in a teenager's brain. But research on young animals shows that nicotine can interfere with processes that are critical to memory, learning, focus, impulse control and brain development." He mentioned throughout the article that there is further speculation that it can likely lead to various learning disorders and mental health issues.

I am glad the federal government has cracked down on vaping in general and especially on brands marketing to young adults and children. However, that doesn't change the reality that hundreds of thousands of young people are already nicotine-dependent.

In my opinion, Robbinsdale Area Schools have categorically failed in stemming the spread of this crisis. Students who bring any form of illegal substance to school need hard disciplinary measures to deter them from bringing these substances to school. I feel like current measures are not enough to deter the presence and distribution of controlled substances in our schools. There needs to be some kind of school investigation into policies on this issue.

At the very least, there needs to be some program of education beyond our health classes. In our advisories, we should be showing students public services announcement content pertaining to the vaping epidemic. We should be showing our youth the truth of vaping and dissuading individuals who don't currently use nicotine or vape from ever starting the habit.

Mask wearing is still helpful

Stigma around using masks needs to be eliminated

By JESSE GARCIA
Quill staff writer

Every one of us has spent a substantial amount of time wearing a mask. In fact, I have been wearing a mask since before the pandemic that took the world by storm even started. I would usually wear a mask whenever I was going somewhere with a large number of people who I had no information about. Due to this habit, when other people were coming back from these events sick with the flu or a regular cold, I would be perfectly fine. As we have learned during the pandemic, masks bring a large amount of safety to people. While masks aren't entirely necessary all of the time, wearing them can be immensely helpful.

Despite the help they bring, wearing masks as the pandemic lingers on is unpopular with some people. Usually, it is the people who feel that masks are restricting their rights that tend to criticize wearing them. However, when mask wearing is not forced upon you, then you may come to appreciate their benefits. Ultimately, it may be the case that the only reason masks got such a bad reputation was due to the fact they were mandatory at the height of the pandemic. At this point, masks shouldn't be mandatory, but they should be heavily advised in indoor settings.

When it comes to wearing masks, it's less about the person trying to pro-

WEARING MASKS
continues on page 8

Skipping class has become an epidemic

Whether it is in-school or out-of-school truancy, students are missing class time at an alarming rate



Photo by SHENG VANG

While walking through the building during any period, one is likely to see many students avoiding class.

By OWEN SANDLUND
Quill staff writer

Truancy is when students skip class or even school altogether. Truancy is a social epidemic at Cooper. To many students, the established norm is skipping classes and mandated Hawk Lunch and Learn sessions, arriving at class late or being mentally absent while in class.

First, when I say "mentally absent," I am referring to the large population of seniors at Cooper who have adopted bad habits, including bringing food into sixth period, heavily using

their phones in classes and taking excessive days off from school for minor illnesses. However, these behaviors are not necessarily easy to address.

What is easier to address is physical absence. The school has adopted policies such as hall sweeps to take a tougher position against this social epidemic of truancy. However, it is too little, too late. In my four years at Cooper, never once did I feel like there were repercussions for skipping class. Regularly, if I was in the hallway for a permitted reason even without a pass, I would not be questioned.

This has resulted in a culture of

apathy that can be witnessed in both staff and students. Recently, my fellow Quill writer Jesse Garcia (12) and I were in the hallways during eighth period conducting staff interviews for the newspaper. In that brief period of time, we witnessed nearly half a dozen individuals in the hallways without any apparent purpose, and a group of four students loudly talking about recent drug use, all of which was happening within view of Cooper staff hall monitors. Every single time I have been in the hallways during eighth period for The Quill or personal purposes, similar events occur.

Students are increasingly misusing bathrooms

Hawks who have a legitimate purpose for visiting the restrooms are being crowded out by those hanging out in the facilities

By DAMARIUS HAMILTON
Quill staff writer

There have been a couple of times this year when I needed to use the bathroom. After arriving, it would be so full of people that I would just walk away and wait. This is just one example of the many cons about bathroom use this school year. I think these cons could be handled better by students and the administration.

The first issue is closed bathrooms. The administration should have every bathroom open on each floor to save time for students. By having all bathrooms open, students will not be forced to go to the second floor for a bathroom even when their class isn't on the second floor. While teachers say "Hurry back" or "Don't take too long" as students exit the room, that is not really possible unless students can stay in their circle and use the closest bathroom. Having all bathrooms open would help students get back to class faster and spend less time missing out on what's going on inside the classroom when they aren't in there. Having the bathrooms open in all circles would give students no reason to take too long going to the bathroom because they would still be in the same circle as their classroom.

Something else that is negative for students that actually have to use the bathroom when there is only one open is when that bathroom gets overcrowded. It is often the case during passing time that

a large group of students will be standing around talking or smoking in the bathroom. I'm not comfortable using the bathroom with a bunch of people standing next to me or behind me, so I know other people probably feel the same way. When most students walk into the bathrooms and see they are crowded, they just turn around and leave. That negatively affects those students because there is not another bathroom they can go to. As a result, they go back to class and wait. Of course, while they are in class, they can't focus because their bladder is messing with them since they didn't go before class. This is the downside of people just standing around in the bathroom instead of using it for its intended purpose.

Another issue this year involves smoking in the bathrooms. When people smoke in the bathrooms, they really don't think about how they are affecting people who actually need to use the bathroom. Beyond the crowding of the bathrooms caused by the smokers, the smell and the smoke in the air can cause other people who do not smoke to get a contact high or it can aggravate any breathing issues they have all because they are in the area at the wrong time.

An additional issue I have noticed this year is that people don't like using the bathrooms because of poor maintenance. When bathrooms are dirty, missing hand soap or have no toilet paper, it is understandable that students do not



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

Trash on the floors and in the toilets make it difficult to use the bathrooms.

want to use them. No one wants to be uncomfortable when using the school's bathrooms, nor do they want to deal with the problems certain other students cause.

Overall, I completely understand why the administration chooses to only have one bathroom open when students misuse the other rooms, but I definitely think it would be better to open all of the bathrooms. Clearly, staff and students need to be doing more to make sure the bathrooms

are staying clean, that no one is smoking and that people are not crowding the bathrooms. Perhaps the hall monitors on every floor could monitor the bathrooms the same way they monitor the circles during class periods. That way, the bathrooms could be open without being damaged or packed. If there are students misusing their privileges, then the hall monitors would be able to catch them right away without having to close the bathrooms.

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

unnecessary 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.

From the Editors

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 correctional 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.

Distribution of The Quill will be handled by staff members during eighth period on the day of the paper's release.

