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# HAWKS MAKE KINDNESS A FOCUS BEFORE BREAK



Photo by SHENG VANG

Students were able to select holiday gifts for their family members during the toy drive, which was rescheduled to January 10.

By SHENG VANG  
Quill staff writer

The Kindness Campaign was a two-week-long event from December 12 to December 22, 2022 that advocated for kindness and care for other people. Ms. Heck, Spirit Committee advisor and the Kindness Campaign coordinator, said, “the campaign is a good reminder for students to be kind as they prepare for the break.”

“For some people, holidays can be rough, so it is also a way to let students know Cooper is here to support them,” Heck said. During the campaign’s first week, students got to participate in activities like taking the kindness pledge and by ordering candygrams. In the cafeteria, there were heart cutouts on which students could write kind messages and a kindness pledge that students could sign during lunch.

Together, these items were displayed in the hallway during the second week of the campaign. As for the candygrams, students could write a message for a friend or a special someone and have it delivered with a candy cane before the winter break. Additionally, the door decoration contest was another way for students and teachers to be involved in the campaign events. The

door decoration was done during students’ advisory classes and, by the end of the first week, all doors were up and ready for voting. In the second week of the campaign, the candygrams and kindness pledge continued along with new activities like the theme dress-up days and the toy drive. Each day of the second week, announcements were made reminding students of the dress-up days

Annual Cooper Kindness Campaign featured fundraisers, theme days and a holiday toy drive

and the campaign activities occurring in the cafeteria. The themes of this year’s dress-up days were comfy clothes day, cultural day, character day and ugly sweater day. In addition, the door decoration winner was announced during the second week and awarded with a present.

Perhaps one of the biggest events of the Kindness Campaign was the annual toy drive, which was scheduled for December 21 but moved to January 10 due to the weather-related cancellation of school on the original date. The toy drive, which has been a long-standing Cooper tradition, is an event in which Cooper students can pick out and give their younger siblings free presents for the holiday. Usually, toy donations are made and collected at the beginning of December. With the event gaining much popularity, students had to sign up to participate, as gifts were limited.

A student who enjoyed the toy drive was Selena Yang (12). She mentioned how the event let her show an “act of kindness toward [her] family members” and that was why she really liked it.

Overall, the kindness campaign positively im-

**KINDNESS** continues on page 8

# Diploma candidates celebrate Silver Platter Day

The annual event acknowledges the completion of each student’s 4,000-word Extended Essay, a requirement for the full IB diploma



Photo by MS. MEYER

School and district officials celebrated the IB candidates at the December 9 event.

By NOAH PLAHN  
Quill staff writer

The annual Silver Platter Day celebration was held in the Cooper Media Center after school on December 9 at 3:45 p.m. This is a tradition during which Cooper’s International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma candidates present their completed, 4,000-word extended essays (EE) to their supervisor on an actual silver platter. This year’s candidates

were Manuel Panora (12) and Amalia Ranstrom (12). “It’s the pinnacle of a 12-month journey and a major milestone toward earning the full diploma,” Ms. Meyer, who works in Cooper’s IB office, said. During the Silver Platter Day event, IB Coordinator Ms. Christensen begins by welcoming the attendees and summarizing the agenda for the celebration. After this, Diploma candidates read out loud an academic honesty oath. Next, each candidate reads their research question, comments on the process they went through in writing the essay and then hands the essay to their supervisor on a silver platter. The event concludes with brief comments from Robbinsdale School District Superintendent Mr. Engstrom and Cooper Head Principal Mr. Herman, followed by a brief reception with desserts. “Our Silver Platter Day gives us the opportunity to celebrate our students’ achievement after 12 months of investigating, researching and writing. It’s a big load off of their shoulders to officially hand over their final copy of their extended essay. Families and staff are able to participate, and the students appreciate this,” Christensen said. According to Christensen, there are many steps to set up the Silver Platter Day event. First, they have conversations with students and their supervisors prior to the event to ensure that they know what the celebration looks like and feels like. Next, they invite families, EE supervisors, administrators, Cooper staff and district staff to the event. They also organize a thank you memento for the students to give to their supervisors and they purchase refreshments to serve after the celebration. Finally, they work with the Media Center staff to clean and arrange the celebration area. In order to raise awareness about the event, Christensen said they invite someone from the yearbook to take pictures. They also typically create a collage that they display at Cooper and via the Cooper Connections newsletter. When it comes to the Diploma candidates, Ranstrom said she enjoyed the event and the many emotions she experienced leading up to this achievement. Ranstrom’s EE

**SILVER PLATTER DAY** continues on page 2

# School health workers offer tips to address winter illnesses

Personal practices related to hand-washing, masking and self-care can help keep Cooper disease outbreaks at bay

By CHIMUAL VANG  
Quill staff writer

An influx of illness has increased at Cooper during the winter months due to people being congregated indoors more often. Being inside allows more passing of viruses from person to person. Added to this is a new study by a team at Massachusetts Eye and Ear Hospital and Northeastern University that shows that cold air itself may damage the immune system response that occurs in the nose, which may also lead to the increase in winter illnesses. Whatever causes the illnesses, there are things Cooper students can do this winter to be prepared.

“Getting your flu shot every year as well as your COVID shot and boosters are the best options you can take to prevent getting severely ill from the flu [and] COVID,” Ms. Kraft, head nurse at Cooper, said. Also helpful is taking other precautionary steps. “Wearing a mask around others to protect yourself is effective as well,” Mr. Rosenblum, an educational assistant in the health office, said. Rosenblum added that the most simple and repeated advice he gives to people is “to practice good hand hygiene by frequently washing your hands.” According to Kraft, the school’s health office contributes to preventing the spread of illness in three main ways. First, they educate students and

families on what to do when they are feeling ill. Kraft said that staying home is recommended when you are sick. Additionally, she suggested controlling your contagiousness by not being around others when sick, limiting your time with others as necessary and practicing social distancing. A second way the health office helps is by sending students home safely when they are feeling sick to prevent the spread of further illness here at school. Kraft said this stops the spread of illness at its source. Third, and finally, Kraft said the health office tracks the number of students and staff

**WINTER ILLNESSES** continues on page 8

Winter weather can challenge newer drivers

Dangerous conditions can be overcome when teens take safety precautions



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

Snow storms will make routine transportation situations more treacherous for people who do not plan ahead.

By JESSE GARCIA  
Quill staff writer

Many drivers already have experienced hardship while traveling given the amount of winter weather that has been happening in Minnesota since November 2022. With constant hazards from natural issues such as the ice and snow, and human-made issues like those that come from swerving and crashes, driving is much more difficult in winter than in the other seasons. Fortunately, there is some winter driving advice for those who are struggling behind the wheel during this time of the year.

Drive patiently

While it may be common knowledge to drive slower in bad weather, just exercising general patience is incredibly important. Driving patiently means you won't be trying to squeeze into risky merges or take corners too fast. In general, just taking it slow is the way to go. This can help the person driving understand their surroundings more and decrease the likelihood of a crash.

As part of being patient, one needs to be sure to leave a reasonable amount of time to get to your destination to account for this slow pace. Also, staying at least three feet behind other cars is a reasonable distance to be able to react to any sudden changes and allow leeway in case anything unexpected happens.

Avoid main roads and highways

It is well known that the highway is a safety hazard during winter, as many cars are put next to each other and some of those drivers don't practice the proper safety precautions. Due to this, avoiding main roads and highways is the safest option in winter.

While it may increase your travel time, you will be decreasing the amount of traffic you are in and the number of driving hazards and people you need to be wary of, which will allow you to focus more on the road. There are only so many things someone can control; as such, it is best to avoid large amounts of traffic because someone might speed up, spin out or, worst of all, crash, causing a pile-up or a stoppage.

Pack emergency equipment

Having the necessary items on hand in a car is extremely beneficial. In winter, it is helpful to have items like a warm jacket, gloves, a flashlight, and ice- and snow-removal tools. These items may come into play if you are in an accident, whether it is severe or not.

The gloves and jacket are used to keep yourself warm if you need to exit the vehicle to assess the situation or if you need to exit the vehicle entirely. Meanwhile, the flashlight can help you see in the dark. Finally, the tools for the purpose of clearing snow or ice from your vehicle can help you see the road. It is fairly common practice to store all of these items in one's car to prepare for a situation that might occur.

Check the traffic forecast

There are many online tools that allow you to check the traffic forecast before you leave home. These apps can let you know of any spin-out locations, areas with poor road conditions and any possible weather dangers that may require changes in the route you might be taking. Reviewing your

WINTER WEATHER continues on page 8

Cooper alumni gives back through AVID

Ms. Lieser, who graduated from the school in 2001, returned to Cooper as a teacher, AVID program coordinator



Photo by SHENG VANG

Ms. Lieser works with Hawks students in all grades during the AVID classes that are held each period in room 116.

By BRIGHT DEKU  
Quill staff writer

Ms. Lieser has one thing in common with the Hawks who take part in the AVID program she oversees at Cooper: she also was a student at this school. "I graduated from Cooper in 2001, and in the yearbook, I was voted most likely to be a Cooper teacher. It's funny that came true," Lieser said. After graduating from Cooper, Lieser attended college at the University of Minnesota, Morris. Once she graduated from college in 2005, Lieser worked as a substitute teacher and a

website manager for an apartment management company. For the 2006-2007 school year, she joined Americorps and moved to Boston to work as a reading support teacher in an elementary school. The following school year, Lieser moved back to Minnesota and worked at Hopkins North Junior High as a ninth grade civics teacher. After teaching at Hopkins for one year, she was hired by Cooper in 2008 as a social studies teacher. During her time in Cooper's social studies department, Lieser taught Geography, World History, EL U.S. History and Honors World History. Starting in the 2010-2011 school year, Lieser

helped develop and teach Cooper's first AVID classes, and during the following school year, she took over the role of coordinator for that program. "I work to recruit new students to join AVID. I also set up guest speakers to come and speak about their careers, colleges and opportunities for our students. I also set up field trips including ordering buses, communicating with colleges, organizing lunch, field trip forms and chaperones," she said. In addition to the student-focused aspects of her role, Lieser said she is responsible for helping her Cooper colleagues become more skilled in AVID

Hawks students share their New Year's resolutions

Whether they are academic or personal in nature, many teens have created goals to work toward during 2023

By SHENG VANG  
Quill staff writer

As the last 10 seconds before midnight hits on December 31, people everywhere gather and prepare for the New Year's Eve countdown. For many people, the new year marks new beginnings and a fresh start, perfect for setting goals and resolutions. As Cooper students headed into 2023, many shared their plans and goals for the new year.

