



Careful driving necessary in winter, spring conditions

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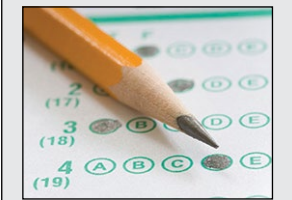
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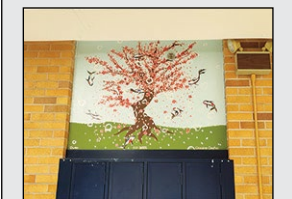


New mask policy a risky change

It is understandable why people are ready to take off their masks, but we need to remember that COVID is still around

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Murals help raise students' voices

The annual mural project, which is part of the curriculum for the IB Art course, is back after being put on hold due to the pandemic

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Hawks commit to college teams

Athletes involved in Cooper lacrosse, soccer and football committed to playing sports at the next level during a National Signing Day event

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AVID STUDENTS SCORE TOP SPOTS IN CONTEST

Cooper students took 16 of the top 20 places in Best-Prep competition



Photo by MS. LIESER

The winning Cooper students joined author Emmanuel Acho (back center) at a banquet held at U.S. Bank Stadium.

By KAPOsia KORICH
Quill staff writer

Cooper AVID students Emakay Dyson (10), Atoria McDonald (10) and TSION Kebede (11) took first through third place respectively in a recent statewide competition sponsored by BestPrep. In addition to the top three finishers, Cooper had 13 additional AVID students place in the top 20. All of the top-ranking Hawk juniors and sopho-

mores were honored for their efforts during an event at U.S. Bank Stadium on February 28. At the banquet, Dyson was given the Kristy Award, which brings with it a \$2,500 academic scholarship. Moreover, Kebede was asked to read her award-winning essay in front of the 1,300 people in attendance. "She did an outstanding job," Cooper AVID coordinator Ms. Lieser said. The BestPrep competition was based on the

concept of "Uncomfortable Conversations." This theme was inspired by the book and podcast by Emmanuel Acho titled *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man*. "Students shared an uncomfortable conversation they believed needed to happen and what might come after that conversation," Lieser said. "Their submissions could include essays, art pieces, spoken word, songs, etc." At the recognition banquet on February 28, Acho

made a personal appearance. "The winners were honored with prizes, meeting Emmanuel Acho, dinner and a program," Lieser said. Each of the winning Cooper students took different approaches to the topics they selected for an uncomfortable conversation. For example, McDonald chose to address the issue of mental health. "I wrote a spoken word poem on why it is important to have this conversation and what it is like to live with it.

I chose this conversation because I know people who deal with mental illnesses and how much of a problem it is in today's society, as well as this generation," McDonald said. While she said it was "nice being rewarded" for the work she did on this project, McDonald emphasized that the conversations she had were much more important. "I find it rewarding I have a chance to share this uncomfortable conversation with others. I believe it is useful because many people can learn from this experience," she said. Another student who took a look at mental health issues in her project was Dyson. However, she specifically focused on generational trauma within the Black community. "My format was a painting because it's something I've always enjoyed to do but never really had a reason to do," she said. "I enjoyed the fact that we were able to do what we wanted and we were able to choose something that affected us or we wanted to bring light to." Dyson added that taking part in the contest was worthwhile because it allowed her to respond to things happening in the real world. "Not only do we have a chance to have our voices heard, we also get a meaningful lesson on our differences

AVID continues on page 2

Snow Week returns for first time in two years

After pandemic-related cancellations, Snow Week brought back theme days, a pepfest and the Jack of Hearts dance

By AALIYAH HALL
Quill staff writer

Many schoolwide activities that did not happen last year due to COVID and distance learning have been making their way back into the school schedule this year. One example of that is Snow Week, which took place at Cooper February 7-12. Snow Week is an annual winter event sponsored by the Cooper Spirit Committee that is designed to promote connections between students through a variety of different activities and events. "I feel that Snow Week gives students an opportunity to celebrate Cooper's culture in a fun and engaging way," Administrative Intern Mr. Nelson, who helps oversee the Spirit Committee, said. One tradition of Snow Week are the theme days, on which students and staff are asked to wear outfits related to a concept or idea. This year, the themes included Hat Day on Monday, Croc Day on Tuesday, Flannel Day on Wednesday, Y2K Day on Thursday and Color Day on Friday. For Color Day, ninth graders wore red, sophomores wore blue, juniors wore white, seniors wore black and staff wore pink. Spirit Committee member Lily Chang (11) said she enjoyed planning the theme days along with her peers in the group. "I like to hear everyone's different ideas on what we could be wearing that week," Chang said. At the end of Spirit Week, two larger events took place. First, there was a pepfest promoting winter sports and performance groups at the end of the day on Friday. Each class period was five minutes shorter on Friday, which allowed for a 30-minute gathering in the gym at the end of the day. "The Spirit Committee plans, prepares and performs the pepfest," Nelson said. "They contact the different dance groups, plan the games and emcee the event." The final highlight of the week is the Jack of Hearts dance, which took place Saturday, February 12 in the Cooper gym. The dance, which coincides with Valentine's Day, is sponsored by the Cooper Dance Team and is used by that group as



Photo by SHENG VANG

The pepfest took place at the end of the school day on February 11. a fundraiser. Chang said all of the events of Snow Week help in getting students excited for this dance. "I think it is useful because it brings us all together and we can all have a good time and get ready for the Jack of Hearts dance," she said. Agreeing with Chang is Nelson, who pointed out that the events of Snow Week give everyone a chance to get involved even if they are not attending the dance. "I feel that Snow Week gives students an opportunity to celebrate Cooper's culture in a fun and engaging way," he said. "Students that don't plan on attending the dance are still able to dress up and be a part of the Cooper community."

Amir Locke killing raises concern among students

The fatal shooting of another Black man by Minneapolis police has teens thinking about their own safety

By DEVIN GRAY
Quill staff writer

The fatal shooting of Amir Locke by a Minneapolis SWAT officer on February 2 was the latest in a series of recent incidents that have had an impact on the community in the Twin Cities and at Cooper. According to Minnesota's CBS affiliate WCCO, Locke's killing occurred when police raided a downtown Minneapolis apartment with a no-knock search warrant. Officers were actually looking for Locke's cousin, Mekhi Speed, who was a suspect in a murder investigation.

When police broke into the apartment, where Locke happened to be sleeping, he stood up with a gun in his hand, which is when the officer fired. In a press conference after Locke's killing, his family reported that Locke had a license for his gun and a concealed carry permit. Additionally, they said he had a gun due to his need for protection as a DoorDash driver. After Locke's death, the police continued their investigation of his cousin Speed, who was eventually caught. Speed is being prosecuted as an adult in a murder case although he is 17 years old. According to the Minneapolis Police Department, they have arrested two other suspects along with Speed for

suspicion of murder. Speed's lawyer recently told the media that he plans on pleading not guilty. This event is one of many others like it that have happened in the Twin Cities area over the last two years. Events like this not only affect the families and loved ones of the victim, they also have an impact on the community. Cooper Equity Specialist Mr. Patterson said this type of news "does have an effect on students" because it is something that is "constantly happening." He also said that educators need to "provide a space for students to vent" about these types of incidents. What is more,

AMIR LOCKE continues on page 8

Program helps Hawks complete missed credits

Credit completion classes gave students a second shot at passing first semester

By JACK ATKINSON
Quill staff writer

Cooper students who were close to earning a passing grade in first semester classes but did not quite get to 60 percent had a chance to take part in the school’s credit completion program, which ran for three weeks starting on February 7.

“We are very excited to give students the opportunity to complete credits and lessen the number of students who need credit recovery while ensuring students are held accountable for mastering academic content,” Mr. Mahan, who oversees the program, said.

The program consisted of six, two-hour sessions that ran after school from 2:15-4:15 p.m. On Mondays and Tuesdays, students in grades nine and 11 took part, while students in grades 10 and 12 took part on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

The 189 students across all four grades who were invited to participate in the program were able to earn credits in core subject areas such as English, math, social studies, science and global language. Eligible students who fulfilled the requirements earned a “pass” on their academic transcripts. Students who did not meet the class requirements or chose not to participate in credit completion did not earn credit and will need to repeat the course.

“This puts students who almost passed their classes in a very favorable position,” Mahan said. “When they would otherwise have to retake a semester-long course, they now only need to finish a few assignments until they’ve met the standard. For example, a student may have failed a class at 58 percent. Credit completion gives them the opportunity to complete that two percent necessary to pass the class as opposed to spending three weeks every day in summer school. It’s a no-brainer.”

The students taking part in the credit completion program had different tasks to complete depending on the credit they were trying to earn. For example, Ms. Heck, who worked with students trying to complete English credits, said the credit completion experience was slightly different for each student.

“We do take attendance and then, depending on the class and what a student needs to complete, they can work independently on the work assigned to them, or some classes will be working on completing work together to earn their credit,” she said.

Heck praised the credit completion model because of the time it can save students who did not pass a first semester English class.

“It benefits students, as they will not have to make up their credit in summer school or in any other credit recovery program,” she said.

Another core subject in which students could complete first semester credits was science. Working with upperclassmen who needed credit was Ms. Johnson, who helped students with their Physics and Forensic Science credits.

“Students can complete work that was assigned during semester one of their core courses. In some cases, an all-inclusive lesson will be created for the student to finish that shows their understanding of state standards required during that semester,” she said.

According to Johnson, one advantage of credit completion is that students can zero in on finishing a specific assignment or unit that they need to complete instead of retaking the entire class.

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Cooper juniors take free ACT exam

Eleventh graders were able to work on the college-entrance test during regular school hours on March 8

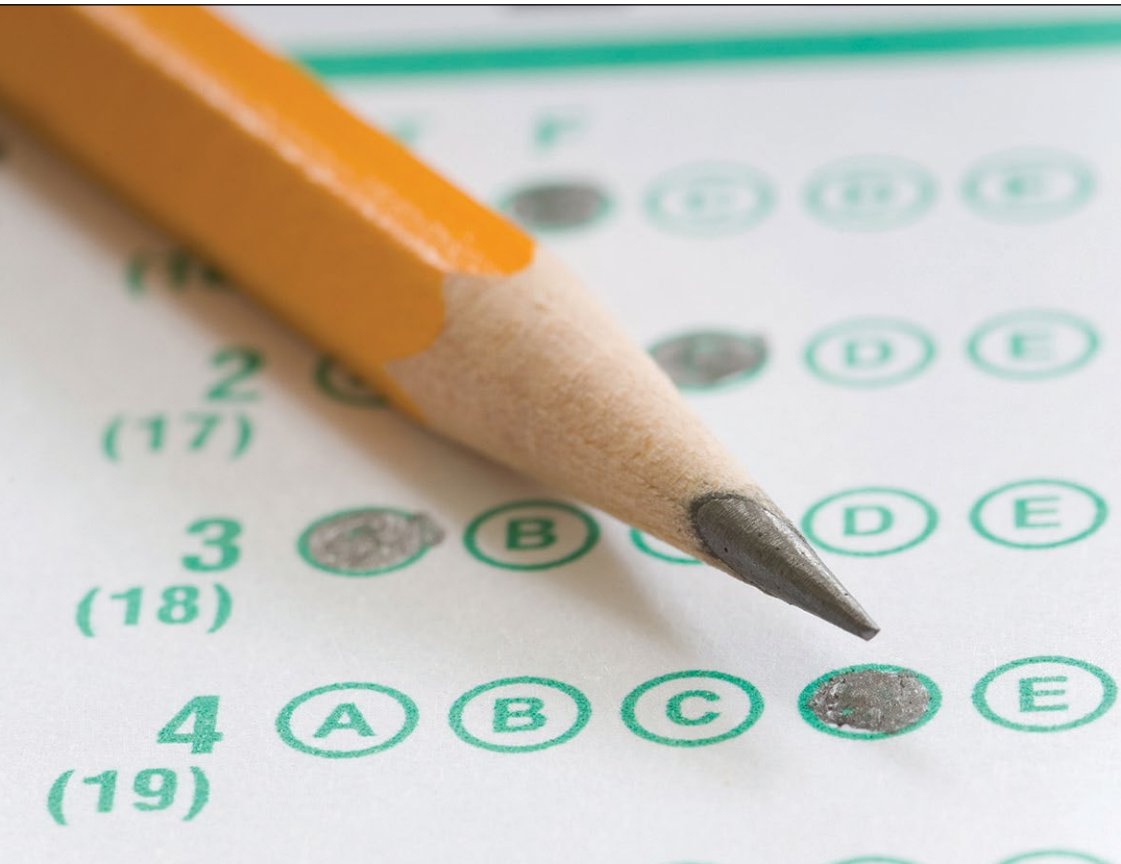


Photo by SHENG VANG

The ACT consists of English, math, reading and science segments, each of which has time limits.

By SHENG VANG
Quill staff writer

American College Testing, or ACT, is an exam many Cooper juniors took for free at school on March 8 for college admission.

The ACT is based on a 36-point scale and does not impact a student’s high school grades or progress toward graduation in any way. However, according to Ms. Hough, the 2021-2022 junior counselor, students should still take it seriously since many colleges use it to make decisions on admissions.

“Since many colleges use it to make admissions decisions, it’s important that students take it, and take it seriously, to give themselves as many options for after high school as possible,” Hough said. “It’s not required but recommended to take it.”

Similarly, Ms. Warndahl, who supervises the College and Career Center, said the test is good at giving colleges more information about a student.

“The ACT gives colleges a look besides your grades,” she said. However, she also pointed

out that, with the pandemic, many colleges are not requiring the ACT for this year or for the class of 2023.

As the days counted down to Cooper’s March 8 test session, many junior teachers were getting their students prepared for the ACT. In addition to the March 8 date, other testing dates are also offered on Saturdays by ACT throughout the year, but they will not necessarily be at Cooper.