Classic *Noire* casts a cinematic spell

Moody game lets the player become a Los Angeles police detective in the film noir era of the 1940s



Photo courtesy of ROCKSTAR GAMES

After a successful initial release in 2011, *L.A. Noire* was released six years later for Xbox One, PS4 and Nintendo Switch.

By KYLE COX
Quill staff writer

L.A. Noire was a relatively well-praised game when it was released back in May 2011. Due to its high ratings and fairly positive reviews from many video game outlets, it was considered one of the top 50 games of 2011 according to *Eurogamer*. It won awards for its music, including the 2012 BAFTA Video Game Award for Best Original Score. It also won for Best New IP and Best Atmosphere, which was deserved. Now that we are a decade removed from the game's first release, this is a perfect time to play this game if you never played it before.

L.A. Noire gives the player the feeling of being in a movie. It really nails the aesthetic it's trying to convey: the fashion, cars, music and people of the 1940s. Even the way the characters talk to each other features 1940s slang and culture. It adds a sense of realism to the game.

In the game, you follow Cole Phelps, a decorated war hero turned LAPD cop as he works the streets of Hollywood, California after World War II and rises up the ranks of the police department. After helping to solve a murder case, Phelps gets promoted from being a regular first responder to being a detective in the Traffic Division. Over time, as he continues to solve more cases, he gets promoted to other divisions such as Homicide, Vice and Arson. Working with partners that you get depending on what division you're in, you must investigate various crime scenes for clues, follow up on certain leads you may have and interrogate eligible suspects to find out who did it. After a case is complete, the player's success is rated on a one-to-five star scale based on whether or not all the questions are answered correctly, all the clues have been found, how much money in damages you caused to your car and how much money in damages you caused to the city.

In terms of gameplay, *L.A. Noire* is very cinematic. You have gunfights, police car chases, tailing and the investigation of crime scenes. It really does make you feel like a detective in the 1940s with its somber, gritty atmosphere. One of the key components that makes the game so great is the interrogation mechanic. Whenever you question anyone, you have to actually read their body language and listen closely to what they are saying in order to figure out if they are telling the truth or lying. If they are lying, you need to make sure you have proof. In order to do that, you need to make sure you find all the clues in the areas you investigate because it could be useful in the future. Sometimes, if you do not have proof but know that they are lying, you can doubt their answer and force the person in question to reveal more clues, though it doesn't always work.

The game's cases are all set around a certain theme. For example, when you enter the Homicide Division, all the cases revolve around a series of murders by a killer known as The Werewolf. It's intriguing to see the case start to unravel the more cases you solve in the division. Some cases are actually loosely based on real-life crimes that occurred during this time period, so another aspect of realism is added to the game.

Speaking of cases, some actually alter the ending depending on what you do and say. Let's say you got an accusation wrong: you won't be able to get some clues from that person and you will have to find another way to get them if possible.

Even going to one place before another can alter the course of the case. For example, in one case, you are investigating the murder of a man who was hit by a car. As you investigate, you learn there is more to the case than just a hit and run. Depending on who and where you investigate first, you will possibly alter the ending of the case completely. It's cool when that happens because it gives you the feeling that your actions affect how the case will end.

There are also some instances when you have to choose between two suspects. If you get the wrong suspect, you get a lower rating. Therefore, you need to make sure you get all the clues and questions right for the best rating.

The music captures the era very nicely. The composer, Andrew Hale, did an amazing job creating the orchestral score for the game. Accompanying his work is an awesome soundtrack composed of songs from that time period, including artists like Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Tex Williams and Bing Crosby.

The music is also a big part of the investigation process. When you enter a crime scene, the music will tense up and actually go quiet for a moment. Whenever you encounter a clue, the music will alarm you that a clue is nearby. It even notifies you that you found all the clues in the area. When it comes to an interrogation, the music will notify you if the choice you made during the Truth/Doubt/Lie portion is right or wrong. It's not a surprise that the game won an award for the music.

The action that takes place in the game is pretty good as well. Hand-to-Hand Combat is pretty simplistic. You have three buttons: a dodge, an attack and a grab. It's a pretty simple mechanic, but then again, it is more of a detective investigation game, not a hack-and-slash or a beat-'em-up game.

In terms of gunplay, it's what you would expect from a game like this. There isn't a bullet time mechanic or anything of the sort. However, the gunplay does somewhat affect how some cases will end. For example, if somebody takes a hostage, you can shoot them and kill them, or find a way to incapacitate and subdue them. There is also a mechanic where you can keep aim at a suspect and, if you hold the aim on them for a bit, a cutscene will play of you shooting into the air, making the culprit stop.

Car chases are another interesting part of the game. If you're close enough to the other person's car during a car chase, your partner actually pokes his head out of the car and tries to shoot out the tires. This makes the car chases even more intense.

In the game, you can gain "intuition points" as you level up. Your level grows depending on how many questions you get right and the clues you obtain during the investigations. Your intuition points can be used on various things like revealing all the clue locations at a specific crime scene, eliminating wrong answers when you are stuck on questioning or even asking the community what they would choose as a selection. It's almost like a game of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*?

There are also different costumes you get based on the level-up system. When you reach a certain level, you get an outfit. It's nothing flamboyant; it's more like suits of different colors, which makes sense because the game wants to keep things realistic. I suggest trying to get everything right because you never know when you will need those intuition points in the long run. This is helpful because the cases get a bit more difficult as you go higher and higher up the ranks in terms of clues and interrogation.

For the everyday perfectionist who wants to complete the game, *L.A. Noire* is for you. There are, in total, 21 cases across all five crime divisions. Additionally, there are 40 total street crimes, which are basically side missions that you can do while on a case. There are also 13 newspapers you can obtain over the course of the assigned cases.

In conclusion, *L.A. Noire* is great. The story, the music, the atmosphere, the dialogue and the mechanics make the game amazing. The pacing, though slow, gradually builds up over time, taking you along for the ride. Like many other Rockstar releases, this is one you surely need to pick up and play. I will give this game a 4.5 out of five stars for the realism aspect, the cinematic feel and atmosphere, the somber tone and the investigative tactics.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENTS ADJUST TO LIFE IN AMERICA continued from page 2

"My favorite class is acting class because it's so fun and my teachers are amazing. It is just such a fun class," she said.

This fall, Erfurth played on the soccer team and plans to do Nordic skiing or cheerleading in the future. She looks forward to prom, graduating and "all the small things."

After returning to Denmark, Erfurth will be continuing her education at her Danish school and then she plans to go to college.