**Precious Cephus** (11): "For next year, I want to focus more on my mental health and friendship. I want to leave all of the negativities aside."

**Ma-Hawa Solee** (12): "Next year, I just want to get through high school with no problem."

**Samya Currin** (10): "My New Year's resolution is to focus on what is important in my life."

**Sudais Hassan** (9): "I want to try the spicy challenge and get better at spice tolerance."

**Kristopher Oates** (10): "My New Year's goal is to focus on my sports and academics."

**Keethan Lee** (11): "Getting better and keeping my grades up at an A and B+



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

The start of a new year is often seen as a time to make changes in one's life. is my New Year's resolution."

**Emmanuel Karmo** (10): "I plan to play video games and try out some new ones."

**Rachael Baysah** (11): "During the new year, I want to pass all my classes, be a better version of myself and to be as beautiful and amazing as I am."

**Amanda Xiong** (12): "I currently do not have any plans or goals for the new year, but I will keep thinking."

**Gideon Wilson** (9): My New Year's resolution is to be better and have better grades."

**Marwen David** (11): "My goal for next year is to continue to grow even through the hard times, to continue to have self-discipline and to take it one day at a time."

**Remi Desalu** (10): "I want to have better grades and I wish to do better in a video game I have been playing next year."

**Nevaeh Pacheco** (11): "My goal is

strategies. "I spend time helping to share AVID information and AVID strategies with staff throughout our building, trying to help grow AVID strategies school-wide," Lieser said. Beyond her work as a teacher and AVID coordinator, Lieser has been involved at Cooper in other ways. When she first started teaching at the school, she helped oversee the spirit committee. "I organized homecoming and helped with snow week and spring fling," she said. Currently, Lieser is on the staff social committee, which "plans fun things for the Cooper staff to do together." Lieser also works with National Honor Society advisor Ms. Kilsdonk to organize American Red Cross blood drives at Cooper. "I was very excited to have made my 100th donation this past summer," Lieser said. Outside of school, Lieser said her focus is on her six-year-old son Isaac, who just started kindergarten, and her nine-year-old daughter Charlotte, who is in third grade. "I spend a lot of time with them. They love to read, play games, spend time outside and bake," Lieser said. Lieser also enjoys listening to music, being active and being social. "I really like organizing things like parties and gatherings," she said. "I also really love buying gifts for people. If I wasn't a teacher, I would love to be a personal shopper." In the meantime, Lieser said she enjoys being at Cooper and the connections she makes with her students. "I'm glad to be a Cooper teacher. I remember the day I got the call and was told that I was being offered a teaching position. I was so excited," Lieser said.

DIPLOMA CANDIDATES CELEBRATE SILVER PLATTER DAY continued from page 1

subject area was "Music" and her precise research question was: "How has modern harp technique developed in relation to the development of the instrument?" Helping her along the way was Ranstrom's EE supervisor, orchestra teacher Ms. Pflaum. Ranstrom said there were many aspects she enjoyed about the EE process. "It led to a lot of fascinating conversations with my harp teacher and I really enjoyed learning about the lives of the composers whose pieces I've played and the context they were written in," she said. At the same time, Ranstrom said there were many challenges during this process. "It was more challenging than I expected to find sources that addressed my question than I expected it to be at first, but, thankfully, another harpist friend gave me some tips on where to look," she said.

According to Ranstrom, the Silver Platter Day celebration is an important part of the EE process. "We spend so much time and hard work on all of our projects for IB, and especially the EE, so I think it's important and encouraging to have a celebration for the milestone of finally submitting our EEs. It gives us a time to finally be relieved and proud of ourselves for getting such a big project done before we have to move on to our IAs and exams," she said. Joining Ranstrom at the Silver Platter Day event was Panora, whose subject area was "Physics." Panora said his precise research question was, "How can the jump rope exercise be optimized by manipulating factors such as jump height and twirl rate?" Supervising this EE was Ms. Johnson, Panora's physics teacher. "What I enjoyed most about the process was being able to connect two things that I enjoy doing, creating an

experiment for it and writing an essay. I had just gotten into jump rope as a form of cardio and I decided to do some research of the physics behind the movement and find the energy transfers in it," he said. Much like Ranstrom, Panora said he faced some challenges during the EE process, including finding the correct tools to carry out the experiment and deriving the equations he would use in his research. "I was able to find the right equipment and was pointed in the right direction for the equations by my mentor," he said. As Panora's supervisor, Johnson said she enjoyed many things about the EE process. "I enjoyed looking deeper into a concept that I had never really thought deeply about," she said. Johnson said she thinks the Silver Platter Day celebration is an important part of the EE process for IB Diploma

candidates. "Silver Platter Day is important because it celebrates the hard work that has been completed throughout the year on their EE," she said. "It's like a reward." As for her personal participation in the celebration, Johnson said she enjoyed the 2022 event. "I did enjoy participating, it was quite quick. It was nice to see some students there. It would be nice to have more students see this so that they too can be excited about IB," she said. According to Christensen, having an audience attend the Silver Platter event is an important part of the celebration. "We got a lot of compliments from everyone this year. Families, in particular, appreciate the celebration, knowing how hard their students have worked to reach this day. The students particularly enjoyed taking selfies with our 'IB Done' frames," she said.

# Excuses for tardiness don't hold up

Although the hallways can be crowded, the five minutes allotted to get from class to class is more than enough time to do so

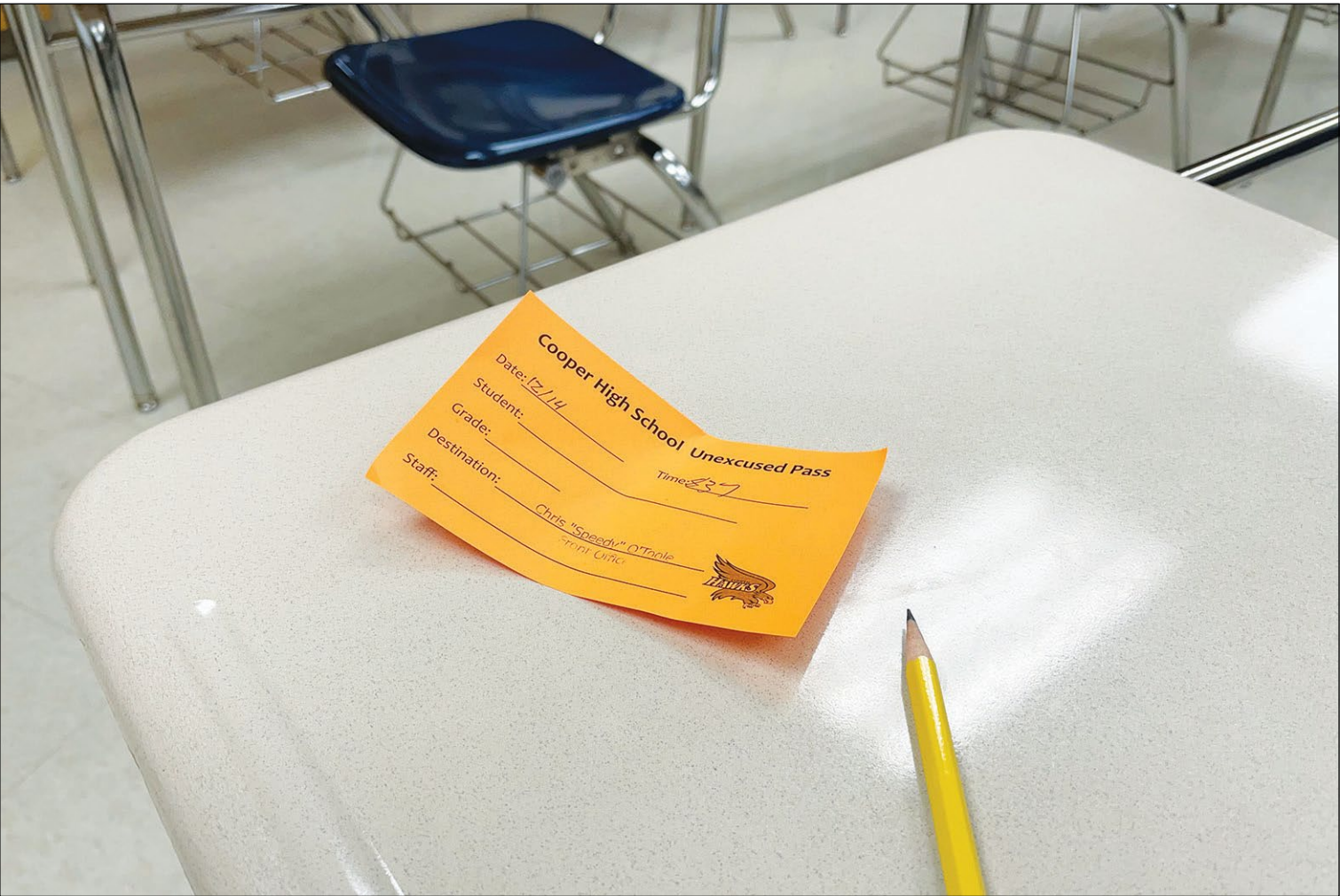


Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

The orange passes students receive when they are late have become an all-too-common sight at Cooper this school year.

Students who get to class on time may have noticed how late to class other students can be. One reason is that the hallways are super-crowded during passing time because of the number of students who just won't go to class. Also, the lockers of many students are located all the way across the school from wherever their next class is, which can make them late. Tardiness may also be due to the student not liking the specific teacher and not wanting to be in that teacher's class. No matter what the case is, classroom tardiness appears to be on the rise this year.

Some tardiness is caused by the hallways being more crowded with students who just don't seem to be too concerned about getting to class on time. With the large numbers of students who are not concerned about being punctual come more behaviors that affect hallway congestion. For example,

there are students who stop in front of the doors at the "Y" that lead to the stairs in order to talk to friends or turn around to go the opposite way despite the entire line of students behind them. It is highly irritating when another student stops you from walking to get to your class on time.

Locker location also plays a major role in tardiness. Is your locker all the way on the other side of school from where you have class? Do you have a hard time getting into your locker every time you go to put something in or take something out? Having a locker is helpful, but it can also be irritating. Struggling to get to, or into, your locker can be a reason for getting to class late. Of course, this isn't a good reason for being tardy because

you should already have what you need for your next class with you instead of going to your locker during every passing time to get what you need. While some people like to leave their lockers unlocked so they do not have to use the combination in order to save time, this can be unsafe

because people can easily access lockers. This results in additional tardiness.