In classes like AVID and English, students spent time before the test “learning how to strategize for the ACT,” Anita Vongkaysone

Weather changes make safe driving necessary

The transition from winter to spring means teen drivers will deal with a wide variety of extreme weather conditions

By JACK ATKINSON
Quill staff writer

High school is the time when most teens first learn how to drive and get their license. Teens who will be driving to school for the first time should be aware of many helpful tips in order to make their car trips safe. These tips can help drivers make their way through difficult weather, which can range from snow to rain during a typical spring in Minnesota.

1. Scrape snow and ice off your car before leaving for your destination

You will have to scrape all of the ice and snow off your car before you go out to wherever you are going. If you are going to drive your car and you can’t see out your windshield or through your windows, you will maybe crash or cause an accident.

2. Make sure your car’s signals are working

Before driving, you should make sure to check that your headlights, brake lights, turn signals, emergency flashers and interior lights are operational. This will help you stay safe on the roads in case anything goes wrong.

3. Make sure you have windshield wiper fluid

You can quickly go through a lot of windshield wiper fluid in a



Photo by JACK ATKINSON

April is a month when Minnesotans will still see measurable snow.

single snowstorm. Make sure your vehicle’s windshield wiper fluid is full of high-quality winter fluid with de-icer before winter weather hits. Additionally, always make sure that your defrosters and your windshield wipers work. If you have any worn-down blades, be sure to replace them right away.

4. Make sure you have emergency supplies in your car

There are many things to carry in your car to stay safe in any weather. When it is cold out, a snow shovel, broom and ice scraper can be helpful. Also, you will want abrasive material like sand or kitty litter in case your vehicle gets stuck in the snow. Cold

weather is also a good time to have blankets for protection from the cold in case you break down. During other seasons of the year, it is good to have a cell phone and charger, water, food and any necessary medicine in your car. Additionally, you should carry jumper cables, a flashlight and warning devices like flares and emergency markers.

5. Keep your gas tank close to full whenever possible

Poor weather conditions may sometimes lead to accidents, which can cause traffic jams on city roads and highways. If you are stuck in one of these traffic jams with a nearly empty gas tank, you

(11) said. She added that they also learned “tips for the English portion.”

Along with what went on in classes, the district also offered an ACT Boot Camp to help students prepare. Other resources for students were located on the Cooper website and there were practice books available in the College and Career Center in room 211. Warndahl said practice books were handed out to all junior advisories and students were able to stop by and pick one up.

On the day of the ACT testing, only juniors were in the building. According to Hough, students had to be at school on time “because once the test starts, students can’t start late.” The test had four sections and each section was timed. Around lunch time, the test concluded and students were free to go home or stay after for the college fair in the Cooper gym.

Hough had some advice and tips for juniors who took the ACT.

“Get a good rest the night before. Eat breakfast. Familiarize yourself with the test and the timing of it beforehand. Be on time and prepared with pencils and a calculator if you have one,” she said.

Likewise, Warndahl advised students to be prepared but to also be realistic about the exam.

“There is not really anything to study for because the test is on what you have learned,” she said. “Just make sure that you get your rest the night before and eat a good breakfast and come ready to take the test. Four hours of sitting for a test is not going to be an accurate view of what you are as a student.”

can run out of gas and contribute to making the traffic jam even worse. By having a full gas tank whenever you head out for a drive, you can avoid this potential problem.

6. Have a plan if your car breaks down

If you break down on the road, it is smart to stay with your car and avoid overexerting yourself. You should also let your car be seen by putting bright markers on the antenna or windows and keep the interior dome light on. If you need to run the heat during a winter breakdown, be mindful of carbon monoxide poisoning. Make sure your exhaust pipe is clear of any snow and run your car only sporadically, just long enough to stay warm. Don’t run your car for long periods of time with the windows up or in an enclosed space.

7. Stay home in bad weather

Whether it is snow or a thunderstorm, drivers should only go out if necessary. Even if you can drive well in bad weather, it’s better to avoid taking unnecessary risks by venturing out.

8. Always drive slowly

It is important to adjust your speed to account for lower traction when driving on snow or ice. The same thing applies during heavy rainstorms, which can cause a car to hydroplane or spin out.

AVID STUDENTS SCORE TOP SPOTS IN CONTEST continued from page 1

and how it impacts the world around us,” she said.

Shaelyn Owens (11) is another winning student who said she enjoyed the chance to engage in a “deeper analysis of current events” in today’s society.

“I chose to write about the struggles biracial people and mixed-race couples endure, whether that means struggling with their own identity and emotions or discrimination from other people,” she said.

Owens’ project took the form of an essay because she felt the items she wanted to cover would be “difficult to translate in another medium.”

“I really enjoyed being able to share some of my own experiences as a biracial person, as well as debunking some myths about mixed

people and couples that have a negative effect on us overall,” she said.

Much like Owens, the issue of race was also central to Kebede’s project, which took the form of an essay.

“The racial injustices in the place I’ve lived in my whole life and how it has effected the communities I’m a part of was the kind of uncomfortable conversation I wanted to share with others,” she said. “Written words were the best way for me to showcase how I was feeling so the audience could focus just on the writing and the message.”

Kebede said she enjoyed the process of researching and writing her essay because it gave her the opportunity to look at her community in a more thoughtful and critical way.

“When we feel love for a place, it can be challenging to call out its wrongdoings, but it’s also incredibly necessary,” she said.

While Owens and Kebede went the route of writing an essay, Anita Vongkaysone (11) chose to make a drawing inspired by the topic of victim blaming.

“Drawing and sketching has always been much easier for me than writing or anything complicated,” she said. “I mostly enjoyed the sketching part. Letting my imagination onto paper is always fun.”

The ability to be creative was a highlight of the competition for Vongkaysone, as was the chance to “point out a serious issue.”

“I was honestly not expecting to win, but when I found out I won, I

was ecstatic,” she said.

In addition to Dyson, Kebede, McDonald, Owens and Vongkaysone, the Cooper students in the top 20 included Adil Hassan (11), Yaiel Jones (11), Victoria Modupeoluwa (11), Saed Omar (11), Rhoda Omare (11), Samuel Quintero-Castillo (11), Jestis Davis (10), Kiana deWeever (10), Somah Kamara (10), Billiah Otero (10) and Gian Ventura (10).

“Students who attended the event did a wonderful job representing themselves, AVID, Cooper and Robbinsdale Area Schools with pride, grace and maturity,” Lieser said.

A total of 165 students across the state submitted entries in this competition.

Racial taunts mar basketball game

Members of the Hawks girls basketball squad had to endure an ugly display by the fans of the New Prague team

By ERIN CHUNN
Quill staff writer

Cooper's girls basketball team played New Prague on February 15. Sadly, the events of this basketball game would have you thinking it happened during the Jim Crow era. During the game, New Prague students and families we're making monkey noises (!) at our precious athletes. The fact that Cooper lost and was still harassed shows the New Prague fans didn't care about watching the actual game; they came with racist intentions. Dismissing this hate act as "no big deal" is completely unacceptable because New Prague parents were present and allowed their kids to provoke the athletes. Of course, this is not surprising because hate is taught; no one is born racist.

In order to better understand the impact of this racist incident, I spoke with basketball player Pauline McCarthy (11), who gave me an account of what happened: "We were playing a regular game until the second quarter, when things got rowdy. That's when the monkey noises started. Once the game was over, things got even more chaotic to the point where our coaches had to go to the bleachers to quiet things down. The players went into the locker room to talk about what just happened. Everyone was angry and disappointed. Most of our players are black, but all of us were disgusted," she said

Unfortunately, this wasn't the only racist incident that night to involve New Prague. During a boy's hockey game against St. Louis Park, the New Prague



Photo by ERIN CHUNN

Cooper students created and displayed signs supporting the team in the days after the incident.

team and fans were also racially taunting them. St. Louis Park responded by sending out a formal letter detailing the events of the game and proclaiming the end of their conference relationship with New Prague. Robbinsdale Area Schools soon followed in their footsteps by taking a similar stance. It's amazing to see the districts rally around their athletes. It promotes the importance of student athletes feeling comfortable enough to compete.

The reputation New Prague has gained in recent weeks is only the tip of the iceberg. While we worry about the experience of our athletes competing against their school, we also need to worry about the experience people of color have in New Prague. In fact, local news coverage of these incidents featured an interview with a Black New Prague student, Rowan Griffin (10), who said it is time for their school board to "take accountability" for the district's

problem with racism.

Ultimately, it's a blessing as a Black student to be part of a diverse community at Cooper. It's hard to imagine being in a place that hates my skin eight hours a day, five days a week. You can't even really depend on the adults because they are enabling the kids' racist mindsets. While we should judge the New Prague students for this terrible behavior, it is also clear that their whole community needs to be checked.

Students need to be smarter with valuables at school

While it is probably better to leave expensive items at home, there are some ways to safeguard the ones you bring to Cooper

By DAMARIUS HAMILTON
Quill staff writer

Students always bring personal items to school. Although students really shouldn't have to worry about these personal items getting stolen at school, the unfortunate truth is that some people see valuable things unattended and decide to take them. That is why it is important to find safe spots to put these personal items so you can spend the day in the building without those items being stolen.

One really good spot for students to keep valuables is a school locker. If you use a locker, no one knows the combination except you, as long as you are not giving it out to anyone else. The lockers are also secure because there are cameras in the hallways, so if someone tries to steal from your locker, they will be seen on the camera. While it is best to keep things you really care about at home so they're safe, keeping them in a locker is the next best thing.

Another good place to keep stuff you want safe is with a student or a staff

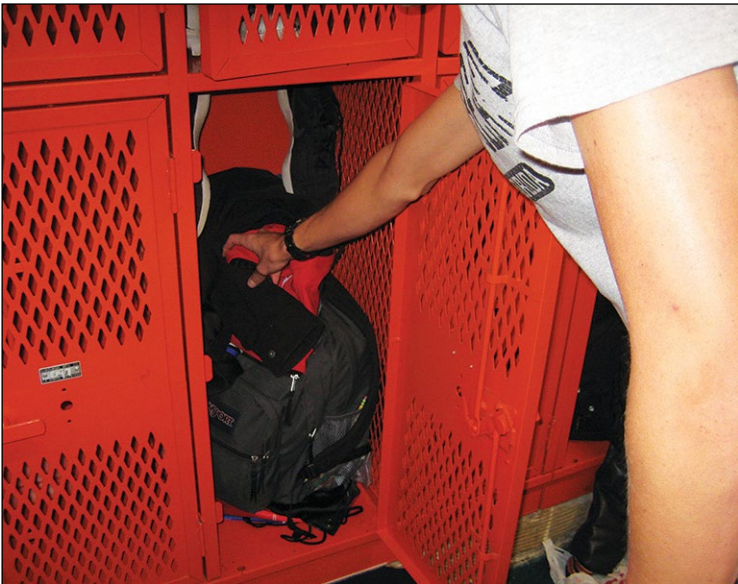


Photo by DAMARIUS HAMILTON

Making sure you properly close your locker is important.

member you trust. Giving your valuables to a student you trust can sometimes go wrong, but when it comes to a staff member, you never really have to worry. A trusted adult will definitely make sure your items are locked up or

placed somewhere safe.

Of course, there are situations when you may not trust anyone. In this case, it may be a better idea to keep your valuables in your backpack. However, if you decide to go this route, you will need

to make sure that you always have your backpack with you throughout the day. If you leave the bag unattended to go to the restroom during class time, there is always a chance someone might be able to get at your belongings.

My last suggestion for a good place to keep your possessions is in the front office. There is no way your items will be messed with in this location because there are always adults nearby and there are always cameras recording. Asking your grade-level principal or an office worker to safeguard your valuables may be a good option if you have something with you at school that you are nervous about.

If you are going to take the chance of bringing valuables to school, then it is a good idea to make use of one of these locations to keep your personal items safe. The option you pick will depend on what makes you the most or least comfortable, but any of these options are better than leaving your items out on your desk unsupervised during the school day.

Open lunch should be treated as a privilege, not a right

Some students are abusing the freedoms of open lunch, which could result in that opportunity being taken away

From the Editors

Upperclassmen at Cooper who are on track to graduate get the privilege of leaving school for open lunch. While it is great that students get this freedom to leave the building for an hour, sometimes students don't make the right decisions when they go out for lunch. Some examples of the way open lunch is abused is when students don't come back for sixth hour, they leave early for lunch during fourth period or they

drive recklessly to their lunch destination. It is important to be smart during lunch, not only for your safety, but also so you don't get into any trouble that could jeopardize your privilege to leave school grounds.

One potentially dangerous decision that students make when they go out for lunch relates to how they drive. Some students at Cooper have a tendency to drive recklessly as they are pulling out of the parking lot and into public. Reckless driving can cause a lot of problems, like getting pulled over or getting into a

car accident. A way to prevent these problems is easy: all you have to do is drive carefully and safely.

Another bad decision that students might make when it comes to open lunch is skipping all or part of their fourth- or sixth-period class in order to extend their fifth period lunch. This can be a problem for these students because they will miss class work. It also becomes a problem for other people when these students disrupt class upon their late arrival or add to hallway traffic during class time. A simple

way to avoid all this is to just leave and come back to school at the required times surrounding open lunch.

Open lunch is a privilege that can easily be taken away if students are not staying safe and responsible. In order to avoid problems during open lunch, remember to always be smart while driving, leave for lunch only when it is allowed and come back to school on time. If you do these things, you will make life a lot easier and safer for you and the people around you.

Hiring biases in pro football must be stopped

The NFL has a clear, long-standing issue with not hiring head coaches of color

By NAIMA HUSSEN
Quill staff writer

The 102nd NFL season came to an end with record television ratings and profits. The season, however, also ended with ongoing, unresolved conflicts about the league's continued resistance to hiring and retaining African-Americans as head coaches and executives.