Pol Prat

Prat is from Spain and he took part in the Cooper foreign exchange program to build new experiences and get better at English. Prat said when he first got

here, the main thing he noticed was how friendly and nice everyone was. Prat also mentioned how the school year is going well for him but some of his classes are hard because of his lack of English.

"Government is hard because I have never learned it before and it's different from Spain," he said. "My English is also pretty bad."

Despite the challenges of those classes, Prat did say his favorite class was weight training.

In addition to school, Prat got involved in the Cooper soccer team and hopes to play on the volleyball or tennis team later in the school year.

After high school, Prat plans to go to university in Spain and

study entrepreneurship. For now, his goal is to "learn English and meet new people."

Funanya Jibunor

Jibunor is a foreign exchange student from Spain. Through her friend's encouragement, Jibunor decided to join the foreign exchange program in hopes of becoming better at English. She also said that she had always wanted to study in a different country and would like to graduate internationally so this was a good opportunity for her.

Jibunor said she had mixed feelings after first arriving in America.

"I was excited and kind of scared because I didn't know any-

one and I was going to live with complete strangers," she said.

Even so, as school started, she managed to get through her nervousness and is doing great in school. She is part of the theater crew and plans to take part in Nordic skiing and join dance.

Being able to choose her classes was one of the things she has most enjoyed so far this school year. Jibunor mentioned how even though school is good, she misses her school breaks back in Spain.

"Back in Spain, they would have breakfast and then a 10-minute break before lunch, so I am missing that," Jibunor said.

Still, she said she is "having a great time here."

U2's classic *Tree* worth a listen

Band released remastered edition of album in 2017

By COLE BURSCH
Quill staff writer

There is a place with a beautiful desert sky and a lone tree, a Joshua Tree. When the band U2 put out their fifth album, *The Joshua Tree*, many were surprised by its incredible success. The band had come from Ireland yet they were taking the U.S. by storm. Their songs had controversial and meaningful lyrics that destroyed and reshaped social views of love, politics and pain.

These Irish lads were no surprise, though. The four members are Bono (Paul Hewson) on vocals; Larry Mullen, Jr. on percussion; The Edge (David Evans) on guitar, keys and vocals; and Adam Clayton on bass. The guys started off in high school when Larry Mullen, Jr. and Bono put out an ad for musicians to start a band; David and Adam responded and the rest is history. Their sound is anthemic and lush, built for giant stadiums, yet their lyrics are personal enough to be performed in an intimate coffee shop. The band gained mainstream American success with *The Joshua Tree* but had been working for years and years up to that point.

The Joshua Tree was a revolution. No rock album in the 1980s was as popular or political as *The Joshua Tree* by U2. The intense and personal lyrics are brought out in a beautiful atmosphere that makes you second guess the American dream from the start. The album was re-released and supported with a 2017 world tour by the band.

The Joshua Tree flows smoothly yet still leaves you impassioned and unsettled. It starts softly but powerfully with "Where the Streets Have No Name." Bono, who frequently visits African countries to help with famine relief, wrote this song about the streets in third-world countries that are just dirt paths and how privileged we are to live somewhere so developed. As Bono sings, "Where the streets have no name. We're still building then burning them down."

The second track on *The Joshua Tree* transitions the album to the band's constant search for more from this world. "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" is a layered and urgent plea to the world and the powers above for more. This song leaves you unsettled yet hopeful for the future that may come. As these first two songs show, the album's transitions and flow create a passionate structure for the entire album.

The album's lyrics are a meaningful analysis of the American dream. In 2017, the band spoke about this approach during their tour for the 30th anniversary edition of the album. In an interview with Zane Lowe, one of the things Bono and company reiterated consistently is that the album is about what the American dream could be, not what it actually is in reality. For example, although the idea of equal rights and opportunity are beautiful and noble, they are not the reality in America and elsewhere in the world.

This critical yet optimistic tone can be seen in songs such as "Red Mill Mining Town" and "Bullet the Blue Sky," which look at the ideals of the American dream. These two songs, which are personal favorites on the album, depict the sheer anguish of struggling to get by, as is the case in "Red Mill Mining Town," and the corruption of the powerful and the tragedy of war, as is the case in "Bullet the Blue Sky." Throughout the album, the lyrics play a powerful and potent role in shaping the band's statements about what the American dream really is, and the good and bad things about the society in which we all live.

As a lifelong fan of U2, I could go on about the importance of their works to rock music and their impact on the youth of this nation from the '80s to today, but for the sake of time, I will conclude with this: if you haven't listened to *The Joshua Tree* already, hopefully after reading this you will be intrigued to check it out. Each individual song is worth a million listens.

What U2 has created is an example of how music can actually affect social change. This five-star album *The Joshua Tree* by U2 changed modern music with its beautiful storytelling laced over atmospheric and anthemic music. *The Joshua Tree* influenced views of America and the world while also shaping the youth and upending pop culture forever.

Premier Performers

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

Kaeden Knoblauch

By LA'SHAYA TAYLOR
Quill staff writer

Kaeden Knoblauch (12) participates in Cooper's choir program. He is currently a member of Concert Choir, Drop the Octave and Chamber Singers

"I have been doing choir for about 12 years," he said. "I started doing it in elementary school because it was required and I just kind of fell in love with singing."

An aspect of working in choir that Knoblauch enjoys is performing after many rehearsals.

"The one thing that I have enjoyed the most is getting to listen to the final results of the songs we practice for weeks or even months on end," he said.

Knoblauch explained that a highlight of his time in choir goes back to elementary school.



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

"My favorite memory is being a tiny little fifth grader and getting to go to Orchestra Hall because I was in all-district choir," he said.

In addition to his music classes, Knoblauch said he has had other enjoyable courses as a Cooper student.

"My favorite classes that I have taken so far over the last couple of years of high school have to be Foods and Film Study because, honestly, they were both really fun classes and have great teachers along with them," he said.

When he is not at school, Knoblauch said he enjoys playing volleyball.

"I've been playing for the last four years and am super excited for Cooper to have a team coming this spring," he said.

In fact, Knoblauch said he would like to play volleyball in college for a Division Three school starting next fall.

Donovan Johnson

By LLEWELLYN BOUTHIM
Quill staff writer

Donovan Johnson (12) is a singer who takes part in Concert Choir and Drop the Octave, a sectional choir group.

"I have been singing in choir for six years since eighth grade and singing in choir at Cooper since ninth grade," he said.

Johnson cited the process of collaboration as being one benefit of his work in choir.