Stopping to talk to friends is sometimes a factor that leads to tardiness. Friends can talk you into doing irresponsible things like being late to class. You can be on your way to class when one of your friends calls out to you; you don't want to be rude by continuing to walk away without saying anything, so your progress to class gets stopped. Certainly, an alternative

would be to tell them you need to get to class and you can pick up the conversation later. Although they might get irritated, you have to be responsible enough to get to class on time.

In some cases, tardiness happens when the students don't like the teacher. Not liking a teacher isn't surprising; it actually happens very frequently. If a student doesn't like a teacher, they might do anything to spend less time in that teacher's class, which could be their reason for being late.

Ultimately, there are many reasons why classroom tardiness may be on the rise this year. However, these reasons are not always good enough to justify missing out on your education. As high school students, we should be mature enough to plan ahead in order to make it to class on time. We should also be smart enough to make our learning a priority by being to class when the bell rings.

## From the Editors

# District responses to recent gun incidents fall short

Although officials have taken steps to better communicate with the public about weapons issues, more should be done

By OWEN SANDLUND  
*Quill* staff writer

Media coverage of Robbinsdale Area Schools is, sadly, rarely positive. However, the coverage has been negative for especially concerning reasons in recent months. This fall, multiple incidents connected to Robbinsdale Area Schools occurred that involved firearms. These ranged from shootings in the community that involved district students to guns on school premises and threats of violence. Given the range and kind of incidents that have taken place in a short time span, it is essential to analyze what can be improved going forward with our district's response to issues of this severity.

Some steps have already been taken to respond to the issue of weapons in school. For example, Robbinsdale Area Schools updated its weapons policy in December 2022 to comply with Minnesota standards, according to KARE 11. This updated policy requires immediate referrals to local law enforcement in situations involving dangerous weapons. This is a change from the delays of up to several days in reporting gun incidents to authorities this fall following the middle school incidents. While this change is welcome, there's still a lot to be desired by the district's response to issues of this sort.

One ongoing issue is that communication with the community and parents has been strained, which has been a common complaint for inhabitants of the district. CCX Media reported in November 2022 that many parents were upset with the lack of transparency when

it came to the weapons issues. As an example, after a gun incident occurred at Robbinsdale Cooper High School, an email was sent out and promptly deleted, leading to the only source of information being reposted on local Facebook pages by concerned and confused parents.

District communications with staff haven't been much better. In a November 18, 2022 email from Superintendent Mr. Engstrom to all district employees, there was a lack of direction, but an abundance of justification, concern-

which the district was forced to concede to in its new policy. They rounded out the email lamenting the country's "gun culture" being responsible for the presence of firearms; however, that is no excuse for incompetence in handling the reality of such a culture. If it is the case that our culture is in this state, there's even less of an excuse for such incompetence.

There are also some things I think the school district should act upon in addition to the security measures it has already taken. Firstly, at Robbinsdale Cooper

While Robbinsdale Area Schools was recently in the news for all the wrong reasons, I hope going forward we can learn from these mistakes and improve upon them. In this case, it is an absolute necessity to do so, as lives are being threatened by the district's lack of action on weapons.

ing middle school gun incidents. Within the email, he wrote, "As soon as school leaders learned about the situations, they launched investigations to determine if the incidents involved the schools or their students...and turned the matters over to local law enforcement." Essentially, this defended the tardiness of turning over the information to police as an admirable effort by school investigators. Personally, I would feel safer if these incidents were immediately turned over to the police,

High School, many of the side doors are not secured. Students often leave through these side doors throughout the day without staff approval. This is a big security risk as students or others could also easily enter these doors with help throughout the day. Weak spots like this could lead to a gun incident on a scale we have so far avoided. I feel the school district should begin drills in collaboration with law enforcement or hire an outside firm to advise improvements that could be made

to prevent a nightmare scenario from ever occurring.

Secondly, education about firearms is incredibly important. In elementary school, I remember taking a health course in which we talked about firearms, but that was many years ago. Firearms are a really serious thing. Firearms are dangerous but they are also incredibly common with more than a third of U.S. households containing a gun according to the Violence Policy Center in 2021. Robbinsdale Area Schools should consider teaching firearm safety or just requiring education on the topic so students understand the reality of guns. Throwing some instruction at them years ago and just lamenting that guns are off-limits is clearly not enough and ignoring the issue is not an option in a country with such a "gun culture."

Thirdly, I think restorative justice programs need to be expanded. These programs teach students how to resolve conflicts in peaceful and constructive ways instead of turning to violent alternatives. On a similar note, I hope moving forward Robbinsdale Area Schools continues increasing both security and mental health infrastructure. However, one thing that cannot be negotiable is students possessing firearms. A zero-tolerance approach is a necessity for cases of that magnitude.

While Robbinsdale Area Schools was recently in the news for all the wrong reasons, I hope going forward we can learn from these mistakes and improve upon them. In this case, it is an absolute necessity to do so, as lives are being threatened by the district's lack of action on weapons and security.

# Onlookers make in-school fights more dangerous

Students who instigate physical conflicts should face heavy consequences

By DAMARIUS HAMILTON  
*Quill* staff writer

Most students have the same mindset for every school fight they see. When a student sees a fight, their first idea is to get loud so more people come to watch until there is an unnecessary number of people watching. The next thing they do is pull out their phones and record until it's over. These behaviors may seem fun at the time, but they create an environment that is even more dangerous for the people fighting, the people watching and the adults who are trying to take care of the situation. Whether it is the students who are fighting or the students who are watching, there are many things about fighting at school that do not make sense.

It's easy to think all students want to watch school fights, but some students genuinely just mind their business and keep walking to class. I respect that because I usually just ignore the fights and go to class. While I can't completely say why anyone else might ignore the fights, I ignore them because I'm not getting anything out of watching the fight. Of course, no one else is either, but I guess they still enjoy watching the fight. This brings up an important point: I feel like if you are going to watch the fight, you should help stop the fight, especially if it's clear someone is getting more hurt than the other person. I know students aren't

This brings up an important point: I feel like if you are going to watch the fight, you should help stop the fight, especially if it's clear someone is getting more hurt than the other person.

required to break fights up, but I feel as if there is nothing wrong with breaking them up as long as you can do so without getting hurt. I also feel like the hall monitors would appreciate it if students safely broke up fights because it would make their job easier.

Of course, not having a fight in the first place would make everyone's life easier. I know teachers and staff members often give students advice like: if you have a problem with someone, tell someone. However, from a student's point of view, that's not something most of us would want to do or be comfortable doing. This brings up the important role student-teacher relationships can play in avoiding fights. If a student is comfortable with a teacher or staff member, there is a better chance that student will tell them about problems they have with another student. Unfortunately, some students don't have a staff member or teacher they feel comfortable enough with to talk to about things like that, and they don't want to tell a principal or counselor, so they try to avoid getting in trouble with the student they have a problem with. Sadly, the student can't avoid this kind of problem forever, especially if the other person is making the situation worse, so they sometimes feel like they just have to handle the situation themselves through a fight.

Another behavior that is of concern when it comes to

IN-SCHOOL FIGHTS continues on page 8

Chromebooks can help, hinder student success

While the devices are key to completing school work, they can also be a distraction

By LLEWELLYN BOUTHIM  
Quill staff writer

Chromebooks are used for many tasks during the school day ever since they were first introduced to students in the Robbinsdale School District nearly a decade ago. Chromebooks can provide educational help and more freedom to do work wherever and whenever a student desires. The thought of having your very own personal computer to complete classwork seems astounding to younger students when they first start using them in elementary and middle school. However, as the years go by, students start using their Chromebooks for other, less educational purposes. Movie websites, proxies, gaming websites, video streaming websites: these are all things students now access on their Chromebooks that are not part of the primary purpose of having the device. The question this raises is whether or not the Chromebooks have become a distraction to students.

I would argue that the problem isn't the Chromebooks, but the internet. The district is giving students a great deal of freedom on the internet to go where they want and do what they like. While there is no way to block the entire internet, the district has put up walls to certain websites and has instituted strict rules and regulations around which sites users are permitted to visit. Despite this, the potential distraction for students accessing the internet with their Chromebooks is still a concern.

There has been student backlash when some sites are blocked. The freedom that we are getting on our Chromebooks seems to become smaller and smaller when this happens. But perhaps these restrictions are for the greater good? Perhaps we need that freedom to shrink so that we may focus on the task at hand? The primary goal of the Chromebooks was to provide education for students. Chromebooks are a way to communicate between teacher and student, not to watch sport highlights.

Compounding the distractions Chromebooks provide are the technical problems. Chromebooks get broken, whether it is cause by someone kicking them across the room or by an internal problem with the software. Fortunately, Chromebooks can be fixed and the school has tech teams that specialize in fixing them. Of course, one irony is that the loaners sometimes seem to work better than our actual Chromebooks.

Is the digital age of education brought to us through Chromebooks as good as, or even better than, the old days? Should we go back to how it used to be by writing in notebooks instead of typing on Chromebooks? I am not sure. Chromebooks have helped people in terms of work, but they have doomed people in terms of distractions. They could be used as tools for education or tools for entertainment. There are many pros and cons to the use of Chromebooks in school. The real question is: are you using yours in a way that benefits your own education or are you using it as a way to benefit your own social life?

It's not too late to get involved at Cooper

Whether it is joining a sports team or taking part in a club, students have many options for engaging in school life



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

Many students visit the weight room after school to take part in Cooper's fitness program, which is just one of many activities available to interested Hawks.

By YUSEFF SHABAZZ  
Quill staff writer

Have you been thinking about joining a sport or activity after school? Maybe your friends are in one and they won't stop talking about it. Perhaps you always liked playing a sport for fun but want to join a real team and get competitive. Cooper has many sports and activities to offer students, but our school's participation rates are much lower than they could be. I think all students should figure out some way to get involved given the many benefits associated with taking part in school sports and activities.

What's so good about join-

ing a sport? Why should you care about taking part in after-school activities? Whether it is football, step, dance or band, joining a sport or activity can be a great experience. Once you find what your interest is, it's nice to be around people with similar or the same goals. These sports and activities can help you build bonds and life skills that will go beyond the sport or activity.