In a 58-page-long lawsuit filed on February 1, former Miami Dolphins head coach Brian Flores alleged that "the NFL remains rife with racism, particularly when it comes to the hiring and retention of Black head coaches, coordinators and general managers."

Flores, who had back-to-back winning seasons as a head coach of the Miami Dolphins, was fired in early January. Hearing this news was surprising to me because Flores is a great defensive mind in the NFL and took the Dolphins from a record of 1-7 to a 9-8 record at the end of the season.

As part of the lawsuit, Flores alleges that he was subject to a sham interview by the New York Giants in late January. New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick, Flores' former boss, sent Flores a text congratulating him on being hired by the Giants. The problem, however, was that Flores hadn't even interviewed with the team yet. Flores said the interviews were only meant to satisfy the league's Rooney Rule, which requires teams to interview candidates of color. Unfortunately, most teams do so before ultimately hiring white men.

The Rooney Rule is named after the Pittsburgh Steelers' Dan Rooney, the former owner of the team. This rule, which took effect in 2003, sought to correct inequities at the top of pro football's hierarchy by requiring teams to interview minority candidates for head coaching vacancies. Although it is nearly 20 years later, there are only two African-American head coaches in the league. Keep in mind that there were also only two when the rule was first adopted.

I think it's unacceptable that the NFL even needs a rule to interview Black people for jobs. The problem is that the white owners of these football teams time and time again abuse their power by hiring people who look like them. However, I don't believe Black ownership of teams would help the hiring problem because Black owners hiring Black coaches isn't going to solve a league-wide issue.

This statement from Flores perfectly describes the NFL: "In certain critical ways, the NFL is racially segregated and is managed much like a plantation. Its 32 owners, none of whom are Black, profit substantially from the labor of NFL players, 70 percent of whom are Black. The owners watch the games from atop NFL stadiums in their luxury boxes, while their majority-Black workforce put their bodies on the line every Sunday, taking vicious hits and suffering debilitating injuries to their bodies and their brains while the NFL and its owners reap billions of dollars."

The NFL's response to Flores' lawsuit was fierce: "We will defend against these claims, which are without merit." However, the league soon changed its tune and Commissioner

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NSPA

Mental health can be managed with planning

There are some simple ways to make sure you are not getting overwhelmed with stress

By TAJANNEA JENKINS
Quill staff writer

Mental health is a big issue for teens and adults. The effects of stress and anxiety are especially noticeable when you're a teenager in high school. That is because you have so many things to keep track of, such as homework, studying for tests, playing a sport and doing things after school like working. Although teens have stress and anxiety, there are some tips that can help you deal with it.

1. Stay organized

When I feel like I have too many things on my plate, I try to make a list. I'll do the assignment with the closest due date first and the assignment with the farthest due date last. This helps me keep my mind focused on one task and stops me from trying to do it all at once and overwhelming myself in the process. Having a planner or an app on your phone will help because it can allow you to develop a set schedule and not stress yourself out down the road. My checklist helps me get tasks done throughout the day without stressing myself out and feeling like I have too many things to do at once. By spacing out my tasks, I know what to expect from that day and what assignments need to be done.

2. Do things that help you feel relaxed

Everyone has things that make them feel better, whether it's art, reading, listening to music, exercising or watching TV. Doing something you enjoy can ease the pressure of feeling like all you have in life is school and work. Doing something that's enjoyable to you can help separate you from the tasks that are causing you stress and anxiety. Personally, I enjoy listening to music because it brings out my best mood. Sometimes, it even motivates me to do my work. If I do my work while listening to music, I am able to get my assignments done while I'm doing something I enjoy. This makes school feel much less stressful than it is.

3. Get enough sleep

The third tip for dealing with stress and anxiety is getting enough sleep. Staying up all night on Facetime or watching TikTok may seem like a good idea at the moment, but when you start school the next day, you will regret it. When you're not sleeping enough, you can suffer from fatigue, which can affect your mental health. Not having enough sleep can also cause mood swings, which can increase stress and anxiety and even lead to depression. When you're getting the right amount of sleep, it allows your body and mind to rest, which then helps you feel much better the next day. It is recommended that teens sleep eight full hours every night so your body can be fully rested and ready for the next day. When I don't sleep enough, I notice myself becoming increasingly angry and more inclined to stress myself out by overthinking everything from that day.

4. Reassure yourself

I often reassure myself that I am trying my best. Even if things do not work out, if I know that I tried, I can at least be satisfied with the idea that I did the best I could do. When you reassure yourself in this way, it makes you feel better because only you know what you are capable of. Reassuring yourself can help you feel more secure. It can also help you relax because you will know that you did your best. If you reassure yourself and think positively about a situation, that will help you avoid any anxiety that might occur.

5. Talk it out

Cooper has many staff members who will be there for you if you need to unload your thoughts and feelings. Whether it is a teacher, a coach, a guidance counselor or the school therapist, there are many adults in the building who will be there for you. Having someone who will listen to you is important to avoiding stress and anxiety. That person will have your back, help you fix the situation you are facing, or just sympathetically listen to your issues. When you're struggling with any kind of mental health challenge, it is important to remember you're not alone. There are people who want to support you and there are resources at the school that will help.

New mask policy may be too risky

It is understandable why people are ready to take off their masks, but we need to remember that COVID is still around

By DAMARIUS HAMILTON
Quill staff writer

The Robbinsdale School District announced on March 3 that wearing masks in school buildings is now optional. I feel like the optional mask policy isn't the best thing to do at this point in the pandemic. Even though infection rates are going down, the overall cases for the virus in Minnesota are still high. For example, the Minnesota Department of Health reported on March 8 that 4,245 new cases were detected in the previous three days. In addition, there are so many students in the school buildings and nobody knows how healthy they are or if they have gotten the vaccine. Overall, in a school with hundreds of students and with COVID still being spread in the community, it seems like we should all keep our masks on a little longer.

I don't really see any real benefits from the optional mask policy at this juncture other than the fact that we now get the chance to see one another's faces. I know it is important to be able to see a person's face and their facial expressions. I also know that taking off the masks is good for some people because it's harder for them to breathe with a mask on. However, is the chance to see someone's face worth the risk? The virus is still being passed around, and when a student catches it, they will be out of school for one or two weeks depending on their vaccination status. Keep in mind as well that being vaccinated does not prevent you from getting the virus; it merely keeps you from getting a dangerous case of it that could put you in the hospital. These many risks do not seem like a good tradeoff for the chance to take our masks off and see everyone's faces for



Photo by SHENG VANG

Many Cooper students are still electing to wear masks after the recent policy change.

the first time this year.

Although Cooper is not as big as some suburban high schools, we are not too small either. Currently, the student population is in the 1,500 range, which does not include all of the adult staff members in the building. With that many people in the building, you not only have the increased chances of passing around the virus if someone is infected, you also have that many people making their own personal decisions about whether or not to wear a mask.

After the district changed to a mask-optional policy, I have noticed that a majority of students and staff

are still wearing their masks. However, a growing number of people in the building have been choosing to take them off. What this leaves us with is an inconsistent approach to masking where some people are wearing or not wearing them due to feeling weird and uncomfortable or because they are concerned about their personal safety. The previous policy of requiring masks for everyone was beneficial due to its consistency.

Requiring everyone to stick with masking has some benefits in protecting us against COVID and other illnesses that are typically spread at school. We now know after the last two years that properly worn masks

significantly protect both the people who are wearing them and the people around them. This protection applies not only to COVID, but to the many other cold- and flu-related illnesses that can cause students to get sick and miss school. With more of us not wearing masks, it is inevitable that some people at Cooper will get the virus and potentially spread it around school. After our two weeks of distance learning in January due to high COVID numbers, the last thing we need to do now is get rid of our masks and run the risk of going back to distance learning, which was not good for most students at our school.

Continued fire alarm issues are dangerous, disruptive

The school is running the risk of having students react too casually to a real fire emergency after so many false alarms

By DAMARIUS HAMILTON
Quill staff writer

The fire alarm issues at school really need to be talked about. Whatever the problem is with them clearly needs to be fixed. The alarms going off without warning or without a good cause is leading to many problems in the school. Most of the time, it's not the fault of the people running the school that the alarms go off, but I feel like they could handle it better when those disruptions happen. Specifically, if those alarms are being caused by certain students at school, then the administrators should be able to find out who they are and discipline them in some way. Those students are not just messing up their own learning, they are messing it up for the entire school.

One reason that the staff should do more to discipline students is because a big cause of the fire alarms going off is students vaping in the bathrooms. When vaping causes the fire alarms to go off, the students often just get away with it because they anonymously exit the school with everyone else. When nothing happens to these students, it makes it seem like the staff doesn't care enough to actually do something about the problem.

When the alarms go off, students



Photo by SHENG VANG

The new alarm system was installed at the start of this school year.

are required to evacuate the building, which can disrupt learning. When students are testing or working on a summative, these alarms makes things more stressful. The students have to stop testing and leave the building, which means they lose time to work. This makes it more frustrating when the people responsible for the fire alarm are not held accountable.

The fire alarms are also annoying because of the lights and sounds. Sometimes they are able to shut the sound off

so we can return to the building, but the light that flickers on and off doesn't stop until a little later. The light is annoying and distracting, especially because some students lose their focus so easily to begin with. Additionally, there are students who have medical conditions that can be triggered by flashing lights, so the flickering light doesn't help them at all.

One thing that is particularly bad about the fire alarm situation is that, when the alarm goes off, we don't know whether it is a real fire or if it is caused

by people smoking. As a result, we have become too dismissive of the alarms. The thing that is bad about this fact is that if we ever had an actual fire and needed to get away for real, most of the students would think it's a "fake" alarm and not take it seriously. Thinking a real fire alarm is "fake" can endanger lives and that would be on both the school's hands and the hands of the students causing the fire alarms to go off unnecessarily. No one wants to see anything bad happen to anyone in the school because they are unaware of a serious situation. I just hope they try harder to do something about the fire alarm situation for safety reasons.

From student safety to the disruptions that are happening in the classroom, there are many reasons why the fire alarm problem needs to be addressed and fixed. If this problem continues, no one is going to take the alarms seriously since they have been happening so much. One possible solution would be for the hall monitors to control access to the bathrooms a little more. Perhaps there could be check-ins each period to see if the staff could catch anyone vaping. This could lead to a reduction in fire alarms. Any fix to this problem would be welcome since it would lead to fewer interruptions and people would start taking the alarms seriously again.

Parent-teacher conferences have become unnecessary

The ability of parents to contact teachers electronically makes traditional conferences seem outdated

By ERIN CHUNN
Quill staff writer

Parent-teacher conferences are short meetings that typically include a student, their guardians and their teacher. Usually, grades, attendance and behavior are the issues discussed at these meetings. As students get older, you typically start to see a decline in participation at parent-teacher conferences. I believe that parent-teacher conferences are unnecessary for high school students. The main reasons why conferences are unnecessary for students our age are because we are entering adulthood, high school is supposed to be preparation for independence and it's a waste of faculty time when other forms of parent contact are available to teachers.

As they enter high school, students can be as young as 13 and fresh from middle school. When students are that young, conferences may be

necessary to check general behavior and academics. However, after freshman year, it's time for students to start taking responsibility for their own actions and academic progress because the only person that can accomplish their goals is the student. High school is a checkpoint in life when decisions for the future are made and a lot of maturing happens. Since this is a time focused on self-growth, having parents come in to meet with teachers and check for progress on topics the student has no further interest in is illogical.

Conferences are more futile the older a student gets because high school is preparation for college and the workplace. In college, your parents normally can't intervene with your studies and keep in touch with your professors. Similarly, when you have a job, your guardian won't occasionally have meetings with your boss discuss-

ing your progress and participation for that work period. Continuing to have parent-teacher conferences this late in our academic career makes no sense because this is an age when students naturally begin to think for themselves and give as much effort as their own will and motivation will allow.

The final reason conferences are redundant and unnecessary is because parent contact information for each student is available to each teacher. As a result, if something needs to be discussed, the teacher and the parent could have a real one-on-one conversation instead of quickly talking while three other families wait next to them for their turn during a conference night. Sometimes, there are cases when a student needs constant conferences in order to be set up for success, but for many students, that's not the case. Parents also have access to each teacher's professional contact information

through Schoology, so if the parent wants to check on their child, communication is simple without the need for official conferences.

In conclusion, parent-teacher conferences may be important for younger students still developing their minds, but for young adults, they are essentially not needed. Students need to learn self-preservation since it's vital in life and the only way to learn and adapt is by independently keeping up with your assignments or reaching out when needed. It is during high school that parents figure out that their students are growing into their individualism and will do what their heart desires. Although communication between parents and teachers is encouraged, they can easily use the internet to monitor a student's progress through Schoology and Infinite Campus, which makes conferences unnecessary.

Taxi Driver still resonates 45 years later

The film's considerable and deserved reputation comes from its great direction, acting, cinematography and sound

By LUKE REKELA-JASPER
Quill staff writer

Taxi Driver, directed by Martin Scorsese, is a psychological thriller based on a screenplay by Paul Schrader. The film is a character study of a taxicab driver named Travis Bickle (Robert De Niro), whose lifestyle in a morally bankrupt New York City, combined with his loneliness, post-traumatic stress and anger at the world, causes his mental state to deteriorate.

Released in theaters on February 8, 1976, *Taxi Driver* was met with commercial and critical success, receiving numerous accolades and nominations, and is considered by many cinephiles to be one of the greatest films ever made. For me, what got *Taxi Driver* on my radar was the 2019 movie *Joker*, directed by Todd Phillips and starring Joaquin Phoenix, which was heavily inspired and influenced by *Taxi Driver* and a few other Martin Scorsese films from the 1970s.

After my first viewing of *Taxi Driver*, I remember feeling very mixed about it. While I appreciated Scorsese's direction and De Niro's performance, what I did not fully understand was the main character, Travis Bickle, who I initially was sympathetic toward, but by the end of the movie, was not at all behind. It took a few rewatches for me to finally get what all these film critics and movie buffs on the internet were talking about.