"I have enjoyed singing with and growing with other voice parts through sharing mistakes and laughing after performances," he said. "When it comes to Drop the Octave, which I have just recently joined, I enjoy being able to become friends with the tenor and basses of choir."

As he looks back on his time in choir, Johnson said he was anxious the

first time he performed on stage.

"I was very nervous at the time, and so was everyone else, but then the performance started and we sang our first line and all the nervousness turned to pride and excitement," he said.

Beyond his work in music classes, Johnson cited math and forensics as his favorite subjects in school.

"I like math because I have always been good at it and it's always been a safe place where I can openly ask questions about what I'm curious about," he said. "I like forensics due to the perspective you gain on how crime scene investigators do their jobs versus what I thought before."

Outside of school, Johnson enjoys running, biking and playing video games.

Next fall, Johnson hopes to attend college somewhere in Minnesota as a psychology major.



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

Joseph Metzger

By YUSEFF SHABAZZ
Quill staff writer

Joseph Metzger (12) is in choir and theater. He has been in choir for four years now. He joined because he was "around instruments a lot growing up" and his mom even sang at church. Additionally, he has been doing theater for one year and decided to join because he wanted to be in more school activities.

Metzger said he enjoys the songs they sing and how everything comes together in choir. When it comes to the difference between listening to music and actually singing, he said "there is more emphasis on the vocals." As for theater, he said he especially enjoys practicing lines and "preparing for the show."

Metzger's favorite memory from choir was their final concert last year.

"Seeing all the seniors shed tears as they sang their last song together showed me how much choir meant to them," he said.

Right now, Metzger said he doesn't really have a favorite memory from theater, but he said he enjoyed their "first night performing."

During the school day, Metzger said his favorite classes are IB English HL, History of Africa in the Middle East, Choir and AVID. He said he likes these classes because "they make learning fun" and most of his friends are in these classes.

Metzger's favorite activities outside of school are playing drums and guitar, learning piano, drawing and exercising.

As for his post-high school plans, Metzger said he is unsure of what he wants to pursue. However, he said he plans to continue with choir and acting.



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

Cameryn Giroux

By LLEWELLYN BOUTHIM
Quill staff writer

Cameryn Giroux (12) is in choir. Additionally, Giroux also takes part in art classes like drawing, painting and clay.

"I have been singing since kindergarten in school music classes and I have been drawing since I can remember," Giroux said.

Giroux pointed out that their involvement in the arts has a therapeutic benefit.

"In my experience, singing helps me with my anxiety. In my life, I can't remember a time I haven't been listening to music or singing along. It gives me peace and it helps clear my mind," Giroux said.

Giroux's involvement in the arts has produced many memories. A favorite choir moment was a duet Giroux performed with a friend in eighth grade.

More recently, a drawing assignment led to a memorable experience.

"This year is my first year in a drawing class and we had to draw a self-portrait. I worked really hard and I feel like it was one of my best drawings," Giroux said.

Not surprisingly, Giroux said her favorite classes at school are arts-related.

"I enjoy arts more than anything and I find myself randomly drawing or painting all the time," Giroux said.

Outside of school, Giroux enjoys playing softball and horseback riding. In fact, Giroux's interest in horses may become her career path.

"I am hoping to get into the University of Wisconsin, River Falls to work with horses in the future," Giroux said.



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

Variety

Cuphead captures feel of old toons

The one-of-a-kind video game will be a challenge to any caliber of player



Photo courtesy of STUDIO MDHR

One consistently compelling highlight of *Cuphead* is its surreal, hand-drawn animation.

By KYLE COX
Quill staff writer

Cuphead is a side-scrolling, run-and-gun, 2D shooter game that will keep you on your toes with its difficulty and skill level. It was released after a seven-year delay for Xbox One and Microsoft Windows on September 29, 2017 by Studio MDHR. It's a crazy difficult game with beautiful, hand-drawn animation, various styles of gameplay that rely on strategy, co-op capability to play with a friend, and music that emulates and captures the 1930s era of cartoons perfectly. *Cuphead* is definitely something you want to pick up if you are looking for a challenge.

In the game, you play as Cuphead, the main protagonist of the story, or his brother Mugman as they go into a casino against the wishes of Elder Kettle, the "dad" of the two brothers. Inside the casino, they meet King Dice, the owner, who tells them to play a game of craps. When they get on a winning streak, King Dice calls upon The Devil to challenge them and he makes a deal with the brothers: if they lose, he takes their soul. Being the confident ones that they are, Cuphead and Mugman decide to take him up on the bet, but, unfortunately for them, they roll snake eyes and lose.

But it doesn't stop there. The brothers beg The Devil to make them another deal and he does just that. In the new deal, the brothers must collect the souls of all the people who are in debt to him so that he won't take their souls in return. Desperate to not lose their souls, Cuphead and his brother head out to find these people on a quest to keep themselves intact. Before they go, they are greeted by Elder Kettle, who, after giving them a lecture, provides them with a magic potion to shoot fireballs out of their fingers (as any normal parent or guardian would do for their children).

You start out in the game in the open-world map from the top-down perspective, which reminds me of the very first *Legend of Zelda* game. Each level you choose is constructed around a boss battle at the end or in the middle; sometimes, the battle is the entire level. When you do choose a level, there are two difficulties to choose from: "Simple" and "Reg-

ular." "Simple" is the easier way to get through the level, operating more like a practice mode, while "Regular" is more of a normal mode. Some things are taken out of the boss fights and levels when you are on "Simple" mode, so "Regular" mode is the more preferred difficulty setting. However, "Regular" mode is hard and the levels only get harder and harder over time. That's what I like about *Cuphead*: it's basically telling you that you have to try your best in order to see everything that the game has to offer, which is good.

At the end of every level, you are assessed on your performance with a letter grade that is based on the number of parries you did, the amount of health you have left, how fast you got through the level and your use of the super meter. I suggest working together with a friend to get past these levels, which you can do thanks to the co-op feature. This feature also helps when it comes to the difficulty in the other levels. Having a friend to play with is way easier than playing solo.

Also, when you are in the "hub," there are things you can do beyond the story to assist you on your way. For example, there is a monastery-esque place where you have to protect a vase from ghosts using the parry mechanic. After completing that level, the person who was trapped in the vase comes out and rewards you with a super move or upgrade to help you in the story.