According to youth.gov, taking part in school sports and activities can lower drop-out rates and help close achievement gaps for low-income students. Additionally, after-school sports and activities boost social, emotional and academic development.

I have personal experience with this component of getting involved following my decision to join the wrestling team. I joined wrestling because I used to do it for fun with my brother, who also wrestled. I knew getting involved with the Cooper wrestling team would keep me in shape; plus, my friends were also on the team. I ended up really liking it and am glad I chose to join.

Of course, what encouraged me to join wasn't just the achievement gap or the social and academic development I would experience, although these are definitely real benefits. Instead, I just wanted to experience being on a team, getting competitive and

showcasing my talent. There's just something special about doing an activity you like or are interested in and doing it well. Seeing the work you've put in pay off and seeing the results of the practice is something that makes school sports and activities unique.

While after-school sports and activities will sometimes challenge you, with patience and persistence, they will also reward you for overcoming those challenges. The school's many sports and activities will teach you patience, confidence and discipline. Most importantly, they will also teach you to believe in yourself. So don't wait around wondering if you could be great at a Cooper sport or activity. Go try one.

Late morning buses are having negative impact on students

Hawks who rely on district transportation to get to school are sometimes not arriving at Cooper until the end of first period

By DAMARIUS HAMILTON  
Quill staff writer

Some buses have been arriving late at Cooper in the morning every day this school year. These late arrivals are primarily due to bus scheduling problems that resulted from the change in high school start times. While there was hope that these problems would get fixed, there are still some buses dropping off students well after first period has started. The late arrivals are having a big impact on students and their ability to do well in school.

First of all, it should be noted that not all buses are late. A majority of the bus routes are scheduled so that students get to school before the start of first period. It should also be remembered that the late buses are not always the fault of the drivers. The drivers are just following their assigned routes and they have pick-ups and drop-offs of younger kids before they deal with the high school students.

Further complicating things at this time of the year is the weather. When the conditions outside are bad, drivers may get behind on their routes. This means that students have to stand at their bus stops for longer periods of time in the



Photo by SHENG VANG

The morning line-up of buses is often missing a few of the expected vehicles.

cold. While high schoolers are mature enough to dress appropriately in order to stay warm and comfortable outside, no one wants to stand out in the cold longer than necessary, no matter how warm they are. Most students waiting at a stop for a late bus are likely to give it 10-15 minutes before giving up and going home. While some parents may be able to drive the student to school or at least call the attendance line in these situations, others cannot, which means the student is out of luck. This leads to

the student having a bad start to their day.

While the bus problems are not necessarily related to actions of the drivers, the late arrivals are definitely having an impact on students. Late buses lead to fewer students coming to school or getting there on time, and fewer students coming to school or getting there on time leads to bad attendance and bad grades. When students are absent or late due to busing, they miss out on important information in class, not to mention formative and summative assignments. This can

result in a student always being behind, which can cause them to give up and not earn their required class credits.

The late buses also have an impact on the school's staff. The adults in the building have high hopes for the students. Staff members want the students here and in class in order to get their education. When students are absent or late due to busing, staff members need to make many adjustments to what is happening in the classroom or in locations like the cafeteria, where late students still need to get access to their morning breakfast. When students feel like staff members want them at school, it gives the students more motivation to get up and wait for the bus so they can go to school. However, when the buses don't cooperate, everyone pays the price.

The primary solution to the bus problem would be to better time the routes so everyone can make it to Cooper before school starts. If that is not possible, students should be more considerate about getting to first period as soon as possible if they are on a late bus. Another thing we can do is make sure the staff remains patient with students who are late due to situations they can't control. Hopefully, this will not be an issue next school year.

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NSPA

# Avatar sequel is flawed but engaging

Twelve years after the release of the original film, James Cameron returns with his long-awaited follow-up



Photo by 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS

The intricate character design created through advanced CGI is a highlight of the new movie.

By OWEN SANDLUND  
Quill staff writer

It's been more than a decade since the release of James Cameron's original *Avatar* in 2009. The movie was a massive success, earning billions of dollars and establishing itself as a pop culture phenomenon. Since then, multiple greenlit sequels, more than \$100 million in merchandise sales and even a theme park attraction at Disney World have all resulted from a single movie about alien cats fighting a mining company. Being five years old when the first movie came out, I never really understood what drove it to become such a success, but with *Avatar: The Way of Water*'s release in 2022, I found myself getting interested in the series, hoping I could understand the draw of Pandora.

*Avatar: The Way of Water* is a 2022 20th Century Studios production directed by James Cameron. Outside

of *Avatar*, Cameron has directed films like 1997's *Titanic* and the first two *Terminator* movies. A common theme throughout his most recent work is a focus on nature and romance. The first *Avatar*, for example, was completely lacking in good dialogue and characters, but it featured well-crafted relationships, not to mention the wonderful spectacle of Pandora and engaging action scenes. In that film, the main character, Jake Sully, was a depressed and disabled veteran who was escaping a comparatively dull reality on Earth to feel alive in the land of Pandora. The good news is that the sequel captures the land of Pandora even better than the original, which is of benefit to the audience.

*Avatar: The Way of Water* is a blend of science fiction and action that at times feels like an IMAX nature documentary. The plot follows Jake Sully and his Na'vi family as they find themselves pursued by familiar foes as

humans, or skywalkers, return to the planet Pandora in a bid to colonize it as a new home for humanity as Earth slowly dies. As the growing conflict begins to threaten their family, Jake, his partner Neytiri and their four children seek out an ocean tribe of Na'vi and learn their ways.

The movie is more than three hours long and it starts with a summary of events that happened since the 2009 movie. As a sequel, it is not necessary to watch the first movie to enjoy it, as there is a lot of exposition that is needed to explain the events involved in the time jump from when we last saw the *Avatar* universe. However, seeing the first film would be helpful to fully understand the story. Watching *Avatar* for the first time around a week before seeing *The Way of Water* on Disney+ greatly improved my viewing experience.

The main chunk of the three-hour film follows Sully's family as they

adapt to their new environment at a reef village. This is where the movie really begins to shine, as Cameron is able to build an entire ocean ecosystem full of vibrant colors, original creatures and appropriate lore to go along with all of it.

While the environment is wonderful, and makes the movie incredibly enjoyable, Cameron struggles to properly develop all of the characters introduced in the film. The development of Jake's two sons, for instance, is relatively well done and it is interesting to watch them come to terms with being perceived as outsiders by the other reef Na'vi. However, Sully's daughters feel like after-thoughts that are being established merely to become future plot points during later installments in this series.

At the same time, the Sully character is a lot more enjoyable in the new film. The poor internal monologue and stock remarks of the first film are toned down, making the character feel much wiser.

When it comes to the story itself, I found myself suspending disbelief and just turning off my brain at times to fully immerse myself in the movie. Sometimes, characters just disappear in fight scenes for plot convenience, while on other occasions, entire locations are just forgotten about. The conflict is not very original either, as the antagonist is a literal clone from the first film.

This sense of repetition also applies to the ending of *The Way of Water*, which is a long fight scene that is similar to the one featured in the first film. While it is intense and well done, a certain fatigue sets in as it goes on. In this sequence, deaths of some key characters occur, but it is hard to fully feel the impact of them when the action just keeps on going.

The movie's eventual ending is heavily tied to the sea and nature, which helps unify this movie with the first one. However, given that Jake and Neytiri are much stronger than they are in the

**AVATAR SEQUEL**  
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# New Overwatch falls short for serious gamers

Issues with character balance have not been adequately addressed since the game's release, which has frustrated many players

By JESSE GARCIA  
Quill staff writer

*Overwatch 2* is the 2022 sequel to the widely successful 2016 game *Overwatch*, made by Blizzard Entertainment. While the sequel game was speculated about for an extremely long time, and many fans wished to hear word about it, not much was said about it by the company. As such, when *Overwatch* began to lose players, the company finally announced the new game. Some would say this announcement, and the new game, came too late.

One big change with *Overwatch 2* is that it is a free game. This is an incredibly welcome change, as many fans noticed very early into development that *Overwatch 2* was extremely similar to the original game. In fact, due to the overwhelming amount of similarity between the two games, many people were hesitant to enter the new game. Despite this, *Overwatch 2* had an extremely successful launch in 2022.

Unfortunately, soon into the game's release, players noticed "cracks" in the game. The game launched with three new characters. Meanwhile, a notable number of characters from the original game were reworked and changed in heavy ways. These changes were accepted by



Photo by BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT

Some characters in the new game seem virtually unstoppable.

players with mixed feedback. While the characters were extremely useful for content purposes, in terms of game and character balance, they created a rocky path for *Overwatch 2* players.

Character balance is a concept that affects many games, whether they are well-known games like *Street Fighter*, less-played games such as *Gundam Evolution* or the most-played game in the world, *League of Legends*. Character balance is a key aspect to many player-versus-player games, as there are many features and choices that help make your character the strongest. While this is a key factor in

every game, it has varying levels of impact. In some games, it is the entire foundation of the game, which is the case with *League of Legends*. For other games, it's merely a tool to further a player's skill, which can be seen in *Street Fighter*.

Unfortunately, in *Overwatch 2*, players are experiencing an extreme gap between characters' strengths. While that would be normal for a newly released game, it is expected that they would have fixed it by the end of their first season, which has not happened. Upon the season concluding, a large number of players have

had problems with characters such as Sojourn, Roadhog and Kiriko. To normal people, this wouldn't seem that bad: three characters being much stronger isn't the worst thing possible in a five-versus-five game. However, it becomes a bigger problem when you look into the three characters added into *Overwatch 2*: Junker Queen, Sojourn and Kiriko.

While Junker Queen was very much under-powered, having seemingly no playability, Kiriko and Sojourn seemed to be able to do everything. Kiriko, the newest support character, has an ability to cleanse any status and temporarily make the person hit by her "Protection Suzu" invulnerable. Also, the character has a movement ability that allows her to teleport to an ally within range. Taken together, these traits make her strong but not necessarily dominant, especially because her burst healing abilities are only mediocre.