There are many aspects of *Taxi Driver* that I loved from my initial viewing. First off, the cinematography by Michael Chapman is fantastic in how beautifully horrific it is, especially when accompanied by Scorsese's stellar directing. The film depicts a nightmarish mid-1970s New York City, and often uses colors to indicate what a character is feeling in a scene. One of my favorite scenes that uses color is when Travis is confiding to Wizard, an elder taxi driver, about his violent thoughts and his anger at the world. As he speaks, the neon lights around him bathe his face in red.

Another aspect that I love is Bernard Hermann's excellent score. It has a very sleazy, melancholy jazz sound, which perfectly captures the psyche of Travis and how isolated he feels in such a large and lively city. The score is also seductive, sinister and inescapable, much like how Travis feels in his miserable life. Without Hermann's music, *Taxi Driver* would not be what it is today.

Also stellar is Scorsese's direction combined with the brilliant editing of Marcia Lucas, Tom Rolf and Melvin Shapiro, whose work makes this film come together so well. Knowing that Schrader's script is about a man who is losing his grasp on reality, Scorsese often frames Travis to look both pathetic and despicable at the same time, even when Travis believes he is in the right. The editing also plays a major role in the viewer becoming immersed in Travis' insanity. For example, during a scene in which we hear Travis reciting an aphorism about him being better than the people around him, the editors repeat a scene of Travis doing a 90 degree turn to his left, to further emphasize the fact that they want the audience to know this man is not who we think he is.

Taxi Driver's script, written by Paul Schrader, is also one of the best scripts I've ever seen turned into a motion picture. For almost the entirety of the screen-



Photo courtesy of COLUMBIA PICTURES

Robert De Niro's memorable performance as Travis Bickle is one of *Taxi Driver*'s best assets.

play, Schrader keeps the focus on Travis and his view of the world. Whether or not you agree with Travis' thoughts or actions, the script makes it so you can at least understand why Travis is doing what he does.

At the same time, Schrader also does the opposite. Travis spends most of his nights driving around New York City and, through voiceovers, he explains how much he hates the city and wishes a "real rain" will cleanse it. Interestingly, the script never presents Travis with a solution to his problems; instead, it makes you realize the reason Travis keeps going out into the city he hates is because he takes pleasure in judging people and making himself think he is above them. While Travis may feel a sense of power in believing he is different from other people in society, it also contributes to his overarching feeling of loneliness, which further depresses him. Schrader's script is richly layered with various themes and emotions that all bounce off each other and cooperate in a balanced way. The conflict in Travis also feels realistic, like something an actual human being could struggle with and suffer from.

While *Taxi Driver* may spend much of its time putting the viewers in Travis' shoes, the film also features a variety of interesting supporting characters that all contribute to Travis' eventual fate. There is no bad performance in this film and every actor in this movie does a great job at their role.

One of the main characters that contributes to Travis' fall from grace is a campaign volunteer named Betsy, played by Cybill Shepherd. With a stable job and her own interests, Betsy is the complete opposite of Travis. Betsy's friendship with another campaign volunteer named Tom, played by Albert Brooks, further stamps down the idea that her life is organized compared to that of Travis, who is a mess of a human being.

Meanwhile, Leonard Harris plays Charles Palatine, a presidential candidate, who Travis selects as his first target to get back at Betsy. Travis views Palatine as a father figure to Betsy, which interferes with Travis' complex masculinity issues.

Another character worth men-

tioning is an unnamed, deranged taxi cab passenger played by Martin Scorsese. Travis picks up this passenger one night and then listens to his plan to kill his cheating wife with a specific firearm. Even though Scorsese played this role because the actor who was actually cast did not show up on set, I find it fitting that the director of the film is playing a character that ends up directing Travis down a path of violence.

But perhaps the most important character that leads Travis to the film's climactic ending is a 12-year-old prostitute named Iris, played by Jodie Foster. Travis fantasizes about saving and returning Iris to her family, despite Iris' belief that she is perfectly safe where she is. Travis' mission to liberate Iris leads to him becoming at odds with her pimp, Sport, played by Harvey Keitel. Film-maker Quentin Tarantino spoke about Keitel's role in the film while discussing *Taxi Driver* on *Sky Movies*, and stated that he believes the storyline involving Travis and Iris would not be the same without Keitel's sinister, invasive and crude performance, which I agree with 100 percent.

Ultimately, *Taxi Driver* is about Travis Bickle, brilliantly played by Robert De Niro. During my initial viewing, I thought *Taxi Driver* was a film about Travis' loneliness and PTSD driving him to become what he claims to have hated. However, after further analysis, I've determined *Taxi Driver* is a film about a man whose loneliness is self-inflicted. Travis uses his own isolation as a defense mechanism to justify and then convince himself that he must be New York's secret protector. In a way, Travis is like Batman: he has his own self-written sense of right and wrong and he believes he is a necessary force of justice.

Travis' urge to feel dominant in a city rife with crime leads to another aspect of his character I am fascinated with: his masculinity. *Taxi Driver*'s third act bears a lot in common with many Western films, one in particular being the 1956 film *The Searchers*, in which John Wayne's character tries to find and rescue a woman from danger. Similarly, a big chunk of *Taxi Driver* revolves around Travis' relationship with two women: Betsy and Iris. What challenges Travis' masculinity is that both of them

refuse to side with him, which sparks Travis to inflict blame on the more dominant men in their lives. For Betsy, the man Travis blames is Palatine, and for Iris, it is Sport.

I think my favorite aspect of *Taxi Driver*'s third act is how it unfolds. Believing that assassinating Palatine will be, in its own sick and twisted way, a means of saving Betsy, Travis attempts to kill him. However, after his failure, Travis resorts to saving Iris instead, violently killing Sport and the other pimps at her brothel.

Because all of the characters he kills are criminals, Travis is praised as a hero by the media. If this sequence of events was reversed, and Travis successfully assassinated Palatine, he would have been detained or killed by Secret Service agents and viewed as a terrorist. In the end, Travis gets lucky, and is left with no repercussions, which means he will likely continue his vigilantism. For this reason, I am glad that a sequel to *Taxi Driver* was never made because the brilliance of this film's ending is how it portrays Travis as a horror movie villain who is still out in the wild and still on his hunt as *The Taxi Driver*.

Taxi Driver has sparked a number of controversies since the time of its release. An early criticism of *Taxi Driver* was that the film is racist, which I disagree with. Instead, I would argue that *Taxi Driver* is a film about a racist whose actions audience members can judge.

Another criticism *Taxi Driver* received was for its violence, especially the final act's shootout, which almost got the film an X rating. I remember in my initial viewing being very put off by the third act's gritty and bloody shootout, but upon further analysis of who Travis Bickle is and the story Paul Schrader is telling, I think the violence in the film is appropriate. It definitely is in service of Travis' character and is not present for the sake of having a violent final fight.

In conclusion, *Taxi Driver* is one of those movies that always has my attention for the entirety of its runtime. Its gritty performances, atmosphere, tone and themes make *Taxi Driver* feel like it exists in a world of its own. I rate *Taxi Driver* five out of five stars. However, I would only recommend this movie to people who enjoy independent films.

Dreams offers suspenseful tale of self-discovery

Kristen Ashley's 2011 novel is a romantic drama with a serial killer subplot

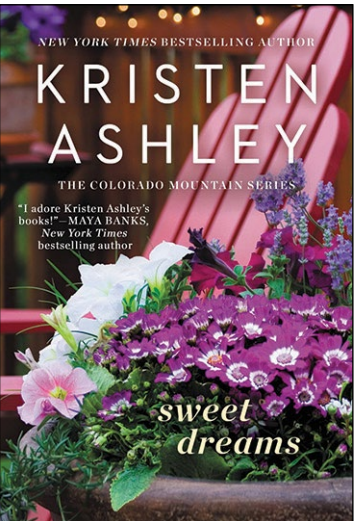


Photo courtesy of GRAND CENTRAL PUBLISHING

The story focuses on the journey of protagonist Laurie Grahame.

By TAJANNEA JENKINS
Quill staff writer

Sweet Dreams is a romantic drama written by author Kristen Ashley that was originally published April 24, 2011 by Grand Central Publishing. In my opinion, it's the best book Ashley has ever written. *Sweet Dreams* is about a woman's journey to find herself. The character development and the way the little things play into a big moment later in the story are huge reasons why I love this book and the way it is written.

The main characters in *Sweet Dreams* are Laurie Grahame and Tate Jackson. After a horrible series of events that involves Laurie's husband cheating on her, she leaves her "perfect" lifestyle to find where she belongs. She decides to settle in Carnal, Colorado, where she meets Tate Jackson, who is the mysterious "bad boy" of Carnal. He also happens to be her boss. Upon their initial meeting, Tate says some insulting things to Laurie that make her never want to speak to him again. Unfortunately for her, when danger strikes the town and there is a serial killer in their midst, connecting with Tate seems to be her safest option.

Sweet Dreams has a lot of great things about it. One thing I like in particular is the character development of Laurie. When we first get introduced to her character, she's broken. She doesn't know where she belongs or how she fits in the world. During the course of the book, we see her accept who she is and not the ideas other people have about who she should be. She becomes a strong woman who is able to speak her mind and feel more confident in herself. This is in contrast to the beginning of the novel, when she isn't speaking up for herself and acts like a pushover.

Another one of my favorite aspects of the novel is the plot. While the book is about Laurie and Tate, the author never forgets about the side characters. Ashley proves that when the identity of the serial killer is revealed. Ashley also shows what it's like to be in a small town and the history that goes with it. She never loses sight of the characters and the plot just for the sake of the love story, like most authors do. This is one of the reasons I think this is Ashley's best book.

One more reason I love this novel is because of the title. *Sweet Dreams* has more meaning to it than it just being the title of the book. Its meaning is twisted in so many different ways during the story that it's hard to catch it without reading the novel one or two more times. Eventually, you will finally grasp the meaning, and when you do, it's satisfying. Ultimately, while the characters are going through something scary, they're also enjoying a beautiful thing together.

Sweet Dreams is the most romantic and dramatic book I've ever read. It has the perfect amount of romance without losing sight of the drama. To me, *Sweet Dreams* is a must-read. It's a novel that can't be put down and it is all you will think about. This novel teaches you that not everything is what it seems to be. I rate this book five out of five stars.

Mortal Kombat Mobile brings the fight to your phone

While it might not be the best video game out there, it can help you pass the time if you want something fun to play

By BRIGHT DEKU
Quill staff writer

Mortal Kombat Mobile was released by Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment in 2015. I chose to review this game because I have been playing it a lot lately and I really like it. I think gamers should check out this game if they're interested in the fighting genre because it passes the time and it is fun. Another reason why it is a good game is because there is a lot you can accomplish in the game without having to spend any money, although you can if you choose to.

At the beginning of the game, users will get starter cards. There is a large number of cards available and some of it is left up to luck. The fighting then opens with Scorpion going against Subzero. These two fighters can be thought of as the main characters of the game.

One highlight of the fighting sequences in the game is the graphics. It



Photo courtesy of WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT

The graphics of the game emulate the existing look of *Mortal Kombat*.

is almost as clear on the phone as it is on a console at home. As you play, you typically will not lag a lot unless your phone is at one percent of its battery life.

Of course, that can happen to any app. Overall, the graphics have been largely consistent when I have played the game. I also love the speed with which you

can move through this game. Once you start it, you can finish the game in just a few weeks or a month. Of course, there is really no finish to this game because, no matter how often you play it, there will always be new opponents in new towers or new characters for you to defeat.

On the other hand, the music in the game is something I don't like. It is always the same, which gets annoying after awhile. Sure, you can mute it if you want to, which is what I do most of the time. Depending on your taste in music, you may not be as bothered by its use in the game as I am, but it is definitely a drawback for me.

Despite that shortcoming, *Mortal Kombat Mobile* is a good game. It takes an acceptable amount of time to play and you can accomplish a lot without investing a lot of money. It is a great game to check out if like fighting games with good characters. Overall, I give this game a rating of four out of five stars.

Sing You Home successfully deals with social issues

The 2011 release by writer Jodi Picoult keeps readers guessing to the end

By TAJANNEA JENKINS
Quill staff writer

Sing You Home is a romantic drama written by Jodi Picoult and originally published by Arita Books on March 1, 2011. *Sing You Home* is a book that can change the way you view the world and it does this by sparking conversations about contemporary issues. While it has the most complex and well-developed characters I have ever seen, the most important reasons I love this book are because of the plot and the fact that I never know what to expect.

Sing You Home is about a couple, Zoe and Max Baxter, who have a good marriage. The couple battles fertility issues until Zoe eventually gets pregnant. However, just when she feels like her dreams are coming true, tragedy strikes as Zoe loses the baby and her marriage when she is seven months pregnant.

In the aftermath of the tragedy, Zoe throws herself into her work as a musical therapist who helps Alzheimer's patients connect with their present surroundings through music. When Vanessa, a guidance counselor, asks Zoe to work with a suicidal teen, the time Zoe and Vanessa spend together transforms their relationship from friendship to love.

Meanwhile, Zoe's ex-husband Max starts being mentored by the pastor of an evangelical church. This pastor has vowed to fight what he calls "the homosexual agenda," which puts Max at odds with Zoe and her new relationship. Eventually, when Zoe wants to use some frozen embryos from her earlier fertility treatments to try and have a baby with Vanessa, Max refuses, which sparks a legal battle between the two characters.

As the plot makes clear, one of the best things about *Sing You Home* is that none of the characters is perfect. Each one has their own struggles, which means readers cannot really take any sides in the story because each character has their own truth. Given the fact that each character is deeply flawed, they seem much more realistic. The struggles the characters go through make them seem like real people.