Another amazing aspect of the game is the art. *Cuphead* features the most unique visuals I have ever come across in gaming. The game is an homage to the art style of the great Max Fleischer, the creator of Betty Boop and Popeye. The way the animation goes so smoothly together, and the wacky-yet-complex way the enemies move and attack, is so beautifully made that you can tell the developers put a lot of time and effort into it. The areas you go to in the game make you feel like you're in a dream thanks to the vast backgrounds and variety of locations, which include deserts, beehives, haunted trains, forests and carnivals.

The music is another element that really takes you in. The way it swings from flamboyant to somber is great, and it fits the tone of the game perfectly. The music creates the nostalgic feeling of watching one of

those old cartoons.

Speaking of nostalgia, there is a filter that makes the game look like a black-and-white cartoon. However, the only way to get this is by moving through certain levels without shooting a single enemy. Basically, you have to be a pacifist during a game in which everyone is trying to kill you. If you do that, you get a "P" grade, which gets you one step closer to the Easter egg. There are other audio and visual filters that make the game even more vintage depending on the grades you receive when you are playing.

At times, the game's difficulty is reminiscent of *Dark Souls*. *Cuphead* is fast-paced and it throws enemies at you to counter with various weapons and supers, such as long-range single shots to keep your distance, short range three-round bursts that inflict massive damage over time, and mid-range shots that bounce all around to inflict moderate damage. The game also allows you to parry certain attacks so that you can fire back at the enemy for big damage. For example, if you see an attack that flashes pink, you are able to parry that attack and send it back. Moreover, the run-and-gun segments are difficult. Pattern memorization, keen hand-eye coordination and good timing are a must when it comes to completing these levels.

One interesting element of *Cuphead* is that you can choose to go wherever you want in the game. You have free reign because of its branching levels and stories, so there is definite replayability and unpredictability in this game. Enemies come out of nowhere, which can become a tad hectic, forcing players to keep their composure. You always have to watch out because, once you die, you have to start back over again at the beginning of the level.

Overall, *Cuphead* has stunning animation and difficult gameplay that blend perfectly together. The game is a breath of fresh air compared to all the generic, cookie-cutter shooters we have right now. In fact, I would say *Cuphead* should be regarded as one of the best games in its genre. I give *Cuphead* a rating of 4.5 out of five stars for its strong story, amazing gameplay mechanics, vintage graphics and grueling difficulty.

Verity takes readers on a compelling journey

The Colleen Hoover novel was first released at the start of the pandemic in February 2022

By LA'SHAYA TAYLOR
Quill staff writer

The book *Verity* by Colleen Hoover is one of the most anxiety-producing and page-turning books you will ever read. First released in February 2020, *Verity* would be a great novel to read as the fall season starts thanks to its many plot twists and breath-taking shocks. I think *Verity* is a good book because the cleverness of the author will leave your mind blown.

The story is about Verity, a famous book author who has a tragic accident, leaving her unable to finish the last three books of her

most successful series.

Verity's husband, Jeremy, chooses a struggling writer on the brink of financial ruin named Lowen to finish the last three books. He also offers her the chance to stay at their home and look through Verity's office for old notes and drafts of her latest books.

As Lowen looks through Verity's office, she finds a memoir that Verity has written but did not publish. As she reads through the memoir, she finds many eerie events and dark thoughts from Verity. This leads Lowen to start suspecting that maybe Verity isn't who and what she says she is.

Hoover does a good job of

using a disturbing tone throughout the story. When you're reading the book, you will find that Hoover's style makes it easy to understand the characters and put yourself into their position.

Another thing Hoover does to help bring the story to life is writing the novel from a first-person perspective in the present tense. As a result, when we read the novel, we get the perspective of each character.

If you've never read a Colleen Hoover book before, you should definitely read *Verity*. *Verity* is a book that will change your mind about reading in general. I give *Verity* five out of five stars.

Weight room open to Hawks

From the weight training class to the after-school lifting program, there are many ways to use the room



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

The 2021 renovations to the weight room included upgrades to all of the fitness equipment.

By YUSEFF SHABAZZ
Quill staff writer

Students who are looking to stay in shape or get in shape are encouraged to check out the Cooper weight room. There are programs and classes you can take to step up your fitness and there are Hawk staff members to assist and teach you the proper way to lift.

During the school day, Cooper offers a weight training class taught by Mr. Connors. Connors said he takes special steps during supervising his weight training class to make sure no one “messes around and hurts themselves.” He also assists students with learning new lifts.

According to Connors, weight

training is a “slow-paced” course that focuses on technique and “muscular endurance.”

Connors said he is not just there to supervise because he has goals in mind for his students. He intends to give students an “outlet” when they come to the weight room. He also said that students can use the weight room workouts to “kind of manage their emotions.”

In addition to working on weight-related fitness, Connors said the class deals with general wellness issues. For instance, he said he spends class sharing “health-based information.”

The weight room opportunities don’t stop there. If your school schedule is packed, you can always come to the weight

room after school. Personal Learning Coach Mr. Jones is the supervisor for the weight room after school.

For the after-school program, Jones has the weight room open from 3:40-4:45 p.m. Students are able to take the activity bus home after training with Jones.

Jones, who majored in physical education in college, said he always emphasizes stretching before exercising. He also makes sure that students have a spotter for free weights. Lastly, Jones said he wants to make sure “you see results.”

Students interested in training in the weight room are encouraged to explore the opportunities the Cooper facility has to offer.

Vikings have strong start to '22-'23 season

A new coaching staff has brought effective leadership, new energy to an already strong roster

By NOAH PLAHN
Quill staff writer

The Minnesota Vikings have enjoyed a surprisingly positive start to the 2022-2023 season. Currently, the Vikings have a 6-1 record and sit on top of the NFC North division. As they near the midpoint of the season, it is a good time to look back at what has gone well and what still needs work when it comes to the team’s offense, defense and coaching.

Offense

Going into the start of the season, the Minnesota Vikings hired a new head coach, Kevin O’Connell. Replacing Mike Zimmer after his eight years with the Minnesota Vikings had fans excited and nervous. With O’Connell’s work as an offensive coordinator for the L.A. Rams, fans knew this year’s offense would not disappoint.

Thanks to an extensive wide receiver core and many other pieces on the offense ready to win, the Vikings were built for success this season. One of the newest developments the fans were looking forward to was the further development of star wide receiver Justin Jefferson.

Another player fans knew they could rely on this season is Dalvin Cook. As one of the Vikings’ most consistent players, Cook always seems to put up amazing stats. He is now well known as one of the best running backs in the NFL and he has been having a generally good season so far.