The problems start to be shown when looking at Kiriko's primary fire. This is a Kunai that she throws that deals 40 damage on a bodyslot and 120 on a headshot. This is extremely strong, as most characters only have 200 health. Coupled with this is her

**NEW OVERWATCH**  
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# Films in Twilight series still hold up one decade later

Watching each of the four movies back to back is a great way to appreciate the storytelling strengths of this famous franchise

By REANA GREEN  
Quill staff writer

The *Twilight* saga is a series of films directed by Catherine Hardwick, Chris Weitz, David Slade and Bill Condon that are based on the books by Stephanie Meyer. The first movie, *Twilight*, was released in 2008. Following that film's success were the releases of *New Moon* in 2009, *Eclipse* in 2010, *Breaking Dawn, Part 1* in 2011 and *Breaking Dawn, Part 2* in 2012. I chose to revisit this series of films because they have been a part of my whole life after my brother first became obsessed with

them when I was four years old and the first movie came out. As I grew up and matured, I could grasp the more profound concept of the films rather than just this background sound that I heard as a toddler. I've always been very fond of these films. They are each a work of art that was ahead of its time in how everything is portrayed. Overall, the films in the *Twilight* saga use lighting, makeup and cinematography to demonstrate character progression and emotion throughout their journey.

In the series, Bella (Kristen Stewart) is a human girl who falls in love with a vampire named Edward (Robert Pat-

inson). Meanwhile, Bella's best friend, Jacob (Taylor Lautner), is a werewolf who declares his love for her after Edward ends their relationship. When Edward and Bella get back together, they get Jacob and his werewolf pack to help them fight an evil vampire. Edward and Bella eventually get married and become pregnant with a human-vampire hybrid that slowly begins to kill Bella throughout the pregnancy.

One scene in *New Moon* that shows how effective this series is in connecting with audiences is when Edward disappears, which sends Bella into a depressive state. We see Bella sitting

in a chair, emotionless and empty, looking out her bedroom window. As the camera pans around her head, we see another month and the season changing through the window every time we return to her face. This scene uses a panning technique to make apparent the lack of motivation and depression Bella endures while Edward is gone. This shows how much Edward affects Bella and how depression can tamper with your physical and mental health. We see Bella in the same clothes, po-

**TWILIGHT SERIES**  
continues on page 7

# Marriage Story boasts excellent acting, direction

Director Noah Baumbach creates a thoughtful film about family relationships

By SOPHIA BERG  
Quill staff writer

Director Noah Baumbach's new movie, *White Noise*, started streaming on Netflix in December 2022. This is the most recent movie he made for that company following his 2019 movie *Marriage Story*. One of the main reasons I decided to review *Marriage Story* is because it's one of my favorite movies. It has such raw acting that allows the audience to experience what the characters are going through emotionally. For audience members who have either gone through a divorce or been a child of divorced parents, the movie accurately depicts a family dealing with the struggles and side effects of divorce. The Noah Baumbach movie *Marriage Story* uses certain filmmaking techniques to create emotional scenes to accentuate the toll a divorce can have on a family.

The plot of *Marriage Story* revolves around what happens when a New York City theater director, Charlie (Adam Driver), and his movie actress wife, Nicole (Scarlett Johansson), decide to split up after a decade-long marriage. Although the divorce process is horrible, the couple struggles to make it work for the sake of their eight-year-old son, Henry (Azhy Robertson). Further complicating things is their eventual hiring of divorce lawyers and their overlapping connections to shared friends and family members.

One filmmaking technique I found to be effective in the movie is the use of music. In the very opening scene of *Marriage Story*, it starts with music as Charlie is discussing what he loves about Nicole. During this dialogue, there's a very bright orchestral song playing in the background. This music makes the scene feel sentimental and adoring. The use of music during this scene allows emotion and passion to be experienced by the audience. Without music in this clip, it wouldn't be as emotional and engaging.

A second filmmaking technique that has a big impact is the use of makeup. During Nicole's first session with her divorce lawyer Nora (Laura Dern), she begins to cry as she discusses her memories and life with Charlie. The use of makeup during this scene makes Nicole look distraught. They make her eyes red and puffy to accentuate the idea she is exhausted and distressed. Using makeup during this scene really allows the audience to connect with Nicole. Her emotions are so raw and relatable during this scene that it makes the audience sympathize with her.

I believe the main message of Noah Baumbach's movie *Marriage Story* is how divorce can affect all of a person's relationships. A scene that supports this claim is when Nicole goes over to Charlie's apartment to discuss their ongoing custody battle over their son Henry. Their conversation leads to an argument about their marriage to each other and how it affected them. This scene connects with the main idea for the reason that they're fighting due to the strain in their relationship from an ongoing divorce. In my opinion, the main idea is flawless. Baumbach represents the main objective excellently with his use of filmmaking techniques.

Overall, the Noah Baumbach movie *Marriage Story* uses filmmaking techniques to create emotional scenes that show the effects a divorce can have on a family. I love *Marriage Story* because it's such an emotional and heartfelt movie. The music choices used in the movie are beautiful and fit the scenes well. I believe Baumbach directed the movie perfectly. He is able to get the particular tone that is needed for the movie. Additionally, the actors do an amazing job of giving their full dedication to their roles. *Marriage Story* deserves five out of five stars.

## Premier Performers

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

### Arlo Hollander

By ALEXIS WILLIAMS  
Quill staff writer

Arlo Hollander (12) is a musician in band. Hollander said he first started band in fifth grade.

"My sister had been in orchestra in elementary school and I decided that I wanted to do music, too," he said.

The thing Hollander enjoys most about band is seeing his musical progress.

"Evaluating your own ability can be a blinding process, for both the good and the bad, but it is such a gratifying thing when you can finally understand how far you've come and how far you can go," he said.

Hollander's favorite memory in band took place his freshman year during the annual fall festival.

"I had the privilege to play a con-

cert on Orchestra Hall's stage. I consider that moment to be a great inspiration towards my love of music," he said.

In addition to band, Hollander is the senior drum major for the Cooper Marching Band.

"I hold a lot of the responsibilities, from conducting to teaching," he said.

Outside of school, Hollander is a member of the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphony Orchestra and the Minnesota Youth Jazz Band. He also will be playing with the All-State Jazz Band and University of Minnesota Honor Band.

In addition to music, Hollander is in sports. Currently, he is a captain for the Cooper Nordic ski team, a position he "cherishes very much."

After graduating, Hollander will pursue a degree in music performance, concentrating on classical tenor trombone.



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

### Ma-Hawa Solee

By NEMO PONDER  
Quill staff writer

Ma-Hawa Solee (12) is a part of the Cooper choir program and takes part in a select ensemble group. She said she has been singing for a long time now.

"I have been singing for two years," Solee said. "I started singing because it was the only way I could tell how I was feeling inside."

Solee said the reason she really enjoys singing is because she can communicate what she is feeling through music.

"What I enjoy about the choir is that I can express my feelings through singing," she said.

According to Solee, one of her favorite memories of singing occurred when she was performing alone.

"My favorite memory was singing by myself. I felt joy and a smile on my

face and, at that moment, I knew I was never going to stop singing," she said.

Given Solee's year-round participation in choir, she said she will have many chances to perform during the second semester of the school year.

Outside of her work in choir, Solee said she is a dedicated student in her other classes. Of her many courses this year, she said she likes psychology the most.

"I enjoy psychology because I have been interested in being a psychologist someday," she said.

When she is not at school, Solee said she likes to keep busy.

"I enjoy cooking, drawing, watching movies and reading," she said.

Next fall, Solee wants to go to college and get her degree.

"I plan on going to a four-year college to study psychology," she said.



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

### Harriet Osoro

By BRIGHT DEKU  
Quill staff writer

Harriet Osoro (12) is involved in Cooper's Concert Choir group. Osoro said she has been taking part in choir for four years.

"I started doing choir because I needed it as one of my electives for credit, but by the end of freshman year, I realized I enjoyed being in choir and singing and decided to continue being in it," she said.

What Osoro has enjoyed most about choir is learning new songs and being able to perform them at concerts alongside her friends. Meanwhile, her favorite Concert Choir memory took place in May 2022.

"I got chosen to go to Gustavus and participate in the honor choir," she said. "It was an amazing experience, and

if I could go again, I definitely would."

As she looks forward to the rest of the school year, Osoro said she will have plenty of events taking place related to choir. She said they will be performing at an annual winter concert and taking part in the eighth grade musical festival.

Outside of her music class, Osoro said her favorite classes in school are related to math.

"I enjoy challenging myself with math equations and learning new things," she said.

When she is not at school, Osoro said she enjoys "hanging out with the people [she] loves most, shopping, making TikToks and reading."

Next fall, Osoro will be attending college. However, she said that, at this point, her major has "yet to be decided." Osoro added that she is considering singing at college.



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

### Bailey Phillips

By ALEXIS WILLIAMS  
Quill staff writer

Bailey Phillips (12) is involved in the Cooper choir program. She said she has now been in choir for two years.

"I started choir because I love singing and I knew it would be a fun experience to meet new people," Phillips said.

During the time she has spent in choir, Phillips said she has enjoyed getting to know her fellow singers.

"I enjoy being around such amazing people in the class and it is always a good way to set aside other school work and focus on an activity I love," Phillips said.

One of her favorite experiences during her two years in choir has been the district's fall festival.

"I really enjoyed performing at Orchestra Hall, especially the song 'Refu-

gee,'" Phillips said.

As she moves into the second half of the school year, Phillips said she is looking forward to continuing her work with choir. In fact, Phillips cites choir as her favorite class this year, along with her English class.

"English is my strong suit because I love writing and reading," Phillips said. "I like choir because it is fun and I get to use my voice."

Phillips said her outside-of-school interests are going to the gym, playing sports, listening to music and going to dance clubs.

After graduating from Cooper, Phillips said she will be going to the University of St. Thomas to get her bachelor's degree in psychology.

"I am going to continue doing clubs at St. Thomas for choir and possibly dance," Phillips said.

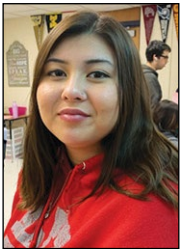


Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

## Third *Witcher* features great gameplay

Popular open-world video game is based on successful series of fantasy novels



Photo by CD PROJEKT

One consistently compelling highlight of *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* is its well-developed story.

By CHIMUAL VANG  
Quill staff writer

*Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* is an open-world, role-playing, choose-your-own-adventure game released by CD Projekt in 2015 for PC, Nintendo Switch, Xbox and PlayStation systems. As the most recent installment in the *Witcher* series, *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* is seen as being the best of the series because of the effective ending it provides to the trilogy of games.

Following the fantasy novels of the *Witcher* series, the game takes place in a fictional world of Slavic mythology. The user plays as Geralt of Rivia, a hired monster slayer, called a Witcher, as he is on the search for his missing adopted daughter, Ciri. At the same time, he is also on the run from a Wild Hunt by other Witchers.