Another one of the good things about the novel is the conversations it can spark about different contemporary issues. This book makes you think real hard about your beliefs and why you feel a certain way. Additionally, the book was written in a time during which the many topics it deals with were more taboo than they are today, which also makes you look at things in a different light. In short, the book makes you question everything.

Perhaps the best thing about this novel is my favorite character, Zoe. I love Zoe because she's strong and courageous. Additionally, her character development is one of the best I've ever read. Although she is strong as the novel begins, the various struggles she has to go through, from losing a child to learning that being pregnant doesn't make her more of a woman to realizing her true sexuality, had an impact on me. It all feels real and the way these experiences are explored is beautiful, which makes this character beautiful to me.

Sing You Home is a novel that makes you think about the hard things in life. It's also a story that shows you that love is love, no matter the shape or gender it comes in. As the novel shows, love should always win in the end. I give this book five out of five stars. You should read it so you can be a part of the conversation.

Boba Fett a competent Star Wars story

The spin-off series of *The Mandalorian* feels more like a sequel to that show as opposed to a standalone tale about Boba Fett

By LUKE REKELA-JASPER
Quill staff writer

The Book of Boba Fett is a space western television series created by Jon Favreau for the streaming service Disney+. It is the second live-action television series in the *Star Wars* franchise and it is a spin-off of *The Mandalorian*, also created by Favreau. *The Book of Boba Fett* follows the adventures of Boba Fett, a former bounty hunter who has now become a crime lord overseeing the criminal underworld of the desert planet Tatooine.

Whether you keep up with the *Star Wars* franchise or not, I'm sure many people know about, or at least will recognize, Boba Fett. For years, Fett has been a favorite of many *Star Wars* fans and has been one of the many faces of the franchise. To me, Boba Fett has always been more of a toy or marketing device used by Lucasfilm and Disney rather than an actual fleshed-out character. But with Fett's reintroduction into the *Star Wars* franchise in the second season of *The Mandalorian* following his apparent death in 1983's *Return of the Jedi*, it was clear to me that Favreau had plans for future Boba Fett adventures, and I wasn't surprised that *The Mandalorian's* season two finale ended up teasing a Boba Fett standalone TV series.

Although I enjoyed both *Mandalorian* seasons, my main concern about this announcement was that I did not find Boba Fett to be a compelling character, let alone someone who I would like to lead a TV series. After all, his main goal in *The Mandalorian* season two was that he wanted his costume back. However, after watching the first episode of *Boba Fett* on December 29, 2021, the thing I took away from it was that Jon Favreau, the writer of the series, has successfully made Boba Fett into a legitimate protagonist, which had me looking forward to the next episode.

In *The Book of Boba Fett*, Temuera Morrison reprises his role from *The Mandalorian's* second season as the main man himself, Boba Fett. Favreau completely flips the character of Boba Fett. Instead of the formerly stoic man of few words, Favreau opts to make Fett more goofy and fun. If it weren't for Morrison's expressive and often hilarious performance, I doubt this change would have worked for me.

Ming-Na Wen also reprises her role from *The Mandalorian* as Fennec Shand, a master assassin whose life was saved by Fett after she was left for dead on Tatooine. I appreciate how



Photo courtesy of LUCASFILM

Temuera Morrison reprises his role as Bob Fett, a character that was first introduced in the original *Star Wars* trilogy.

Favreau connects the parallel of both her and Fett being left for dead on Tatooine, and I especially like the fourth episode, which features flashbacks showing the beginning of their partnership.

Pedro Pascal also returns as Din Djarin, The Mandalorian. He is just as good as he is in his own series. Pascal's return makes me look forward to his show's third season, which is expected to premiere around the holiday season in 2022.

The seven episodes of the series have many compelling elements to offer. The first episode, titled "Stranger in a Strange Land," sets the stage for future episodes to come. Its narrative is divided into two parts: the first is set after the events of *The Mandalorian* and follows Boba Fett and Fennec Shand as Tatooine crime bosses, while the second plot consists of flashbacks that bridge the gap between Boba Fett's seeming demise in *Return of the Jedi* and his reintroduction in *The Mandalorian*. I think the pacing of the switch between present day and flashbacks is well balanced. However, the problem is that I eventually became disinterested in the present-day storyline and just wanted the story to return to the flashbacks, which revolve around Fett slowly developing a strong bond with a tribe of Tusken Raiders.

The second episode, titled "The Tribes of Tatooine," is definitely an improvement over its predecessor. This chapter primarily revolves around Fett's time with the Tuskens, but it still suffers the same issues as the first episode: the present-day storyline is slow, boring and uninteresting.

The third episode, "The

Streets of Mos Espa," throws everything I like about the series out the window and really soured my opinion about the show. Fortunately, the fourth episode, "The Gathering Storm," is a definite improvement. The focus of this episode is more on Fett's future motivations and his partnership with Fennec Shand.

However, it is the next episode that really divided my opinion on the show. This chapter, "Return of The Mandalorian," features The Mandalorian arriving to work with Boba Fett and his friends. While I really enjoy the first half of this episode, and think it would have been a pretty good start to *The Mandalorian* season three, there is one jarring issue with this episode: Boba Fett isn't in it. It's hilarious to me that Boba Fett, the guy who's name is in the title, has an episode of his own show that does not even feature him.

The sixth episode, "From the Desert Comes a Stranger," is a continuation of the fifth episode. In effect, Boba Fett has nothing to do and is limited to a cameo appearance at the end of the episode. While I find the subplot with The Mandalorian entertaining, that is only because I really like *The Mandalorian*.

The season finale, "In the Name of Honor," thankfully brings things back to Fett and friends. This episode serves as the resolution to the conflict between him and the crime syndicate, The Pykes. While it has its moments, *The Book of Boba Fett's* finale is underwhelming and frustrating, primarily because it undermines and contradicts *The Mandalorian's* season two finale. This greatly disappoints me and has me worried

about how *The Mandalorian* will flow as a TV show when looking back on it. Despite the fact that *The Book of Boba Fett* has a few episodes that can stand well on their own, when looking at every episode separately, the show is quite a mess.

Speaking of elements that do not quite work, it needs to be noted that, even though the show is called *The Book of Boba Fett*, there is no book involved in the plot or even mentioned at all. My prediction was that the finale would be titled "The Book of Boba Fett" and that Boba Fett would create a book of laws or mandates for the territory he is in charge of to maintain order, but I was way wrong.

In contrast, one aspect of the show I really like is Ludwig Göransson's score. I think the music goes perfectly with both the present day and flashback storylines.

Additionally, I think all seven episodes are really well-directed. The episode directors, which include Robert Rodriguez, Steph Green, Kevin Tancharoen, Bryce Dallas Howard and Dave Filoni, prove that they know how to make *Star Wars* look good and, at the very least, engaging.

In conclusion, *The Book of Boba Fett* is undeniably a competent TV series with a beginning, middle and an end, but the show as a whole greatly suffers when its shifts focus from the main narrative with Boba Fett and turns into *The Mandalorian* season 2.5. I rate *The Book of Boba Fett* 2.5 stars out of five and would only recommend this series if you like both seasons of *The Mandalorian* and would like to enter its upcoming third season without being confused.

Mitchells conveys a clever critique of technology

The 2021 film, which was nominated for an Academy Award, finds a good balance between action, comedy and drama

By PHILIP ROBERT
Quill staff writer

Sony's 2021 film *Mitchells vs. the Machines* is a masterpiece in animation. In fact, the movie was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Animated Feature. The animation shows emotion and feels real. I know this sounds cliché, but if you pause a scene in this movie, you will see the quality of the animation. Once you see this movie, you will not be surprised at why I feel this strongly about *Mitchells vs. the Machines*.

The movie starts in Kentwood, Michigan in the year 2021. The main character is Katie Mitchell, an 18-year-old LGBTQ+ girl who is about to begin college. As she starts a road trip to college with her dysfunctional family, a robot takeover of the world begins, resulting in the need for Katie and her family to save the world.

The movie deals with several themes. One issue it deals



Photo courtesy of SONY PICTURES ANIMATION

Mitchells focuses on the challenges related to being in a family.

with is the bad side of being on technology too long. The film also deals with the importance of learning to let go of the past. In the movie, Katie's father represents the past and his generation's reliance on Walkmans, VHS machines and pre-digital television. Meanwhile, Katie represents the current generation and

its reliance on iPods, iPhones and Instagram. These themes help viewers relate to the film on a personal level.

Another highlight of *Mitchells vs. the Machines* is the animation. This movie shows the veteran team at Sony Animation flexing its muscles. Every movie from 2014 onward that Sony An-

imation has made brings across a unique feeling of warmth (except for *The Emoji Movie*). The movie is produced by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, the same people who made *The Lego Movie*, so you know this movie and its animation are good.

The central structure of *Mitchells vs. the Machines* is also effective. The movie is packed with action scenes but it also has scenes in which we see the loving nature of the main family. Much like *The Lego Movie*, *Mitchells vs. the Machines* does not take itself too seriously but it is also very relatable. That approach makes this movie cool.

Overall, *Mitchells vs. the Machines* is an animated film that will appeal to audiences of all ages. While some critics have said this movie is too fast for them, I believe that is what makes the movie stand out. A movie is supposed to take you to new and unusual places, just like books. It is for this reason that *Mitchells vs. the Machines* earns five out of five stars.

Butterfly soars on Cooper stage

Cooper's one act play made it all the way to the sections competition in February



Photo by SHENG VANG

The theater troupe hosted a final performance of the play for Cooper students during eighth period on February 17.

By ANDREW HAGGE
Quill staff writer

Cooper's 2021-2022 one act play, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, advanced to the section competition on February 12. Although the play did not make it to state, the success of the section performance prompted advisor Ms. Wurzer and the play's cast and crew to bring the play to Cooper students during eighth period on February 17.

This year's one act play, which was student-directed by Minzi Sahn (12), featured heart-wrenching emotions. For those lucky enough to be able to see it in action, there was quality in every moment, making it very worthwhile for audience members. This was a strong play that seemed more focused on telling a story and sharing it with others than trying to win and make it to state. Thanks to its very strong story, this was for sure a must-see Cooper production.

The main character in *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* is Raja, who is telling the story as an adult about when she was a child during World War II. Older Raja was played by Elizabeth Menges (11) and younger Raja by Alleyne Syverson (9). Raja is a young Jewish girl who is forced into

Nazi concentration camps with her family when her country is invaded by Germany.

As the story unfolds, Raja makes friends along the way who, like her, are Jewish and forced into ghettos. Slowly, trains stop by the ghettos and force more people away to concentration camps like Auschwitz, where many would never see their families again. Raja makes a

PELLING story running along, helping the audience connect with the sad-but-true story of Raja. There was plenty of emotion, which brought some viewers sitting near me in the audience to the verge of tears. Strong body language by the actors helped reinforce the emotions and effectively communicate them to the viewers.

As for the structure of the play, the transitions between sequences were strong and smooth, leading to a deeply moving final scene. Within these sequences, the small number of props were all used well. In fact, a few of them were used as symbolic items and others had dual use throughout the performance.

The cast and crew also deserve a lot of credit for writing the original script. The dialogue and speeches were powerful and

emotional. Although there were a few mistakes, they still put on a magnificent show.

Overall, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* was excellent. Cooper students should make sure to check out all of the school's theatrical productions. This one-act production put out powerful messages through the talented actors and crew. This play deserves four out of five stars.

As for the structure of the play, the transitions between sequences were strong and smooth, leading to a deeply moving final scene. Within these sequences, the small number of props were all used well. In fact, a few of them were used as symbolic items and others had dual use throughout the performance.

deep connection with Irena, who is a teacher figure, as she works on coloring sheets that are being used to distract the children from the harm of the world outside. By the end, though, Irena ends up on a Nazi train, which takes the happiness out of Raja's soul.

What the one act team lacked in funding, time and space they made up for in raw talent and skill. The actors kept the com-

Wall murals give students a platform

The annual mural project is part of the curriculum for the school's IB Art course

By SHENG VANG
Quill staff writer

The wall murals located throughout the building are paintings created by art students at Cooper to express and show their voice publicly.

"It gives students an opportunity to leave their legacy on the wall of the school before they leave and graduate and do great things," Ms. Mielke, an art teacher, said.

The wall mural project was started four years ago by Ms. Miller, the previous IB Art teacher at Cooper. She wanted students to be able to show more of their voice publicly around the school and so this project was pushed forward to give them that opportunity.

According to Mr. Molitor, another art teacher, the process of getting the murals approved took a long time since it "involved putting ink on walls, which is not typical." However, when the project did get approved, he said it felt like a "big win."

"The students that were originally in the IB class really enjoyed the opportunity to have a project where they can go out and put their work on the walls

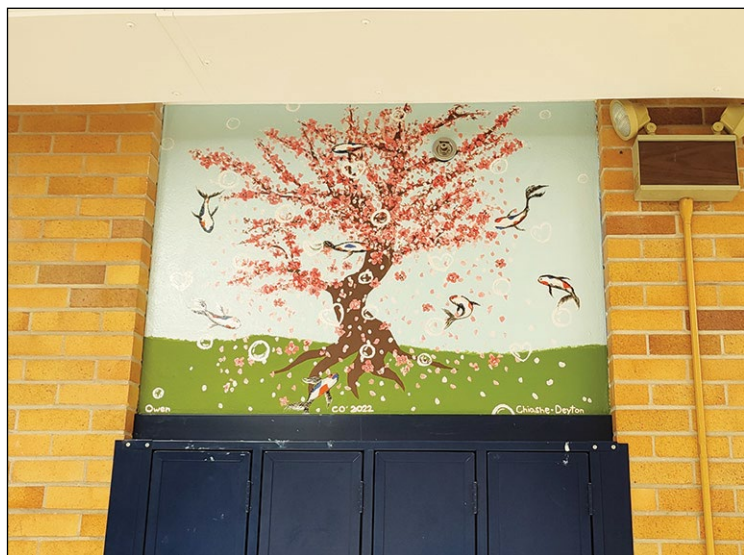


Photo by SHENG VANG

Painting of the murals was put on hold for two years due to the pandemic.

for public display. It was a very important thing for them," Molitor said.