Also impressive on the Vi-

king’s offense so far has been Kirk Cousins. Many people questioned if Cousins would be a part of the team in the 2022-2023 season, but Cousins has played great, leading to many accolades and much fan approval. Cousins has become known for upping his play in October and that could be seen this season with his impressive performances against the Saints, Bears, Dolphins and Cardinals. Hopefully, Cousins and company will continue to have an explosive offense as they move into November.

Defense

Minnesota Vikings football

Thanks to an extensive wide receiver core and many other pieces on the offense ready to win, the Vikings were built for success this season. One of the newest developments the fans were looking forward to was the further development of star wide receiver Justin Jefferson.

has been known in the past for emphasizing the defense. Given O’Connell’s expertise with the offense, there were concerns that the defense this season would be ignored. However, one of O’Connell’s main goals was to make sure they improved from last year on defense.

In order to make this happen, the Vikings picked up a couple of key assets to help on defense. The biggest one was the signing ZaDarius Smith. This pickup was good for many reasons. Not only did we bring in a great player to help us on defense, but he’s also a former Green Bay Packers player, which means we’re taking out a key defensive player from one of our top rivals in the NFC North.

While Smith is having a strong season, many Vikings fans have been impressed by the performance of some of the younger players. One of the biggest names right now is cornerback Cameron Dantzler, who was drafted in 2020 in the third round with the 89th pick. In the Vikings game against the Dolphins, Dantzler stripped the ball from a Dolphins player, which sealed a victory in the game.

Of course, fans should not forget the top veterans of the defense, especially Harrison Smith and Eric Kendricks. In the game against the Dolphins, Smith got an interception and a forced fumble.

These were among the top plays of that week across the whole NFL.

Coaching

The question looming over every Vikings fan heading into the new season was how the hiring of O’Connell would affect the team. Most Vikings fans had grown comfortable with the fact that Mike Zimmer was the coach for eight years, but when the team’s depth starting

improving and the overall record did not, the question of whether Zimmer was the problem led to his firing last season.

So far, it seems like this was the right move. The Vikings have started off with a 6-1 record and O’Connell’s coaching has had a positive impact on the team. Not only are the offense and the defense playing better, the overall chemistry of the team appears to be improved.

As the Vikings emerged from their bye week with a win and head into the remainder of the season, the team is sitting in a pretty comfortable position. The team’s fans are fully engaged and excited as they wait to see what’s next for the new and impressive Minnesota Vikings.

Cooper Competitors

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

DaNari Connors

By NEMO PONDER
Quill staff writer

DaNari Connors (12) plays football during the fall and runs track during the spring.

“I started playing football in third grade and I’ve been running track since seventh grade,” he said. “As a kid, I’ve always been surrounded by football because my father and brothers played it. I was always fast as a kid so I ran track to keep my speed.”

According to Connors, being on a team is a highlight of both of his sports.

“The thing I enjoyed most was building bonds with my teammates over the years. I am really close with a lot of my teammates and my coaches as well,” he said.

Of his many favorite sports memories, Connors said last year’s state run

with football was the best.

“My favorite memory in my sport was going to state. My team and I accomplished that last year and it was amazing because we were the first team to do that in a while,” he said.

This year, Connors is one of the captains of the football team.

“I believe I am a great leader and role model. I know the places people can be, so I hold them to high standards,” he said.

When he is not at school or competing on the field, Connors enjoys playing video games and watching football. Next fall, he hopes that his interest in football will take

him to a Division One school.

“I plan on playing Division One football and majoring in business. I also would like to possibly major in sports science,” he said.



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

Rachel Tidjani

By BRIGHT DEKU
Quill staff writer

Rachel Tidjani (12) plays tennis in the fall. She also serves as a wrestling manager during the winter and a track manager during the spring.

“I have been playing tennis since my junior year. I took an interest during my sophomore year, but with COVID-19 going around, I wasn’t able to leave my house. My former coach, Ms. Navalta, thought I would be a great addition to the team. I had nothing better to do, so I decided to try it out,” she said.

Tidjani said that she enjoys playing tennis because of her teammates.

“The vibes are filled with joy and laughter and we really uplift each other,” she said.

Tidjani said her favorite tennis

memory is when she got her first win in a game. She said she and her doubles partner were “so happy.”

Once tennis is over, Tidjani will turn her attention to wrestling. She said that last season “went pretty good for the wrestlers.” Tidjani added that she liked the chance to “understand a new sport.”

In the spring, Tidjani manages the track team. Much like wrestling, she said last season went well.

When it comes to school, Tidjani said her favorite subjects are math and dance. According to Tidjani, math teacher Mr. Bruce helps her understand the work, while in dance, she likes to express herself.

Outside of school, Tidjani paints and cooks. She also likes “to do a little cleaning here and there.”

Next fall, Tidjani hopes to attend college and major in child psychology.



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

David Giron

By ALEXIS WILLIAMS
Quill staff writer

David Giron (12) plays soccer, wrestling and tennis.

“I’m hoping to play volleyball or baseball this spring,” he said.

Giron said he has been playing soccer his whole life.

“I’ve played since I was a little kid, so it just stuck with me until now,” he said.

Giron said he enjoys having a good time with his teammates as well as playing competitively. His favorite soccer-related memories come from the trips to Duluth the team takes every year.

“I like enjoying a bit of music on the ride there and back as well as some food,” he said.

This year, Giron is the captain of the soccer team.

“Being a captain is great but it is a

very challenging role as you have to lead by example and try to hold everyone together and make sure everyone is treated with respect,” he said.

In the winter, Giron wrestles. He said his goal this season is to make it to the state tournament.

As for the spring, Giron said he played tennis last year. Although he said it was “pretty fun,” he is not sure if he will be returning to the team this year.

In addition to athletics, Giron is involved in band and theater. He said teachers Mr. Hahn and Ms. Würzer, respectively, have had a big impact on him.

Outside of school, Giron likes to watch movies, play sports and drive around.

Next fall, Giron plans to attend college, where he may major in engineering or business.



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

Melissa Truong

By ALEXIS WILLIAMS
Quill staff writer

Melissa Truong (12) plays volleyball. She has been playing volleyball since seventh grade at Plymouth Middle School. She started the sport as soon as she heard that playing volleyball for middle school was an option.

Truong has been playing for Cooper since freshman year. She chose to play high school volleyball mainly because of the influence of her older cousin, who also played. She said she enjoys playing the game with her teammates.

“They make practice and games fun and very memorable,” she said.

Truong also enjoys the competitiveness of the sport, especially the adrenaline rush when she gets a perfect dig or pass.