While the main story consists of Geralt's adventure, the three possible main endings and 40 extra DLC endings are the result of the actions of the player in the game. The endings revolve around Ciri becoming a Witcher herself, Ciri becoming the empress or Ciri dying during the war of the White Frost.

The first ending, the special ending, transpires when Geralt makes more positive choices during the mission's finale, which is known as the "Blood on the Battlefield" sequence, and decides not to visit the Emperor of Nilfgaard. After the "Blood on the Battlefield" ends, and Geralt wins the war against the White Frost, Geralt will meet the Emperor, say his farewells after the war and return to White Orchard, a former garrison, where he will finally reunite with Ciri, now an adult woman, who is eager to prove herself as a full-blooded Witcher.

Next up is the second ending, the good ending. This ending occurs when Geralt makes more positive choices during the mission's "Blood on the Battlefield" sequence by visiting the Emperor of Nilfgaard after winning the war against the White Frost. In this ending, a phenomenon where

the world is slowly engulfed with endless winter takes hold. After returning to White Orchard, a former garrison, Geralt reunites with Ciri and they go on a brief stroll to have a father and daughter moment with light conversation.

When they return to the garrison the following evening, they are greeted by Nilfgaardian soldiers, at which point Ciri finally expresses to her father Geralt that she must claim the Nilfgaardian throne in order to change their world in a positive way and finally bring an end to the monsters that were birthed on their lands. After a final goodbye, she is escorted back to Nilfgaard and Ciri becomes the empress and sovereign ruler of the kingdom.

Finally, the third ending, the bad ending, stems from Geralt making more negative choices during the mission's finale in the "Blood on the Battlefield." In this case, Geralt warns Ciri to not engage in the war, which results in her losing faith in herself against the White Frost. After the loss of the war, Ciri is proclaimed killed in action, and Geralt leaves to seek vengeance, managing to find her stolen medallion, the only thing she left behind. The game then ends with Geralt grieving as he is surrounded by monsters.

Outside of these main endings, there are 40 extra DLC endings. These options involve side missions and various character relationships that give the player a chance to decide which other NPCs they want to bond with and trust.

Within the game, Geralt of Rivia's combat system allows the player two main options: light attacks and heavy attacks. Light attacks are weaker but much swifter when it comes to battling enemies. Meanwhile, heavy attacks are much more deadly given their damage, but they are also much slower. Within the world of the *Witcher* games, enemies are capable of adapting and learning, countering and blocking. As a result, the combat system allows the player to become more versatile

and lucid with their own fighting style.

Another aspect of the combat system involves character armaments. Geralt of Rivia carries two swords with him that the player also has to use to their advantage: a steel sword and a silver sword. Steel is better equipped for fighting humanoid enemies with more efficiency, while silver is better equipped for fighting monster-like enemies with efficiency.

Quick slotting with ranged weapons and magic is also available during the game. However, players should keep in mind that these elements have a limit due to the Witcher gauge, which dictates how Geralt can use his Witcher powers. In fact, it is important to use these elements with caution. If Geralt uses his Witcher powers too often, he will himself become a monster as a side effect.

As for other game features, dodging with the movement keys and countering with the blocking key in time can allow the player to catch an enemy off guard. If close combat isn't efficient for an enemy, ranged combat is the best way to go. Players should remember that magic can weaken an enemy and enemies can weaken you as a player depending on your capabilities.

I believe *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* is one of the most well-crafted games ever made in the RPG genre. Following the amazingly well-written story from parts one and two, part three of the game ends the trilogy in a spectacular way. The gameplay is complex but extremely intriguing as you learn how to fight against each kind of enemy. In fact, encountering a new enemy is the best experience in *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* because it allows you to refine your skills. Not only do you learn more about the world, you also become stronger and more versatile. Since the story of *Witcher 3* is not for the faint of heart, I rate it a three out of five stars. However, for my tastes, I would say the entire trilogy of *Witcher* games earns five out of five stars.

## Gripping plot drives Reid's *Seven Husbands*

The 2017 Taylor Jenkins Reid release is the first in her "famous women" quartet of novels

By LA'SHAYA TAYLOR  
Quill staff writer

*The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* was published in June 2017 and written by Taylor Jenkins Reid. This was Reid's fifth novel, but the first to gain critical acclaim and become a commercial success. It was also the first in what she called her "famous women" quartet of novels that went on to include 2019's *Daisy Jones & The Six*, 2021's *Malibu Rising* and 2022's *Carrie Soto is Back*. *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* is a great book that will make you want to stay up all night to try and finish reading it.

The novel is about Hollywood icon Evelyn Hugo and her mysterious life, which includes

her seven husbands and countless Hollywood secrets. As the story begins, we meet Monique Grant, an unknown magazine reporter who Evelyn hires to write a memoir about all seven of her marriages. It is also in this memoir that Evelyn will let everyone know who was her one true love.

One thing I enjoyed about this novel is that Taylor Jenkins Reid does a good job at writing her story from different points of view. She chooses to write in the first person from Evelyn's perspective in the 1950s and the perspective of Monique in the present day. This choice helps readers have a better view of Hollywood life in the 1950s, which helps bring the book and its characters to life.

Another thing I love about

this novel is the suspenseful mood that Taylor Jenkins Reid sets in the way she chooses to write the novel. One example is while Evelyn is telling Monique a story about one of her ex-husbands. Although she begins telling this story early in the novel, Evelyn stops and decides to finish telling Monique the rest of the story at the end of the novel. This decision leaves Monique and the reader in suspense, which adds an appealing structure to the novel.

*The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* is a great book that effectively explores the essence of true love. Through Evelyn Hugo's adventures, readers learn that there is always more than meets the eye when it comes to romance. I rate this novel five out of five stars.

# Hawks team steps into spotlight

Under the guidance of Ms. Rucker, the squad is getting ready for its many 2023 performances

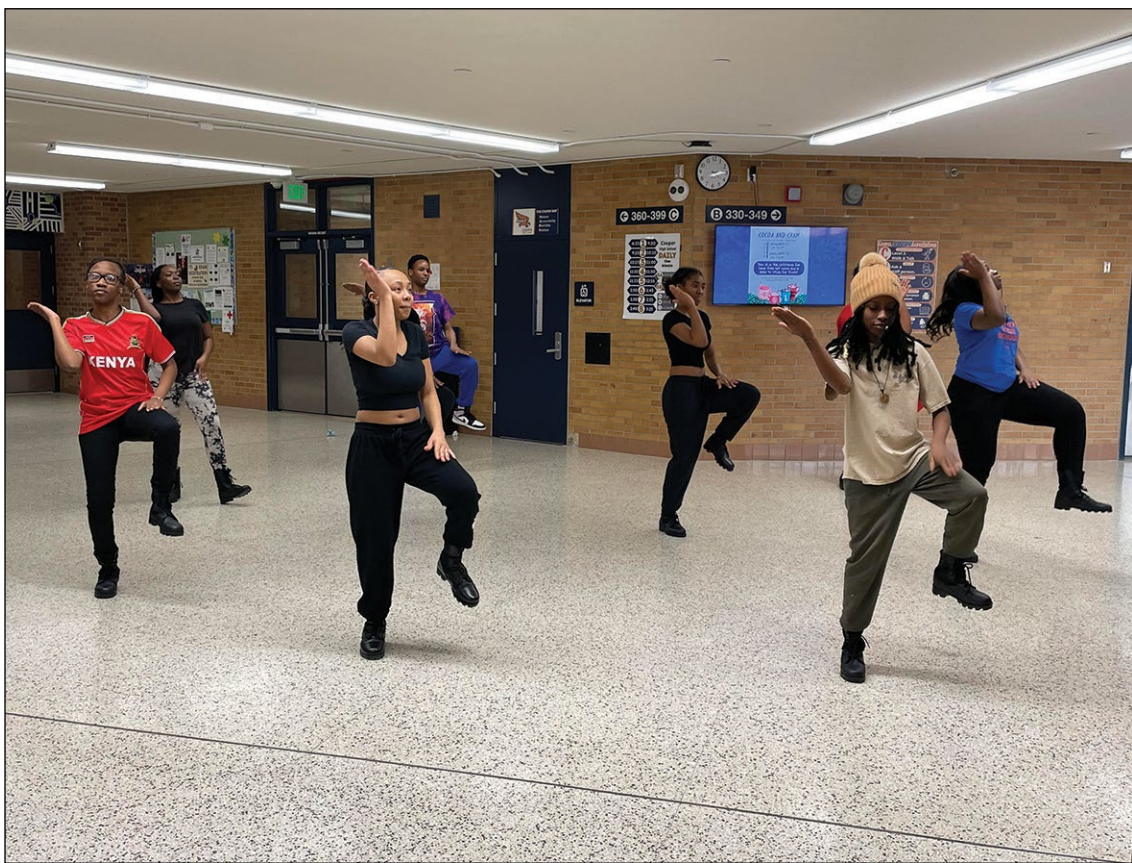


Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

The team meets after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the second- or third-floor Y to practice their routines.

By YUSEFF SHABAZZ  
Quill staff writer

Students who are looking for after-school opportunities at Cooper are encouraged to check out the school's step team. According to the squad's captain, Darien Muhen (11), the step team is a group that is "willing to work together to create a bond and a good community."

The step team is coached by Ms. Rucker, who is also Cooper's bookkeeper. The team typically meets after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays for practice. During a typical practice, team members meet at the second- or third-floor Y right after school. They start practice by running two laps from the main Y to the end of the hallway located by the elevator and back. After that, the team stretches, does commands and practices new routines.

"We basically go over our routines over and over again until we get it right and we feel the team has it down before we move on," D'Niyah Henderson (9) said.

The payoff for all of these practices are the step team's performances. The team usually appears at basketball games, Cooper pepfests and other special events outside of school.

"We actually had our first performance at our Cooper girls basketball game on December 9. We also get invited to middle schools, colleges, in-and-out-of-state events and competitions," Henderson said.

Members of the step team cited many different reasons for why they first got involved with the activity. Henderson, for example, said she was inspired by a movie to join the team this year.

"The movie was called *Step Sisters* and it was about a Black Greek sorority, Theta Chi Phi, that had to teach a white Greek sorority how to step for admission into Harvard Law School. As I saw her moves, I thought to myself, 'I could definitely do that,'" Henderson said.

Another team member who just joined this year is Aijah Jones (9). Jones said her involvement in other groups inspired her decision to get involved with step.