Since the start, the murals have had a positive effect on the community. According to Mielke, the art "liven up" the school and "makes the walls and building look more friendly."

Similarly, Selena Yang (11) said she thinks the murals are "really cool" and a "joy to see." Yang mentioned some of her favorite murals are the ones by the stairs on the first floor because they are "very joyful and color-

ful."

Molitor added that the murals also "give a visual presentation of the different cultures within [the] school."

This year, Mielke and her art students are looking forward to getting some murals done since people weren't allowed in the building to do them over the last two years due to the pandemic. Mielke said any students interested and experienced with paint

WALL MURALS
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Premier Performers

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

Joseph Kubly

By RICHARA BULLOCK
Quill staff writer

The arts have been a central part of Joseph Kubly's (12) time at Cooper. He is currently involved in multiple band groups and the school's improv team.

"I started doing band because I thought the trumpet sounded like a cool instrument to play and I started improv because I was told I would have a lot of fun and that I'd be very good at it," he said.

Kubly said that his skill as a trumpet player in band has gotten him "recognition from professionals." His favorite memory from this activity was when he had a chance to play a solo during a Concert Choir show.

"When I executed the solo perfectly, I was given a huge round of applause," he said.

During his time on the improv team, Kubly said he has "learned how to better think on [his] feet." Among his favorite activities in that group is playing different improv games.

As for school, Kubly said Creative Writing and Wind Ensemble are his favorite classes. When he is not at Cooper,

Kubly likes reading, playing video games, watching Netflix and seeing friends.

Currently, Kubly is looking at several schools in the Midwest as he makes his college decision. He said he hopes to be a history major.

"The two main career paths I have chosen are becoming a history teacher or a lawyer," he said.

Kubly is not yet sure if he will continue with band or improv during college, but he said he wants to continue playing the trumpet "for as long as there is air in [his] lungs."



Photo by R. BULLOCK

Caroline VanSistine

By JACK ATKINSON
Quill staff writer

Caroline VanSistine (12) is a cello player in Symphony Orchestra.

"This is my ninth year in orchestra," she said. "I knew I wanted to be involved in some music activity and I chose the cello because I liked that I could play both high and low."

VanSistine said her involvement in orchestra has allowed her to "meet some really cool people" and play some "fun music." In fact, it is her time with her classmates that has produced her favorite music memories.

"My favorite memories are when we get to perform together. I love being able to show all the hard work we have done," she said.

VanSistine's long tenure in the orchestra program has led to her position

on the Orchestra Leadership Council, which she said is "going well."

Currently, she and her fellow musicians are beginning to prepare for their upcoming spring shows.

"We've been previewing different songs and seeing which ones we like," VanSistine said.

Along with orchestra, VanSistine said English and Chemistry are her favorite classes this year.

"In English, I get to read books I otherwise probably wouldn't have read," she said. "Although Chemistry is one of my harder classes this year, I enjoy the challenge and love the teacher."

Next fall, VanSistine plans to go to college and major in English and political science.

"I want to go into publishing or become an English professor," she said.



Photo by R. BULLOCK

Clare Snapko

By LLEWELLYN BOUTHIM
Quill staff writer

Clare Snapko (12) is a student who takes part in many arts- and sports-related activities at Cooper.

"I am currently involved in Concert Choir at Cooper. In the past, I have also been in Bel Canto Choir and Concert Band," Snapko said.

Snapko first started school choir in fifth grade.

"That year, I joined the All-District Choir. I have been in choir ever since that time," she said.

Snapko cited two reasons why she has stayed involved in choir over the years.

"I love being able to have fun and sing next to my best friend," she said.

One of Snapko's favorite memories from choir goes back many years.

"Singing at a Twins games for All-District Choir in fifth grade is still a favorite memory," she said.

As the winter months come to a close, Snapko said her choir is now preparing for the spring concerts in which the group will be performing.

Beyond her choir class, Snapko said she enjoys all of the subjects she gets to study at Cooper.

"I love all of my classes because I get the opportunity to learn new things and apply what I have learned," she said.

When she is not singing and studying, Snapko said she is focused on playing soccer, reading and listening to music.

Next fall, Snapko will start college.

"I am still undecided about my school and my major, but I know I will be playing soccer at college," she said.



Photo by R. BULLOCK

Isaac Yang

By PHILIP ROBERT
Quill staff writer

Isaac Yang (12) has been in choir throughout his time at Cooper. In fact, he said he has been doing it since fifth grade.

According to Yang, one of the things he has most enjoyed about being in a choir is performing at concerts because it is "fun to sing in front of your friends and family." Although he is not a leader in the choir, Yang said he still enjoys the activity because it gives him a chance to sing. As he looks toward the rest of the year, Yang said there will be a number of upcoming choir performances in the spring.

Yang's favorite subjects in school are art, gym and choir. As a current student in the Clay class, Yang said he loves that he "gets to make

stuff out of clay."

"The colors pop out so well," he said.

Another class Yang enjoys is gym because "you get to do fun activities and get your body moving."

Finally, Yang said he enjoys choir because he gets to sing on the stage with his friends.

Outside of school, Yang's favorite hobbies are hunting, fishing and playing volleyball and badminton.

Next fall, Yang will be starting at a two-year community college. He hopes to major in information technology because he is "really into fixing PCs."

As for continuing with choir after graduating, Yang said he will likely stop after high school.

"It has [been] an honor and privilege to join the choir," he said.



Photo by R. BULLOCK

MISSED CREDITS

continued from page 2

“Students taking advantage of this program get the benefit of not having to retake the entire course to achieve a passing grade,” she said.

Also working with science students was Ms. Diamond, who oversaw ninth grade students needing their Physical Science credit.

“We have prearranged what work, formatives and summatives, students would still need to complete in order to earn a ‘pass’ in Physical Science. Some days, students are working together with me reviewing notes or concepts, and other days, I have students working self-paced and checking in with me if they have specific questions,” Diamond said.

Diamond said the credit completion program not only helps students avoid falling behind on their first semester credits, it can actually help them with the transition into second semester.

“Doing this after the first semester really helps students catch up and be prepared for the second semester of their courses, rather than waiting until the end of the year to participate in summer school. I think the program really helps them find success midway through the year and re-energizes them for semester two,” she said.

Students who needed to complete math credits from first semester worked with Mr. Garrett. Garrett oversaw credit completion for Geometry, Algebra and Algebra II.

“It really benefits those students who were very close in passing their class but, for a variety of reasons, just weren’t able to. This class allows them a second chance to complete the work and get the credit, so they don’t have to make up the whole semester again, either in summer school or in the following year,” Garrett said.

Garrett added that credit completion is especially helpful to younger students, who may not realize the impact missing credits will have once they are seniors.

“This will help them to get back on track for graduation,” he said.

Outside of the four core subject areas, Ms. Miller helped students who needed to complete their Spanish credit from first semester.

“The students who did it will get the credit for the first semester of Spanish 1 or Spanish 2,” she said.

One highlight of the credit completion program is that Miller can tailor it to the needs of the specific student.

“It is very personalized to the student and the level, and which of the learning objectives they need to prove they have met. Some students need to meet all the course objectives, but some students have already proven mastery of some of the objectives, so they only have a few left to demonstrate proficiency on,” she said.

Another aspect of the program Miller praised was the chance it gave her to work one on one with students.

“We can work on each topic one at a time until students feel they have mastered it. They will be able to get more one-on-one help and attention so that they can be successful,” she said.

AMIR LOCKE

continued from page 1

Patterson pointed out that adults and staff members are impacted by these events as well.

Whether or not race played a role in the mind of the officer who shot Locke is unclear. However, Patterson said it does play a role in how the community reacts to an incident like this.

“It might’ve been a different outcome if the young male was a white male,” he said.

From the student standpoint, Kivan Whittler (12) said the killing of Amir Locke has a similar impact to the deaths of George Floyd, Treyvon Martin and Ahmed Aubery. He said that this series of deaths has made people not feel safe sleeping at night.

“It makes them feel not safe in their own home,” he said.

Mordor lets gamers enter Middle-earth

The action-adventure game connects to the world of the J.R.R. Tolkien *Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* novels

By LUKE REKELA-JASPER
Quill staff writer

Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor is a 2014 action-adventure video game developed by Monolith Productions and published by Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment. The story is based off of the Legendarium created by J.R.R. Tolkien and takes place between the events of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogies. The player controls Talion, a human warrior who is bonded by the spirit of an Elf lord, as he sets out on a quest through the desolate land of Mordor to avenge fallen loved ones that were killed by the dark lord Sauron.

Shadow of Mordor could not have been released at a more perfect time for me. Having been anticipating Peter Jackson’s final installment in *The Hobbit* trilogy that was set for an early December 2014 release, I remember being enthralled at the chance to return to Tolkien’s Middle-earth, this time via a video game that had similarities to my favorite video game franchise, the *Batman: Arkham* series, along with having an aesthetic similar to the cinematics of my favorite massive online multiplayer roleplaying game, *World of Warcraft*. To say the least, after finishing my first playthrough, *Shadow of Mordor* did not disappoint me. It was everything I could have wanted and more in a single-player video game.

The game kicks off with a violent and devastating sequence, as Talion and his family are ambushed by Sauron’s forces, consisting of Orcs, Uruk-Hai and three of Sauron’s captains. Talion and his family are killed as a part of a blood sacrifice to summon an Elf lord, which ends up possessing and effectively reviving Talion, who is now used as a vessel to rediscover the Elf lord’s origins and get revenge on the dark lord’s minions.

If you look at most reviews for *Shadow of Mordor*, you’ll likely find many criticisms directed at the main story. While *Mordor*’s narrative is not a masterpiece, I do think it is effective enough, since the main aspect of this game everybody loves is the combat and its system. I think what I most appreciate about *Shadow of Mordor*’s story is how simple it is. Basically, Talion is just on the hunt to kill the three evil-doers who were involved in the murder of his wife, his son and himself. While there are other factors to the main campaign, I think the game features just enough emotion to get me invested in the story.

Mordor’s main campaign also introduces various characters, some of which I find to be memorable, and others, not so much. Much of the campaign’s first half features missions involving an Orc named Ratbag the Coward, who offers to

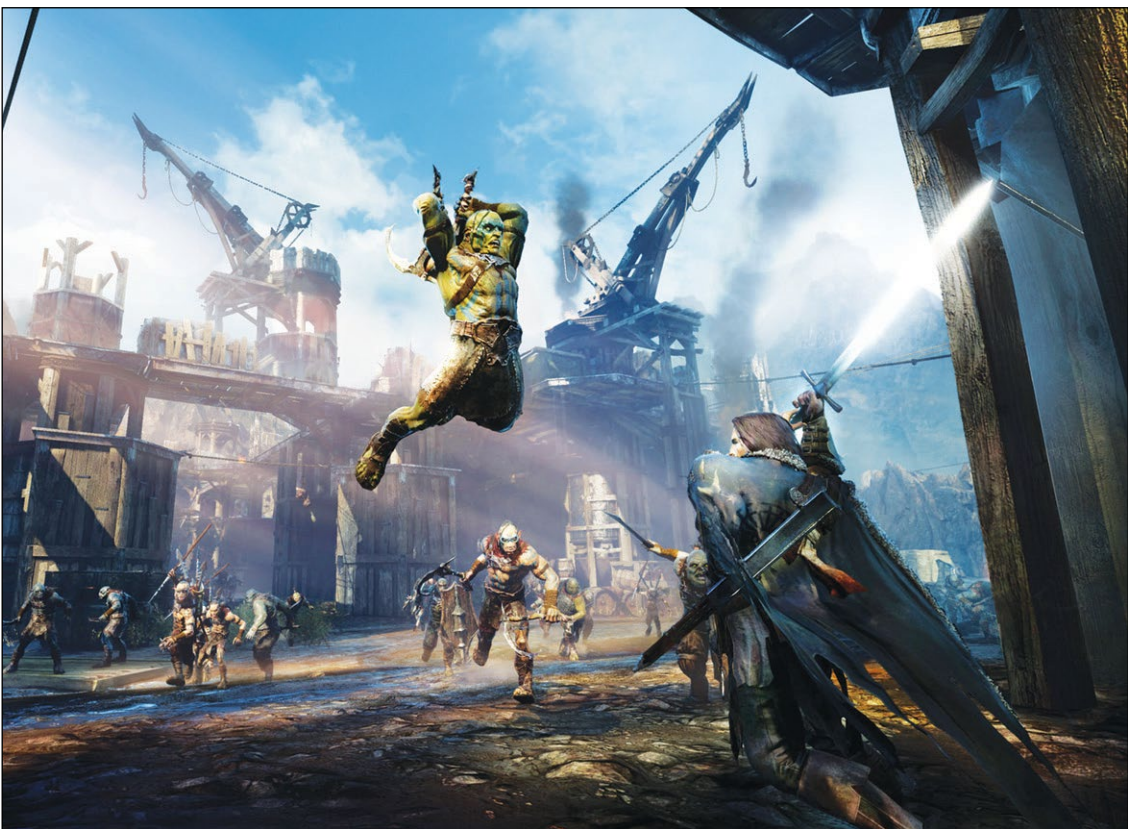


Photo courtesy of MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS

Players control the character of Talion, a human warrior bonded with an Elf lord's spirit.

bring Talion closer to Sauron’s captains in exchange for helping him ascend in Sauron’s military hierarchy.

Another set of missions I enjoy feature the return of Gollum, a prominent character in both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. While I think die-hard Tolkien fans will immediately recognize that Andy Serkis does not reprise this role from the films, I do think that motion capture and voice actor Liam O’Brien does an excellent job.