“Being on the court makes me feel

good,” she said.

One of her favorite memories of playing volleyball is getting a dog on a hit from the opposing team’s middle during a tournament. It was a fast and hard hit and she was able to dig it.

Another fond memory was going to her captain’s house for a team bonding dinner before the first game of the season against Armstrong.

“We talked and laughed for the majority of the night,” she said.

When it comes to school, Truong said her favorite subjects are chemistry and biology. As for hobbies, Truong said she enjoys biking around the neighborhood and playing volleyball for fun.

After graduating, Truong plans on attending a four-year college in the Twin Cities area and hopes to major in something related to science.



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

WEARING MASKS

continued from page 4

tect himself or herself and more about the added safety those masks provide for everyone else around them who may be affected by an illness. Using the most recent pandemic as an example, COVID didn't pose much of a fatal threat to young people, nor did it pose much of a fatal threat to those with a good immune system; however, a large number of people with some form of health issue could be greatly or gravely affected by it. As a result, masks helped keep at-risk people safe. When more people wear masks, the people around them have less to worry about when it comes to getting sick.

Some people dislike masks due to the obvious inconveniences they lead to. For example, wearing masks may make it difficult for some people to breathe. Additionally, mask wearing may make social interactions more difficult. However, these issues may be less important than the fact that masks provide protection and comfort to other people who can rest assured with the knowledge that they are safer. Being sick isn't enjoyable even if the illness isn't critical or life-threatening. If asked to make a choice between losing a day or more of school or work due to an avoidable sickness and wearing a mask, the right choice seems obvious.

In the end, I believe that masks are extremely beneficial and their use should be highly advised if not fully mandatory. Encouraging the use of masks with heavy incentives will increase people's use of them without making them feel they're losing their rights. It is important to remember that, even before the pandemic, mask wearing was common at places where people are facing health risks, such as hospitals or retirement homes. I suggest everyone really think about mask wearing as a health issue and not just a public rights issue. I think most people would conclude that mask wearing is not bad and the people who claim it is may not be thinking logically.

PARKING COSTS

continued from page 3

a free pass.

"If you're having any type of hardship such as a fire or transportation issues, you can go talk to an administrator, then they will talk to me and will figure something out," she said.

According to students, the cost of parking passes has an impact on their decision to drive to school. Peyton Sanders (12) said he feels like the passes are overpriced.

"They are already \$170 at the start of the school year, but I think it should be \$50 because some students don't have \$170 to give at once," he said.

Personal Learning Coach Mr. Sanders said that the district's transportation issues are also having an impact on students' decisions about driving to school.

"Not having enough buses and the buses often being late should be reasons to bring the price down," he said.

Rucker said she would like to start some events for a chance to get some free parking passes for students. One of her ideas is to have students put into a drawing for a daily pass. Additionally, another idea is that, if a student has a 3.0 GPA or higher at a midquarter, the end of a quarter or the end of the semester, they could get at least a week off from paying for parking.

ROBOTICS SQUAD

continued from page 3

Our son participated on the Nordic ski team and robotics at the same time. We have had several students since then who have been involved in other school activities and jobs and still participate in robotics, so it is possible," Coutts said.

Participation in robotics can also be of help when applying to and seeking scholarships for college.

"Through FIRST and their business and collegiate partners, there is over \$80 million of scholarship monies available to students who participate in the FIRST Robotics competition. Many top-tier colleges and universities have recognized the value of FIRST and have included FIRST participation as part of their application process," Coutts said.

Students who are interested in learning more about the group and joining are encouraged to visit Ms. Thurston in the Activities Office.

"We allow student to join at any time of the year," Coutts said. "No prior experience is necessary."

Athletes try to balance school, sports

Coaches and players agree that the challenges of doing a sport can have a positive impact on a student's academic performance



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

The later end to the school day has meant that athletes have even less time in the evening to do homework.

By NOAH PLAHN
Quill staff writer

Cooper has many students taking part in sports, but this comes with the responsibility of finding the balance between athletics and academics.

One coach who has seen the importance of this balance is Mr. Connors, who works with football, basketball and track athletes. Connors said he always pushes academics first.

"For us, the biggest thing is academics. We always push academics first because, without academics, our players are not eligible to participate, so as long as we have that aligned and they're handling their business in the classroom, then that makes it easier for us to trust them and makes it easy for them to be coachable on the field. With that set in stone, we know they are committed and they are on top of things and that leads to how we want things to go on the field," he said.

According to Connors, there are various rules with grades and attendance that athletes are expected to follow.

"If they don't handle things in the classroom, then they probably won't be put in a starting role within the program. As far as academics or attendance goes, students who are missing practice won't be allowed to play in the games, and for varsity guys, if they were in starting roles but missed practice or school and that's

not excused, then that will push them down the depth chart. They have to be committed and show up every day so everyone is responsible for their position," he said.

While finding a balance between school and sports is difficult, Connors said the benefits of athletics are overwhelmingly positive.

"For me, I say sports shapes your life. It creates discipline and structure, especially if they don't have that outside of school. My biggest thing is community, building a family with our network, and using football as a platform. It extends their brotherhood beyond their own house, and as they grow older, they tend to lean on one another and support one another. They also build bridges through other communities. For example, one of our coaches, he's into building homes. Now, we have three of four of our former athletes that are into architecture, construction and business management within his business of work," Connors said.

For people trying to find a balance with everything going on in life, Connors explained that having a routine is important.

"You have to find a routine first and foremost. A routine is everything, and once you fall into a routine, it becomes a habit and that habit becomes a lifestyle. As a former student-athlete myself, I've been through all of that,"

he said.

Agreeing with Connors on many issues related to balancing academics and athletics is Nordic ski coach Ms. Hoffman. She said there are many ways she influences both academics and athletics with her players.

"I tried to always reiterate to my athletes that they are student-athletes and being a student always comes first. I'm lucky to have many of my athletes in class, so I'm able to closely monitor their academic performance," she said.

Hoffman said she puts an emphasis on attendance and grades when it comes to her athletes.

"Grades and attendance are so important to academic success at Cooper. If you are not in class, you are not learning. It's important to be on time and be ready to be a student. My rules were that you needed to be passing your classes to be able to participate in practices and meets. We had some dedicated study time on certain days for practice to ensure that all of our Hawks had time to get their work done," she said.

As a coach, Hoffman said she has often seen how athletics can help people not only academically but in life in general.

"I think one of the biggest effects of being a part of athletics is that you are part of a team. You have a group of people around you to hold you accountable and to be an extension of your family.