"The thing that got me to go for it was that I already did hip hop dance, but I wanted to try a different kind of way of dancing," she said. "Also, my mom encouraged me to do it and I love her for that."

Meanwhile, Muhen said her decision to join goes back to her freshman year, which was disrupted by COVID and distance learning.

"I wanted to start to get involved in activities at my school because, during my freshman year, we didn't really get the chance," she said.

Now that they are on the team, these three steppers agree that a highlight of being on the team is the camaraderie that develops between the team members.

"Step is not just a team, we're a

family at the end of the day," Muhen said. "We have each other's back and we go hard for each other. We have fun and we also get down to business when we need to and that's why the step team is so special and important to me."

According to Jones, another highlight of being on the team is getting exercise.

"I enjoy working with step because it gets you moving your body a lot and really gives you a workout, which I didn't know I needed," Jones said.

Another benefit of participating with step team relates to college. Henderson said this activity can lead to "better college opportunities."

Although the step team season is already in process, team members said it is not too late to get involved. Muhen cited several reasons why Cooper students should consider joining the team.

"You benefit from being involved in the step team by meeting people who are different from you but share so many things in common. Also, you get such amazing advice and life lessons from our advisor, Ms. Rucker, who is such an amazing person and really cares for us," Muhen said.

Students who are considering taking part in step team are encouraged to see Muhen or speak to Rucker in the school's main office.

"Being a part of this team has truly made me grow and become such an amazing person. I am forever grateful," Muhen said.

## FILMS IN *TWILIGHT* SERIES STILL HOLD UP continued from page 5

sition and expression on her face, with nothing changing except the bags under her eyes for months at a time.

Another important aspect of this scene is the addition of a blue hue to the images and the cold, rainy weather in the background. This is a way that the director shows emotion throughout the film without making every scene sad. The blue and rain is another way to show the sadness Bella is enduring. This technique brings depth and emotion to the film by portraying the world as gloomy so that the audience can see how Bella views the world because she is depressed. In addition, the audience can see how depression can affect a person's life in a terrible and traumatic way.

Another example of great filmmaking techniques in this series can be seen in *Breaking Dawn, Part 2*. In this film, makeup usage plays a significant role in showing Bella's change. There is a scene in which Bella is almost dead and is very malnourished after being turned into a vampire. Suddenly, Bella wakes up with these bright red eyes and looks better than ever. She's glowing and looks very healthy and refreshed. This transition shows Bella's new

awakening and how her future will be filled with happiness. This use of makeup helped show how vampires are portrayed in this world and how rather than being these lifeless humans, they're better than ever. These vampires have more life than they did when they were alive and human.

In contrast to the other *Twilight* films that use the blue hue, we see a warm, golden hue in *Breaking Dawn, Part 2*. This change represents the fact that Bella is happier than ever and can finally have her "happily ever after." We saw her overly depressed when Edward was gone; now, she can be with Edward forever. This subtle use of lighting and color temperature plays a crucial role in displaying internal happiness and satisfaction for Bella without going off track in the story. This technique moves the audience from this sad and heartbroken feeling to this warm and fuzzy feeling. These tiny aspects of the film tell us that Bella and Edward will get their happily ever after.

The overall message of the *Twilight* films is that love from another person can affect your emotional outlook on life and guide you to finding

happiness. In the closing scene of the series, Edward and Bella sit in a field of flowers, reminiscing about their journey together. We see that, through thick and thin, they always persevered and did everything to be together. This shows that love can overcome obstacles and bring out the best in someone.

Overall, the *Twilight* films use lighting, makeup and cinematography to show character progression and the ups and downs that come with love. I love this series because it is an emotional roller coaster. I love how the films guide the viewers' emotions through the use of filmmaking techniques like music, lighting and costuming. These elements make the saga memorable and exciting. The directors also did a fantastic job of portraying minor details from the books in the films, which ensured there weren't many blank spots or lost connections. Finally, the films' portrayal of high school life and family life is incredibly realistic, which brings a relatable aspect to the films despite the more unrealistic aspects of vampires and werewolves. As a whole, the *Twilight* series earns five out of five stars.

and the design of the various environments is interesting.

Also stronger in the new film is Pandora itself. It feels like a living, breathing world, not just an animated background for a film. The water environments of the new film often surpass the forest environments of the first *Avatar*.

After seeing *Avatar: The Way of Water* in theaters, I understand why it

is such a success. It is a film that completely takes audiences into a different world populated with characters with whom viewers feel safe and comfortable. While certain aspects of the film, like dialogue and character development, often fall short, *The Way of Water* still offers an escape to a wonderful and fantastic new reality. Overall, I give the new *Avatar* five out of five stars.

# Cooper Competitors

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

## Paris Riley

By NEMO PONDER  
Quill staff writer

Paris Riley (12) is a cheerleader. "I do football cheer in the fall season and then basketball cheer when we get to the winter season," Riley said.

Riley has been cheering since her junior year. She said her decision to cheer relates to her background in dance.

"In the past, I did majorette dance and cheer is the closest thing we have to that at school," she said.

Now that the basketball season has started, Riley has cheered at one of the home games so far. She said she enjoys cheering at the games.

"One thing I enjoy most is using my energy to support other people as they play their sports. I also love to dance and to help make up dances," Riley said.

According to Riley, she has some "really great memories" from cheer.

"One of my favorite memories is going out in front of the entire school and having 27 girls perform a dance that I made and choreographed," she said.

Riley's dedication to cheerleading has led to her being named captain of the fall and winter cheer squads.

"As captain, I have to do the dances and help out the members of my team. I also set up extra practices and team-bonding events," she said.

Riley also is devoted to her classes at Cooper.

"My favorite class this school year would have to be weight training. It is a nice way to get in a good workout every day at school," she said.

Next fall, Riley said she hopes to go to Harris Stowe State as an elementary education major.



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

## Jenny Lee

By BRIGHT DEKU  
Quill staff writer

Jenny Lee (12) participates in dance during the winter season. Before that, she took part in cheerleading during the fall. In the spring, she will play golf.

This is Lee's first season of doing dance as a winter sport.

"I wanted to try something new and so I decided to join the dance team with a couple of friends," she said.

One element Lee said she has been impressed by is "everyone's work ethic."

"I am excited to see how our season goes," she said.

Prior to joining dance, Lee took part in cheerleading in the fall. She said the 2022 season was great and she created "lots of awesome memories" with everyone on her team.

"I'm glad to have met a group of

people who also enjoy doing cheer," she said.

In the spring, Lee plans on taking part in golf. She said she thinks this upcoming season will be enjoyable.

"I convinced some of my friends to join the golf team and hope that we have a big team this year," she said.

When it comes to school, Lee said her favorite class is economics.

"I like the subject since it's something I want to major in," she said.

Outside of school, Lee likes to hang out with her friends and family. She also likes to watch shows and movies in her free time.

Next fall, Lee will attend college, where she will major in economics and minor in finance. She also will continue athletics.

"I like being involved and active," she said.



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

## Darius Mulbah

By ALEXIS WILLIAMS  
Quill staff writer

Darius Mulbah (12) is a member of the Hawks basketball team during the winter sports season. Prior to that, he played football in the fall. During the upcoming spring season, he will be playing baseball.

"I started playing basketball at the age of five," Mulbah said. "I started playing because of my cousin. He always played before he passed away."

Of the many things he enjoys about Cooper basketball, he said his relationship with his teammates is the most important.

"I enjoy the team bonding we have been having lately," he said. "It's a real family."

In addition to playing for Cooper, Mulbah is involved in AAU basketball.

He said his favorite basketball memory was when he got his "first interest and looks from a college" during a past AAU season.

During the fall season, Mulbah was part of the Hawks football team.

"Football was fun and I really enjoyed it with everyone that was on the team," he said.

While basketball and football are two sports Mulbah has pursued for many years, he said his interest in baseball is new.

"This will be my first time playing," he said.

Mulbah's interest in sports fills up much of his time outside of school.

"I do a lot of training for basketball outside of school," he said.

Next fall, Mulbah will attend college to major in sports medicine. He said he hopes to continue his basketball and football career at the college level.



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

## Taten Shroyer

By ALEXIS WILLIAMS  
Quill staff writer

Taten Shroyer (12) competes with the Hawks wrestling team in the winter season. He said he has been wrestling since he was in first grade.

"I play the sport because I am good at it and I enjoy it," he said.

Among the things he enjoys about wrestling are "all of [his] teammates." He also said he likes the energy it brings to be with the other team members and to compete at wrestling meets.

As he looks back at his time in wrestling, Shroyer said he especially enjoyed it when Cooper graduate Walter West "beat the wrestler from Osseo to go to state two years ago."

"I also liked the meet when I beat the wrestler from Armstrong," Shroyer added.

Due to his long history in the sport, Shroyer was named one of the team captains this year.

"Things have been going great so far this season," he said. "I really love leading this team."

Once the wrestling season is over, Shroyer said he is thinking about playing volleyball this spring "mostly for fun."

When it comes to school, Shroyer said he likes his English class this year because he really enjoys reading. Outside of school, he likes going to the gym and playing video games.

Next fall, Shroyer said he will be attending Minnesota West Community and

Technical College. He said he wants to major in childhood education and eventually become a teacher and coach. Additionally, Shroyer said he will continue wrestling in college.



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

## IN-SCHOOL FIGHTS

continued from page 3

school fights involves instigating a fight. I feel like the worst type of student is the one who instigates the fight before it happens. You would be surprised how often that actually leads to the fights we see at school. In these situations, I feel like not only the people fighting but the people instigating the fight should have to face consequences. It is important to remember that there is a difference between the instigators of a fight and the spectators. While the people who watch and record the fight are just there to be there, the actual instigators hype up the fight, make it louder and make the situation worse. These people also should get in trouble for the fight, not the people who are just fighting.

Clearly, there is a lot of blame to go around when it comes to behavior surrounding school fights. I think the staff members and teachers do the best they can to keep students safe, and I never feel like we are in danger when there are fights going on, but I understand why staff would think otherwise. Staff members and teachers can't really do anything when people in the school have a problem with each other. Of course, they try to de-escalate the situation and avoid having the fight happen, but that can only last for so long. If students decide they want to fight, they will do so or they will wait to do so when adults aren't around. Either way, I don't think the violence that goes on in the school is ever the school's fault because, the majority of the time, the cause of the fight relates to something outside of school. Ultimately, it is the students who are fighting that have made the poor decision of bringing their drama into the school.