The latter half of the game introduces a Dwarf hunter named Torvin, who Talion helps hunt for many of Mordor’s most vicious creatures. Upon replaying the game in 2022, I find Torvin to be my personal favorite secondary character. I am glad to continue adventuring with him in the “Lord of the Hunt” DLC campaign.

As for characters I don’t really vibe with, the first half features missions where Talion joins Hirgon, a former enemy of Talion, to rescue Hirgon’s captive human allies and humiliate Sauron. I think the revelation that Talion and Hirgon were formerly at odds with each other is a bit strange, especially when you consider that, in a videogame that predominantly features Orcs, it begs the question as to why the humans would be enemies with each other when they definitely share a common enemy in Sauron’s army.

The second half of the game also has Talion being sought out by Queen Marwen and her daughter Lithariel, who both assist in Talion’s mission to develop an army to conquer Mordor. I don’t think these two characters are bad, but they mainly feel like re-skinned or

re-generated versions of *Lord of the Rings* characters, so I suppose what they lack is originality.

As for the antagonists of *Shadow of Mordor*, the three main bad-dies focused on are the Hammer, Tower and Black Hand of Sauron, who are the central foes involved in the murder of Talion’s family. While I think the boss fights (especially for the Black Hand) aren’t anything special, I appreciate that all three of these villains at least look different and have their own personalities. I don’t necessarily mind that their main character trait is that they are evil since, at their core, Tolkien stories are mainly about good prevailing over evil forces.

When it comes to combat and gameplay, *Shadow of Mordor* is similar to the *Batman: Arkham* games, which primarily involve melee combat sequences with some stealth and gameplay sprinkled in. The combat feels like the best of the *Arkham* series but it is revolutionized by the brutality Talion can inflict, which Batman wouldn’t because of his morals. The best moments of combat definitely come once Talion unlocks the ability to perform “executions” on enemies, which leads to satisfying moments and great animations.

However, I think *Mordor* isn’t as polished as *Batman* when it comes to stealth. I think the stealth in *Mordor* is definitely playable, but in comparison to what you can do in melee combat sequences, stealthing through a sequence seems much less appealing.

The most-talked about aspect of *Shadow of Mordor* is its “Nemesis System,” which has AI-controlled enemies remember their prior interactions with the player and behave accordingly, whether it be

positively or negatively. I’m likely the last person to say the Nemesis System is the best aspect of *Mordor*, but it really is. The enemies players make are completely unique and one-of-a-kind for them, and they all have their own traits that either strengthen or weaken them. These enemies can kill Talion throughout the game, and since Talion can revive himself, his new opponents will rise in the ranks of the Orc/Uruk hierarchy and will become much tougher foes. I think this gameplay technique is extremely effective since it forces the player to think of different strategies to take their opponents down. It also makes the player’s eventual victory much more satisfying.

Another element I love is the gritty aesthetic of the game. There is a looming sense of loneliness that fits the game’s tone and its revenge-driven narrative. Interestingly, these elements were later eliminated in *Mordor*’s 2017 sequel, *Middle-earth: Shadow of War*.

I also like how both *Mordor* and *Shadow of War* at first feel like the main story in the Tolkien Legendarium timeline, but, ultimately, the conclusion to the whole “War of the One Ring” comes in *The Lord of the Rings*. I appreciate that these games follow through with the concept that Talion and everyone else involved are just pawns in a much larger story.

Even seven-and-a-half years after its release, *Shadow of Mordor* is still a classic that I come back to every now and then. Each time I do, I always end up finding something new about the game that I like. I recommend *Shadow of Mordor* to any gamer or fan of *The Lord of the Rings* series. I give this game five stars out of five.

Central Cee brings his skills from U.K. to U.S. audiences

Wild West is an engaging collection of songs that join compelling lyrics with state-of-the-art production

By PHILIP ROBERT
Quill staff writer

Central Cee has had a long road to fame. He first showed his talent by recording himself doing a freestyle in a car. The success of this car freestyle was followed by another one. It was at that point that audiences in the U.K. started noticing Central Cee and he started blowing up. The hype eventually led to him dropping a track called “Day in the Life,” which helped set him up for a recording career. Central Cee has now released an album called *Wild West*, which showcases how lyrically talented he is.

Central Cee starts off the album with “6 for 6.” Produced by Okami202, Seyon and Young Chencs, this track was made after Central Cee first blew up. On it, Central Cee brags about himself and tells listeners about how he helped out his hood in struggling times. He also talks about being in a trap house and how he could have been in prison it wasn’t for music. This is a track that got Central Cee more listeners in countries outside of England, including Canada and Holland.

Another good song on the al-



Photo courtesy of COMPLEX UK

Central Cee's lyrical approach involves telling stories about his life experiences.

bum is “Fraud.” On this track, Central Cee talks about the way he used to hustle by doing credit card scams. In fact, one of his men did a stint in prison for fraud. “Fraud” is a great example of storytelling, which can especially be seen in the first verse: “Get bun in the name of trust. I’m too paranoid. Can’t drop my guard. Couldn’t believe they locked my darg. I feel it for him and it hurt me hard. What’s ours is ours. On your

marks, get ready and go. I won’t come last.” This verse shows Central Cee’s dedication to making it out and how he is trying to help himself and his crew leave the hood life for a more rewarding life.

Also showing Central Cee’s knack for storytelling is “Pinging (6 Figures).” This track about how he turned down a six-figure-advance record deal so his music would be independent. As he says in the song,

“They used to sleep on my ting. Put in the work and I keep on grinding. Got my cake up. I paid it straight up. I defo don’t need co-signing.” In the song, Central Cee also advises up-and-coming rappers that they don’t need to chase girls since fame will bring the girls to the rappers. Overall, “Pinging (6 Figures)” shows that, even though he moving out of the hood, Central Cee can still talk knowledge.

Another one of my favorite tracks is “Ruby.” One protagonist of the song is Ruby, who becomes a victim of neglect and abuse after she starts sleeping around and doing drugs to get attention. A second protagonist is Jack, a drug pusher and gangster who has lost most of the people he knows. Produced by Sykes Beats, this song is a powerful glimpse into hood struggles and how Central Cee grew up in this tough environment. This song shows how the hood is a sad place to be.

Thanks to these and many more excellent tracks, *Wild West* is a great album and a perfect introduction to Central Cee. This album is a good example of how hard work pays off. *Wild West* earns five out of five stars.

Hawks sign for college sports

Athletes involved in Cooper lacrosse, soccer and football are moving on to the next level



Photo by MS. THURSTON

The Activities Office hosted a National Signing Day event for the athletes after school on February 2.

By NOLAN ANDLER
Quill staff writer

Cooper hosted a National Signing Day event after school on February 2 during which athletes committed to play sports at the college level. Nine Hawks signed to their colleges that day: Anna Palony (12) for lacrosse, Jace Herman (12) for soccer and seven players for football: Joe Russell (12), Andre Reese (12), AJ Wodtke (12), Elijah Enna (12), Camden Royal (12), David Connors, Jr. (12), and Donte Williams (12). As they plan on taking the leap to becoming collegiate athletes, these seniors reflected on their time competing for Cooper.

Anna Palony

After three years with the Cooper lacrosse team, Anna Palony will play lacrosse at Concordia University, St. Paul (CSP).

Palony said she signed there because it “felt like home” to her along with the fact that she sees Concordia’s team as one that is on the rise.

“They are a rising program and the possibility of helping grow a successful team is exciting,” she said.

Palony said she had many people help her along the way to college athletics.

“My club lacrosse team coaches, teammates and family all helped with this chance,” she said. “My coaches taught me what I needed to know to get to the college level and my teammates [and] family supported me throughout all of it.”

As of right now, the major Palony will study is undecided but she has interest in a couple different fields.

“I hope to either become a pediatric occupational therapist or to work in the sports industry as a social media manager or something similar,” she said.

Palony’s favorite memory of the Cooper lacrosse team is her teammates.

“Playing with my best friends will always be my favorite memory,” she said.

Jace Herman

Having played four years with the Cooper girls soccer team, Jace Herman is moving on to join the squad at Southeastern Community College. Herman chose this school because she liked how welcoming everyone was.

“The coaches and the community were so welcoming,” she said. “It’s an amazing environment for the sport and academics.”

A big help along the way to college soccer was her Cooper soccer team coach, Mr. Wetherall.

“He gave me an opportunity to play soccer for Cooper after only playing recreational and he completely changed my mindset about soccer. I was never that serious about it until he helped show me the potential I had,” she said.

Herman wants to major in nursing at college “in hopes of becoming a travel nurse.”

Joe Russell

Joe Russell signed with Iowa Western after a record-setting three years as the starting quarterback for Cooper. Russell said he signed with Iowa because they can give him a great opportunity to play Division One college football.

“They can give me the best opportunity to play at the Power 5 level,” he said.

A big part of Russell’s journey to college football was the guidance of Cooper head coach Mr. Howard. Russell said Howard helped contact the coaches to get them to recruit him.

Russell will look to major in either engineering or business in college.

As he looks back on his time at Cooper, Russell said his best memory was “holding that section final trophy up after the Armstrong game.”

Andre Reese

Andre Reese signed on with Bemidji State to continue his football career. Reese signed with Bemidji for several reasons.

“I signed with them because it felt like home and their football culture. They are also a winning team at the [Division Two] level. They are the defending NSIC champions,” Reese said.

The people who helped Reese on his football journey were the Cooper coaches and his family.

“My coaches helped me every day for four years straight to help me make my dream come true. My family helped me keep a clear head so I can focus,” Reese said.

Reese will be majoring in nursing or exercise science at college. Additionally, Reese has the goal of reaching the Division One college football level and making it to the NFL. However, he said if that doesn’t happen, he wants to get a job in education.

As for Reese’s favorite memories of Cooper football, they both happened this season.

“Beating Armstrong twice and going to state to play in the U.S. Bank Stadium with my brothers,” he said.

AJ Wodtke

After playing the linebacker position for Cooper’s varsity squad over the last three years, AJ Wodtke will continue his football career at University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire. Wodtke signed with Wisconsin because he wanted to attend a school that could help him be successful down the road.

“I wanted a school where I could set myself up for success after football [and] school,” he said.

Additionally, Wodtke said he “loved the campus and environment.”

Playing big parts in Wodtke’s athletic journey along the way were his teammates and coaches.

“A huge help to me was my teammates always pushing me to work harder and, of course, my coaches helping me get better every day,” he said.

Wodtke said he plans on majoring in environmental science.

“I plan on majoring in environmental science while minoring in criminal justice to hopefully become a [Department of Natural Resources] agent one day,” he said.

Looking back on his time with Cooper football, Wodtke said his best memories came during 10th grade and 12th grade.

“One of my favorite memories is my first varsity start when I was in 10th grade, along with seeing my team go to state this year, even though I couldn’t play,” he said.

Elijah Enna

Elijah Enna spent four years lining up under center on the offensive line for Cooper every Friday night. Now, he is moving on to play football at Augsburg University.

Enna said he signed there because he liked the team’s coaches and the level of education Augsburg will provide.

Enna’s journey to college football was influenced by his dad, his teammate Jaxon Howard (11) and his Cooper coach Mr. Howard.

“My dad had helped me prepare since I was young and since I told him it was my dream. Jaxon helped me get acclimated to the recruiting process and contacting coaches. [Finally,] coach Howard set my path up to success since ninth grade,” Enna said.

Enna said he wants to major in physical education or sports education in college.

As for Enna’s favorite memories of the Cooper football team, he listed several items.

“Going to state, team parties and dinners, along with summer workouts,” he said.

Camden Royal

Camden Royal will be going to Iowa Western to play football after two years as a Hawks running back.

“I signed with them because they are one of the best [junior colleges] in the nation and they will help me reach my goal of playing Power 5 football,” Royal said.

A big influence on Royal’s football success is Cooper head coach Mr. Howard.

“He has great relationships with these college coaches and he puts each of his players in the best position possible if we’re willing to put in the work,” Royal said.

For college, Royal wants to major in business.

“I’ve always wanted to run my own business and be my own boss,” he said.

Royal’s favorite memory of Cooper football was this year’s state run.

“[I liked] making history and playing in the state tournament. Cooper always had a chip on their shoulder and we shocked the world,” he said.

HAWKS SIGN
continues on page 10

Cooper Competitors

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

Claire Stromberg

By LLEWELLYN BOUTHIM
Quill staff writer

Claire Stromberg (12) is a three-season athlete for the Cooper Hawks. Currently, she is getting ready for the softball season after having competed in swimming during the fall and Nordic skiing during the winter.

“I have been playing softball since the fifth grade,” she said. “I picked softball because it seemed fun and my mom wanted me to play.”

Stromberg said she has developed many friendships during her time in the sport and her favorite softball memories revolve around the time she gets to spend with her peers.

“One of my favorite memories is when our refs were late to a game so we played ‘Ninja’ with the whole team and

did a lot of team bonding,” she said.

Stromberg served as a softball captain last year and is poised to do so again this season.

“I enjoy being a leader and being able to help my teammates,” she said.

Looking back at her sports journey this year, Stromberg said her fall swimming season “went well.” Meanwhile, she said her Nordic season was fun despite “some setbacks due to COVID.”

When it comes to school, Stromberg said her favorite subject is science, although she added that she has enjoyed her clay class this year. Outside of school, she said she enjoys snowboarding and “hanging out with friends.”

After graduating this year, Stromberg will attend the University of Minnesota, where she plans on studying biology.



Photo by R. BULLOCK

Magnus Korstad

By LLEWELLYN BOUTHIM
Quill staff writer

Magnus Korstad (12) has been a competitor across multiple sports during his time at Cooper. Currently, he is entering his fourth year on the track team after having run cross country in the fall and skied for Nordic in the winter.

“I started track in ninth grade because I had been a runner in the past,” he said.

Keeping Korstad interested in track has been the bonds he has made with his teammates and his ability to compete. In fact, the chance to run at meets has led to his favorite track memories.