It's important to feel like you are a part of something that is bigger than yourself to grow as a student, an athlete and a human being," she said.

When it comes to the advice she gives her skiers about finding a balance between personal life, school and athletics, she said that organization is key.

"Get a planner and map out what your time will look like. Try to plan when will you have time to complete homework, work your job and attend practices," she said.

When it comes to Cooper's athletes, captain of the girls soccer team Marin Scherber (11) said she tries to influence her teammates to strike a healthy balance between academics and athletics.

"I really work with them and let them know I'm here to help them with soccer and school. If they need to take a day to work on school or even mental health in general, that's okay. Soccer isn't their main and only point in life," she said.

Scherber said academics are especially important for those players who may be considering taking part in soccer at the college level.

"You can't get into college if you're not doing well in school. Enjoying the luxury of college sports comes with making sure your doing well academically," she said.

Although athletics can take up a lot of a player's time, there are definite benefits to being in sports for one's success in school and life.

"It can definitely be stressful to know that you have multiple places to be. Also, sports are an after-school activity, so every single day have to find the balance between homework, schoolwork and putting in your training. However, if you take it seriously and have a plan, you can make it work," she said.

Scherber added that playing a sport can provide a much-needed release from the stress of the school day.

"I think definitely going to soccer every day, I don't ever feel sad. If I'm having a bad day and I go to soccer and see my teammates, I definitely feel happier and it gives me some peace of mind," she said.

As a student-athlete, Scherber said she has some advice on how to find a balance between her many responsibilities.

"I almost discipline myself in a way every day. I get home from practice and I tell myself, 'I'm going to finish this assignment and then I'm going to take a shower.' It's almost like a rewards system," she said.

Jaxon Howard prepares for Division One football

Over the last six months, the veteran Hawk athlete committed to LSU, signed with agency for NIL

By NEMO PONDER
Quill staff writer

Many Cooper students have played sports at a level that got them recruited by college teams. The most recent example of this can be seen with Jaxon Howard (12). At the end of his junior year, Howard committed to play football for the Louisiana State University (LSU) Tigers, a Division One (D1) program. Along with that, he was also the first high school athlete in Minnesota to sign a name, image, likeness (NIL) deal with an agency under the new NCAA guidelines.

Howard said that his college recruitment process over the years was pretty straightforward.

"I picked up my college recruitment pretty quickly actually. I got my first scholarship offer my freshman year in November. After that, everything ramped up for me, especially during COVID times when everything else kind of broke down. Coaches really got to being more online and what I did was just make a lot of workout videos of me doing drills outside on the field or me lifting weights in the weight room. I was just making quick little snippets, tagging them on Twitter or sending them to Twitter and that's how I got out to everybody," he said.

Howard explained that it was mentally and physically hard getting to the D1 level for football.

"The biggest thing that I did was figuring out things I wasn't doing correctly and being able to fix and improve them. A lot of things when it comes to playing as a D1 athlete is knowing that you are not going to have everything right. When you are able to learn and develop correctly, you are going to be

able to figure out problems with your game and be able to grow from that," Howard said.

Now that he is set on LSU, Howard said he has some goals he wants to achieve as he starts with that team.

"My next step is to get playing time. It doesn't matter where I play, but first, I'm definitely going to start with special teams. I want to get that starting spot at the Jack position, which is defensive end and linebacker combined. I know I'm going to have to work for it. I know there are some other guys coming in with me that are going to be competing for that spot," Howard said.

Howard said competing for spots on the team will be of benefit to him and his teammates.

"I think with that, not only is that going to make me strive more and be better, it also is going to help the team be better. With that said, I really just want to do the best I can for my team and try to get on the field as quickly as possible. Even if that means me playing an offensive position and going on the line to block for some plays, it really doesn't matter. I'm just ready to play ball," he said.

In addition to his decision to join LSU, Howard also signed with a NIL agency. NIL stands for name, image and likeness. On July 1, 2021, the NCAA implemented a policy allowing all incoming and current student athletes the opportunity to earn money from NIL deals. Howard said he was excited to sign with an agency.

"It felt really good, partially because they have such a good history with the athletes they have signed. I met Adam Thielen when he helped create our weight room. I found out he is part of the agency I have signed with.

I also have CJ Ham in that agency, too, which is also really cool because we have something we are collaborating with in the future. Really, the best thing about it is just collaborating with different people around the world. I'm not really doing it for the money aspect either; I'm really just doing it for my brand in the future and helping people out in different communities," he said.

Howard wasn't the only person going through this process. His dad, Cooper activities director and head football coach Mr. Howard, was right there with him helping him get through the process because he also was once in his son's shoes.

"As a parent the, expectation is to help guide them through the process," Mr. Howard said. "Being that I've been through the process as a student athlete, I was making sure I didn't bring my biases in. But I liked being able to help Jaxon with any questions he might have."

Mr. Howard explained that he had a completely different recruitment process than his son.

"My recruitment process was different because of the technology. Twenty-six years ago, the only time you could get offers is if you went to football camps or if college coaches came to your games and watched you play. Another way was taking VHS tapes to the college coaches or having your high school coach send it to them, and if they did have interest in you, they would write your name down in a booklet. Now, there is Hudl, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and other social media platforms, which allows more exposure and more opportunities," Mr. Howard said.

While the decision-making pro-

cess was tough, Mr. Howard said he was proud that his son chose LSU on his own.

"He called the coach to let him know. They had a talk and Jaxon told him he was committing. He didn't tell me first because he didn't know, but I was really proud of him for making this really tough decision," Mr. Howard said.

Mr. Howard also helped advise his son through the NIL process. Mr. Howard thinks the NIL deal will be beneficial.

"Jaxon has come from a different cloth of mentality. It's never been about himself, so I always make sure he does things the right way. He did this so he can help people and collaborate with people that want to help him help the community. He also wants to build on top of his brand, which I think is a great opportunity for him," Mr. Howard said.

Also accompanying Jaxon Howard during his college recruiting and NIL process has been his Hawks football teammates. One person who has worked with Howard over the last four years is Corey DeLoach, Jr. (12). DeLoach said he is excited for Howard but was not expecting LSU to be his top choice.

"I was very much surprised because I thought he was going to go to Miami. I had on Miami attire that day and he went with LSU, but I'm proud of my teammate," DeLoach said.

DeLoach added that it has been a rewarding experience playing with Howard over the last four years.

"It feels great that he helps the team get more exposure and he really brings that fire towards the team. Being able to play with one of the best players in Minnesota is truly amazing," DeLoach said.