## WINTER ILLNESSES

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who are out at one time with a similar illness in order to understand what is circulating in the population at any given time. If needed, Kraft said they report this data to the state Department of Health in order to overcome any rising issues.

According to Kraft, these steps by the health office can help the school address any situations similar to how COVID entered into many people's lives two years ago. Should any similar problems arise again, she said having mask policies in place would be the appropriate response. Likewise, attending school online until knowing more about how a pandemic would unfold could be an appropriate response as well.

For students who do get sick, Kraft said that easing back into your regular routine is always good advice depending on how severe the illness was.

In order to keep one's body strong in the winter months, Kraft said the usual guidance for healthy living is to always try to eat a balanced diet of fruits, vegetables and whole grains; get at least eight hours of sleep each night; drink water; stay active regularly; wash your hands; and take care of your mental health.

## KINDNESS

continued from page 1

pacted the Cooper community. Heck mentioned how "teachers, staff and the district were excited to donate and help spread some cheer among students."

Similarly, Yaiel Jones (12), who is part of the Spirit Committee, agrees with Heck. She said the campaign "makes people think about being kind." She added how she enjoyed the whole setup and activities, especially the heart comments displayed in the hallway. She also said she sees a bright future for the campaign.

"It was nice to look at all the comments and great to know that people participated in the event," she said. "I think the campaign should be continued for a long, long time."

# Hawks praise switch to new conference

The Tri-Metro Conference features teams that athletes, coaches say are better aligned with Cooper's sports programs



Photo by BRIGHT DEKU

Members of the Hawks cross country team said they felt more competitive against runners in the new conference.

By NOAH PLAHN  
Quill staff writer

Cooper transitioned into being part of the Tri-Metro Conference this school year after six years in the Metro West Conference. This was one of many new changes this school year that Cooper coaches and athletes needed to adjust to. For the most part, Hawks competitors have found this change to be a positive one.

### Activities Director Mr. Howard

Overseeing Cooper's transition into the new conference is Activities Director Mr. Howard. Change was a huge theme this year for Howard as he stepped down as an assistant principal to become the school's activities director. Not only did he have to navigate this new position, but also the new conference Cooper just joined this year.

According to Howard, the conference change has had some benefits.

"Demographically, we are more aligned with the teams we play. As it pertains to the number of levels per sport, that I would say is consistent as well," he said.

Howard said the old and new conferences have different characteristics that made the change a good one for Cooper.

"The old conference had more schools that have larger participation numbers and, thus, we didn't match up well with everyone. From an arts perspective, Metro West had a great amount of conference participation," Howard said.

After one full season in the new conference, Howard said the change has produced measurable results.

"Our teams in the fall saw more success due to the better alignment with other teams. Although we were not conference champs, we were competing at a better level," Howard

said.

As a result of these outcomes, Howard said he prefers the new conference.

"I personally love the new conference for our athletes and need to ensure that the new conference works to have better arts for our arts departments," he said.

### Nordic Coach Ms. Hoffman

Nordic skiing head coach Ms. Hoffman said the impact of the new conference has been noticeably positive from a coaching perspective.

"I love that we are in a new conference this year. It feels like we are with schools that are more similar to Cooper and with teams that have a more similar experience with Nordic," she said.

According to Hoffman, the competition level "was very steep" in the Metro West Conference. In contrast, the new conference is better suited to the size of the Hawks team.

"We still have a small team so it's more difficult for us, but the level of competition is more doable," Hoffman said.

Hoffman added that the changes are "so noticeable" that the skiers themselves have positively "commented about the differences." While there is still a portion of the winter season left to go, Hoffman said she is optimistic about how the new conference will play out over the next few weeks.

"We'll see how the end of this season goes, but we are liking [the new conference]," Hoffman said.

### Cross Country Coach Mr. Zuccola

Mr. Zuccola is the head coach of the boys cross country team, which has already experienced a full fall season in the new conference.

"I think the switch to the new conference makes sense on a number

of levels. Our old conference, Metro West, started adding new schools that were far to the south and west of where the initial conference schools were located, which made for some logistical issues when it came to organizing and attending competitions. Additionally, many of the existing and new schools in that conference had much larger student populations than Cooper, which translated into those schools having larger and more competitive teams in cross country and track," he said.

In contrast, Zuccola said the Tri-Metro Conference includes schools that are closer to Cooper geographically and more like Cooper with respect to student enrollment and sports participation numbers.

"The Metro West Conference featured larger schools with big student populations. That usually translated into those schools having larger and deeper teams with respect to roster size and talent levels of the participating athletes. In the new conference, as opposed to being at the back of the pack during conference cross country meets, we were closer to the middle of the pack and had a pair of runners who were quite competitive with the top runners from the other schools in the conference," Zuccola said.

In light of these experiences, Zuccola said he prefers the new conference.

"Based on our experience in cross country, I definitely prefer the new conference so far. It will be interesting to see whether that assessment holds true as we make it through the upcoming spring track season," he said.

### Athlete Andrew Brooks (10)

Andrew Brooks (10) is an athlete who takes part in cross country, swimming and track. Now that he has experienced the fall cross country

season and is in the middle of the winter swimming season, he said he is enjoying the new conference.

"Though Cooper has not been in it long, it is nice to be a bit more evenly matched against other schools of the Tri-Metro Conference. I think that it is a step in the right direction in regards to the opportunity to be victorious with Cooper's sports," he said.

Although it is only Brooks' second year at Cooper, he said the differences between the old and new conferences are noticeable.

"The Metro West Conference was a nightmare to compete against. With the level of competition Cooper has, compared to the schools of the Metro West, we were destined to lose almost every encounter we had athletically. If it were on a scale of 1-10, I would say Cooper could provide around a four or five competition level, while in the sports that I have done at Cooper, the competition for the other schools of the Metro West Conference would be closer to a seven or eight. It is needless to say that I am pleased about the change to the Tri-Metro Conference," Brooks said.

One aspect of the new conference Brooks has observed so far has been the similarities in team sizes.

"Because the size of the schools isn't as extravagant as those in the Metro West Conference, I would assume that we have a better chance based on the economics and the amount of students that the schools of the Tri-Metro Conference have," he said.

In looking back at the cross country season, Brooks said he definitely prefers the new conference.

"For cross country, there was a noticeable difference in the amount of athletes that participated in the races, which meant we would always have a better chance of winning against these new teams," Brooks said.

### Athlete Logan Voigt (12)

Logan Voigt (12) is a multi-sport athlete who takes part in cross country and swimming. Voigt just finished his last season of high school cross country, which gave him a chance to witness the positive impact the new conference had on his team this year.

"The team has struggled with the amount of runners we have had the last few years, and the old conference caused some difficulties for us in the past. Now, with the new conference, we have had old runners returning and new ones joining, and the competition level has risen," he said.

Voigt said the fact that Cooper athletes were better matched with their new conference rivals caused them to become more involved and "compete at an even higher level." As a result, he said he prefers the new conference.

"I am glad the change was made. I wish the younger players nothing but the best and hope this change can continue to positively affect Cooper teams long-term," Voigt said.

## NEW OVERWATCH FALLS SHORT FOR SERIOUS GAMERS

continued from page 5

undeniably overtuned ultimate. At the time of the character's release, this provided a massive speed boost, a reloading speed boost, a fire rate speed boost and a buff to your abilities that made them come back three times as fast. This one ultimate serves as an amazing tool to pair with other ultimates, win fights and, most notably, remove the weaknesses to pre-existing characters.

In contrast, Sojourn doesn't have many outlandish abilities. She has a rocket slide that allows her to cover incredible distances. Additionally, she has a grenade that makes an AOE slow down and does notable damage. Most importantly, Sojourn possesses the railgun, which allows her to be

what the community has classified as a "Sniper on Wheels." This is a problem due to the incredible damage she inflicts. With high constant damage, she can pick off characters with a single shot of her railgun. Meanwhile, her ultimate allows her to constantly regenerate the railgun back to back.

While the character balance is extremely rough, the biggest problem of them all is the lack of understanding the developers have for game balance. When the problems were clearly being voiced by the community after the initial release of *Overwatch 2*, instead of bringing down the power of the problematic characters, they instituted partial fixes. For example,

they lowered the power of Sojourn's railgun but also increased the power of nearly everything else, effectively making her even better. This poses a massive problem in the game. Since the game isn't brand new anymore, many people are beginning to leave it because they are upset and unhappy with the current state of the game. In effect, users are only able to play a few characters, which is an unhealthy situation for *Overwatch 2* as a whole.

Despite these criticisms, the game has many positives. However, none of them are any different from the original game. In light of that, many fans of the original game have been left with a bad opinion about the

new game for its lack of progress. The biggest takeaway one can have from *Overwatch 2* is that the foundations were there to have a release that could contend for the game of the year, but the execution of that promise by the developers seems to have been lost.

Overall, I want this game to be nothing but successful, as it can be incredibly fun and entertaining to play. However, there is an extreme hole in its ongoing development since it was released. It is for this reason that I give the game four out of five stars for its initial release, but after the end of season one and the developers' clumsy attempts at balancing the game, I now give the game three out of five stars.

## WINTER WEATHER CAN CHALLENGE NEWER DRIVERS

continued from page 2

route in advance so you are aware of possible crash areas is incredibly important because you will be prepared to make route alterations rather than getting flustered in the moment. Many drivers experience winter crashes or spin-outs when forced to make quick decisions they weren't prepared for or planning on.

### Get rid of possible distractions

When driving, it is common

for people to listen to music, talk to friends or look around their dashboard. Ignoring these distractions is key during winter weather as even the slightest loss of focus can cause you to miss a sudden change in your path. This can come into play especially with teenagers, who often feel they are proficient enough to handle the weather and distractions at the same time. However, this combination is unsafe even for people who are seasoned drivers.

Ice, other vehicles and low visibility due to snow are hazards that cause many well-trained drivers to get into some kind of accident, whether that be a crash or a spin-out, so younger drivers need to be particularly wary of doing anything in their cars that may be an additional distraction from driving.

### Respect Minnesota's weather

The winter season brings many problems and risks to driv-

ing. As residents of Minnesota, we experience a longer and much more potent winter than drivers in most other states, so it's important we prepare ourselves. While the average driver has a baseline understanding of how to tackle winter-related issues, it is important that we ponder them in order to develop a much deeper understanding. This will help us be prepared for any weather conditions we might face in the winter.