“Hosting meets at Cooper last year was a track highlight,” he said. “It was fun to run on our home track.”

As a senior on this year’s track team, Korstad said he is looking forward to being a leader.

“Captains haven’t been named yet for this year, but even if I am not named a captain, I still have a role as a senior to set an example,” he said.

One team Korstad has had a chance to lead is the school’s cross country squad, for which he has been a captain during his junior and senior years.

“I set some personal records this season and won some races,” he said.

In order to stay in shape for track, Korstad did Nordic in the winter.

“The season went great,” he said. “I had the best race I think I ever had during sections.”

As he looks forward to next fall, Korstad said he will definitely be attending college although he is “still undecided about what [his] major will be.” However, he does not know for certain if he will be running cross country and track for his school.



Photo by R. BULLOCK

Joe Russell

By LLEWELLYN BOUTHIM
Quill staff writer

Joe Russell (12) is a three-sport athlete for the Cooper Hawks.

“I play football during the fall, I play basketball during the winter and I play baseball during the spring,” he said.

Russell first started playing football when he was five years old.

“I started in kindergarten. My family is just filled with athletes, so when my parents put me in, it just became natural to me,” he said.

Russell cited a pair of reasons why he still enjoys playing football.

“I enjoyed the adrenaline rush that it gave me and all the friends and brothers that I’ve made,” he said.

A highlight of the 2021 football season for Russell was making it to the

state tournament.

“I am the quarterback of the team, which some say is the most important position. It was good leading the team to U.S. Bank Stadium,” Russell said.

During the winter season, Russell has traditionally played basketball. However, he said he stopped playing this year to focus on getting “bigger, stronger and faster” for football next year. In the spring season, Russell said he will be playing baseball with the Hawks team.

When it comes to school, Russell said he likes difficult subjects.

“I like math. It’s a challenge for me,” he said.

In his free time, Russell enjoys working on cars by upgrading and fixing them.

Next year, Russell will major in business or engineering at Iowa Western, where he will also play football.



Photo by R. BULLOCK

Davion Evans

By LLEWELLYN BOUTHIM
Quill staff writer

Davion Evans (12) is a Hawk athlete who focuses on basketball.

“The only time I’ve played a fall or spring sport was in 10th grade when I did track and football,” he said. “I might run track this year again.”

Evans started playing high school basketball in ninth grade.

“Nothing really prompted me to start playing. I just thought basketball was fun,” he said.

One basketball moment Evans recently enjoyed was hitting 1,000 points. He also said he likes “winning games because that’s always an enjoyable moment.” Meanwhile, he said one of his favorite memories was beating Armstrong during his junior year.

As a senior on the team, Evans

said he enjoys inspiring the other players around him.

“My role is to pick my teammates up when they get down on themselves,” he said.

Given his interest in sports, Evans said it is not surprising that his favorite class in school is physical education.

“I like working out,” he said.

Outside of school, Evans’ hobbies include playing basketball and reading books. As for next fall, he is planning on attending college.

“I’m not sure about what school I want to attend in the future. As of right now, I want to major in sports management,” he said.

Evans is not sure if he will play basketball at college, but he said he wants to remain involved in athletics for the rest of his life.



Photo by R. BULLOCK

HAWKS SIGN
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David Connors, Jr.
After what he called an extremely special 2021 season with the Hawks, David Connors, Jr. will play football at Illinois State.

“Illinois State really showed their love for me and their want for me as an athlete and as a student. It feels like another home,” Connors said.

Connors said his father and uncles were big parts in his journey through high school football.

“My father and my uncles helped me along the way through everything as far as recruiting and training. They would take me to the field and the weight room to get me to where I am today,” Connors said.

During college, Connors wants to major in either business or construction management.

“My career goals are to finish college, get my degree and chase my NFL dreams while also maybe one day starting a construction company,” he said.

With respect to Hawks football, Connor’s favorite memories revolve around hard work.

“5 a.m. lifts every morning with a bunch of the guys and the two-a-days during summer. You spend a lot of time together and create great friendships,” Connors said.

Donte Williams
After four years of lining up at wide receiver on Friday nights for the Cooper football squad, Donte Williams will move on to Iowa Western for college.

“I felt like it was the best fit for me and my future,” he said.

Williams credits a number of people with providing him with help on his football journey.

“Many people helped, but my parents helped a lot along with the Cooper coaching staff,” Williams said.

As he looks back on his high school football career, Williams said one of his favorite memories of the football team was the comeback win they had at Holy Angels in 2019. He also said “beating Armstrong to go to state” at the section championship game was a highlight from the 2021-2022 season.

In college, Williams plans to major in exercise science.

WALL MURALS
continued from page 7

can do the murals.

“These include students in IB Art as well as Painting 1 and Painting 2, unless there is a special circumstance,” Mielke said.

As for the requirements and theme, there is none except that it has to be school appropriate and be approved by Head Principal Mr. Herman.

“Lots of previous students had done one inspired by their home culture. It’s really just how the students want to express themselves,” Mielke said.

One student who is a participant in the project this year is Chiashe Khang (12). She said that, through her artwork of a cherry blossom tree and a koi fish, she wanted to communicate “an overall message of new beginnings and opportunities” to the Cooper community.

“Upon becoming a student of Cooper, you will come across many opportunities that will propel you in creating new bonds with others, discovering your passions and overcoming challenges, all of which will push you towards success,” she said.

Khang added that, if she had the opportunity to do the murals again, she would definitely do it because it was a “fun experience” and she got to “express [herself] with creativity.”

Molitor said the wall murals are a clear visual of how Cooper supports its students.

“It’s clearly students’ art and shows the student voice and how we as a Cooper community support students’ voices. We can say as a district we support students’ voices, but when you actually see it firsthand, then you start to believe it more,” he said.

Super Bowl LVI was exciting matchup

The eventual 23-20 victory of the Los Angeles Rams over the Cincinnati Bengals came down to the end of the game

By ANDREW HAGGE
Quill staff writer

The NFL’s Super Bowl LVI on February 13 was headlined by the first ever hip-hop and rap halftime show. That, however, wasn’t the only exciting thing that happened during the game. The Los Angeles Rams and Cincinnati Bengals went at it for the championship in the early afternoon inside Los Angeles’ SoFi Stadium, home of the Rams, in a game the Rams would eventually win 23-20.

The Bengals made it to the Super Bowl by playing with great effort, beating many other squads in Joe Burrow’s second year on the team. This was a big change from his first season, during which he tore his ACL. It was quite a change of pace this season for the Bengals as a whole. The team went 10-7, leading the AFC North. In the playoffs, they defeated the Las Vegas Raiders, the number-one seeded Tennessee Titans and, in the AFC championship, the Kansas City Chiefs.

On the other side of the field, the 12-5 Rams took down the Arizona Cardinals, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and the San Francisco 49ers, who had beaten them the past six consecutive times, to make it to the Super Bowl. With a kickoff time of 5:30 p.m. on February 13, the Rams received the ball to start the game.

Quarter One

Receiving the ball first, Matthew Stafford and the Rams offense took it to the Bengals to see what they could do. The Bengals’ defensive line held down the fort almost the entire game, allowing only 43 total rushing yards. However, it was not long before the Rams scored the game’s first touchdown thanks to a Stafford pass to Odell Beckham, Jr. (OBJ) in the back of the end zone. The Bengals then took the ball, churning out some well-executed pass plays with Ja’Marr Chase getting a deep ball on the Bengals’ second drive to the four yard line. However, the Rams’ defense held the Bengals to only a field goal. The quarter ended with the Rams up 7-3.

Quarter Two

Stafford began to air out the ball in the second quarter, throwing a dart to OBJ for a massive pick-



Photo courtesy of NFL.COM

The close nature of the February 13 game reflected the trend of tight finishes throughout the playoffs this season.

up of more than 30 yards. Stafford threw another pass right after the one to OBJ, this time targeting Darrell Henderson, which brought them near the red zone. Not long after the Bengals’ first quarter drive for a field goal, the Rams had scored another touchdown thanks to Stafford’s pass to wide receiver Cooper Kupp in the back right of the end zone. The extra point had some issues, causing the holder, Johnny Hekker, to attempt a two-point conversion on the fly, but he ended up throwing an interception that led to no score.

Even with all of the pressure of the Rams defensive line getting to him, the run was still open for the Bengals’ Joe Mixon, who got multiple near-first-down pickups on the ground. Tee Higgins, wide receiver for the Bengals, eventually caught a touchdown pass from Mixon, running back for the Bengals, in the back corner after a hard-fought drive down the field. This put the Bengals within three points of L.A.

In the subsequent drive by the Rams, OBJ dropped a pass from Stafford, but seemed to hurt his leg with a non-contact injury during the attempt. Beckham would be out after this play for the rest of the game, leaving all of it to his teammates. Hitting the two minute warning, Stafford threw a pick to Jessie Bates III

in the endzone on a deep ball. At the end of the first half, L.A. had 13 to Cincinnati’s 10.

Quarter Three

Twelve seconds into the third quarter, Higgins and the Bengals came up with another big catch for a 75-yard touchdown. After another interception, the Bengals went down the field, but they were stopped by a sack as they were nearing the red zone, forcing a field goal. The Bengals kept stuffing the Rams’ run plays, which then led to a trick play in which the Ram’s Kupp threw a pass to Stafford that was too high, forcing them to settle for three points. Going into the last quarter, the Bengals were leading 20-16, but the Rams’ sacks were piling up, preventing the Bengals from scoring more.

Quarter Four

Leading by four points with just under 12 minutes left, the Bengals were looking to at least get a field goal and force the Rams to score a touchdown. However, the Rams had other ideas. On third down, Burrow tried keeping a play alive by running out of the pocket. However, he was sacked and also looked to be hurt as he limped off to the sideline.

After going back and forth with no luck, the Bengals had possession

again with nine minutes left. A crucial third down came when Burrow threw a potential first-down pass that was dropped by Tyler Boyd. This gave the ball back to the Rams with six minutes to go.

Stafford and company went to work to at least tie the game. The offense came out firing with multiple short pass plays that drove them down the field. Kupp caught a laser from Stafford for a 20-yard gain, which brought the game close to the two-minute warning. A holding call on the goal line against the Bengals’ defense brought the Rams within yards of taking the lead. Twenty seconds later, Kupp snatched the ball out of the air as he ran an out route to land the touchdown they needed for the lead.

With just over one minute left, Burrow had the chance to tie it up with a field goal. However, they needed to march down the field to get into range. On fourth and one, Burrow was sacked and, as he was wrapped up, he got the ball away to a receiver. Unfortunately for the Bengals, the ball didn’t make it to him. The Rams got possession and that was the end of the dramatic run through the playoffs for the Bengals and their fans. The Rams took the Lombardi trophy with a 23-20 victory.

Halftime show plays critical part in Super Bowl experience

Beyond giving players a chance to regroup, halftime at the Super Bowl lets the NFL highlight music icons

By DEVIN GRAY
Quill staff writer

The Super Bowl has always been treated as a special day in the American sphere. Viewers get to watch historic plays and a great atmosphere displayed on their television sets. Meanwhile, we all sit on the couch at our houses with family members as the game unfolds, arguing over politics that don’t matter in the grand scheme of things. While the game itself is entertaining, one thing that brings everyone together is the halftime show. This performance is an annual chance to showcase the great art that the chosen musicians have to show for that year. Overall, I believe the halftime show is a good thing for the Super Bowl and has become a necessary part of the viewing experience.

The Super Bowl changes locations yearly, which is a tradition that must be upheld. The location of each year’s game usually leads to the selection of musical talent that is connected to the game’s location. For example, the recent Super Bowl performance by Dr. Dre, Kendrick Lamar, Eminem, 50 Cent and Snoop



Photo courtesy of NFL.COM

This year’s halftime show was a tribute to famous west coast hip-hop artists.

Dogg was a celebration of west coast hip-hop, which was fitting because the Super Bowl was played in Inglewood, California. From the classic roots of rap, to the current-day representation of the genre, Super Bowl LVI did a good job in representing the west coast sound.

The Super Bowl is a big sporting event, quite possibly the best and

biggest sporting event in America. It’s only right for the halftime show to go big as well. Not only does the music selection do a good job of hyping the crowd, it can also hype the teams. During the recent Super Bowl between the Bengals and the Rams, the Bengals came out blazing as the halftime show finished. This matched the energy of the crowd as

Opinion

HIRING BIASES IN PRO FOOTBALL MUST BE STOPPED continued from page 3

Roger Goodell sent a memo to the NFL clubs saying they were retaining “outside experts” to evaluate the NFL’s diversity, equity and inclusion policies.

The NFL isn’t fully responsible for the hiring of coaches across the league. However, they are responsible for the hires within the NFL front office, which are becoming more and more diverse. I think it’s time to reevaluate the league’s Rooney Rule. For one thing, the length of the hiring

process should be longer. Many teams start the search for a new head coach in late January before the playoffs are over. The NFL should allow coaches that are in the playoffs to have time to be coaches and do interviews. Making this process longer would help coaches like Kansas City Chief offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy, who has been a top head coach prospect for the last three years, even though he hasn’t been hired.

When Flores filed the lawsuit

against the NFL, he explained his decision in the following way: “God has gifted me with a special talent to coach the game of football, but the need for change is bigger than my personal goals.” Flores standing up for the injustices against Black coaches is something we need more of. It is bigger than any one person and more important than the greater good of the league.

Fortunately, on February 17, Brian Flores was hired by the Pittsburgh

Steelers as their senior defensive assistant and linebackers coach. Flores stated that, “We’re looking for, I’m looking for, real change. We’re talking about the National Football League, but it’s really a microcosm of the United States,” when interviewed by Bryant Gumbel on HBO’s *Real Sports*. Flores being hired after filing his lawsuit gives me some hope of change, especially after the blackballing of Colin Kaepernick. Now, we will have to see what the NFL decides to do next.